

ENGAGING MULTICULTURALISM: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CRITIQUE OF
RIVERDALE FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

By

Moses Woodruff, Jr

Bachelor of Science, Tuskegee Institute, 1979

Master of Divinity, Interdenominational Theological Center, 1991

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ABSTRACT

ENGAGING MULTICULTURALISM: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CRITIQUE OF
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Riverdale First United Methodist Church, a multicultural congregation in the southern crescent of metropolitan Atlanta, Georgia, is a congregation composed of twenty-three ethnic groups that has limited fellowship between those same groups. On a recent home visit, one long-standing African American member complained to the researcher “we have twenty-three different ethnic groups at church, and yet I do not know these people!” This calls for advancing an ethic of recognition.

The first step toward creating an environment for recognition will be accomplished by critically analyzing the spiritual formation practices of the various ethnic groups of Riverdale First United Methodist Church (RFUMC). Listening is a key ingredient, at every stage, this being a narrative process. The intention is to discern who are the stakeholders of this community; why they choose RFUMC; what is holding them to the church; and where spiritual formation occurs in each of the ethnic groups.

The project provides an ethnographic critique of this United Methodist congregation in order then to design a “Narrative Model of Spiritual Formation for

Riverdale First United Methodist Church, A Multicultural Congregation". This will be a new model of spiritual formation for this church, one that fosters multiculturalism. The goal of this new model is for the church to take ownership of this ever-increasing multiculturalism; and to identify its strengths and weaknesses in order to enhance relations.

A mixed method research approach ending with action research was utilized in the research methodology. Using a framework of critical ethnography,¹ this researcher completed the following: compiled the primary record through the collection of monological data; did preliminary reconstructive analysis; undertook dialogical data collection; and explored the congregation's system relations. Thus a narrative model of spiritual formation for a multicultural congregation was developed using a critical analysis of the ethnographic findings.

The project consists of at least two months of field notes from participant observations, focus group discussions, demographic data from the city and surrounding communities, informal individual ethnographic interviews, and finally the formation of a workshop that taught the congregation a narrative model of spiritual formation in a multicultural congregation. The data was collected at various locales: the church, homes, and restaurants.

At the heart of bettering relations lies the creation of an atmosphere of recognition. Listening to the narratives of different ethnic groups and utilizing them within the worship service accomplished recognition. This project drew upon the scholarship of Charles Taylor, Robert Kegan, and Ann Wimberly, which not only

¹ Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison, *Research Methods in Education*, 7th Edition (London and New York, Routledge: Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), 244.

recognizes the politics of recognition but also describes the evolving ego or self in society, and thus the church. The enhancement of an atmosphere of recognition, involves being authentic and respecting the other while not assimilating into the other's culture.

Demographic and census data indicate that Riverdale, Clayton County, Georgia and the nation is becoming more diverse. As we become more diverse, nurture and education are vital components in maintaining vitality with such a diversity of cultures and ethnic groups. This has implications beyond the local church to community and governmental organizations, as well as for how we relate to those who are culturally and ethnically different.

The model that came out of this study-- "A Narrative of Spiritual Formation in a Multicultural Congregation"-- attends to identity in a multicultural setting. This attention to identity fosters better relations among diverse groups. Besides helping this particular church, this model of spiritual formation can also assist other congregations to worship together and do ministry together, as opposed to having different ethnic groups worship and do ministry in separate settings on one and the same church campus. This model and research process is about nurturing equal recognition and authenticity for all.

DEDICATION

"I am an invisible man. No I am not a spook like those who haunted Edgar Allan Poe; nor am I one of your Hollywood-movie ectoplasms. I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids--I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me...When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imaginations--indeed, everything and anything except me."

"Invisible Man," Ralph Ellison

I dedicate this doctoral dissertation to my parents, the Moses Woodruff, Sr. (deceased), and Melmaleen Woodruff, who told me at an early age that I could do anything I set my mind to doing. My mother would read stories to us, in the yard, under the big oak tree. I can still hear her voice planting seeds of visions of what we could become. My father would give us "talks" all while he was doing some mechanical job on the old truck or car; thereby sharing stories, giving pearls of wisdom, and all the while framing us into our uniqueness.

To my grandparents, Pearly Hicks and Hurtis Woodruff Sr., who affirmed me at an early age and believed in me. Their affirmation gave me validity, and strength that I was heading somewhere, and in the right direction.

To my son, Wyatt A. Woodruff, who I pray one day will grow into the fullness of whatever and whomever he wants to be! Son, you have so much to offer to this world!

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I could not have arrived at this place without the encouragement of my siblings: Melrenee, Linda, Carter, Judy, Ron, David and Arthur. The name calling (lawgiver, four eyes, head, etc.) only propelled me deeper into reading and studying.

To the Rev. Dr. Stephen Jones, a strong encourager and motivator, thanks for suggesting that I return to my graduate alma mater to pursue the Doctor of Ministry degree. You were right on time.

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Last but not least, thanks go to the lay membership of Riverdale First United Methodist Church. You provided the arena for me to perform my work. You became my laboratory and friend. Thank you for trusting me! There would be no doctoral project without you. There would be no Doctor of Ministry degree for me without you. It was because of your thirst for growth in Christ and growth in numbers that enabled me to seek avenues to assist me as your pastor. I thank God for you!

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Riverdale First is comprised of twenty-three ethnic groups who worship together but have little fellowship between groups. As one long-time Black American church member recently complained to the researcher, “We have twenty-three different ethnic groups at church, and yet I do not know these people!” Howard Thurman described this phenomenon as “contact without fellowship.”² A guest preacher even described this as “a bus stop mentality”, i.e., people are going in the same direction, riding the same vehicle, and yet not establishing relationships along the way, and in some cases not even acknowledging the existence of others.

Not knowing who is sitting in the pew next to us is not effective witness. Howard Thurman in *The Inward Journey*³ says that in life we must journey inward and experience self-encounters. With a congregational setting in mind, and with twenty-three ethnic groups in relations yet not recognizing what is and what is not, we can only obtain what is true and real by journeying inward. With our own eyes, we may discover that in trying to make decisions, we can only progress once we have claimed what is truly our own. It is here that we raise the questions of how twenty-three ethnic groups relate, if at all. It is here that we inquire how and where twenty-three ethnic groups are spiritually formed.

² Ronald E. Peters, *Urban Ministry: An Introduction* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2011), 15.

³ Howard Thurman, *The Inward Journey* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 1961), 39.

This project examines the spiritual formation practices of Riverdale First United Methodist Church (Riverdale First), through the framework of critical ethnography, with the goal of improving the awareness of the various ethnic groups and relations between those groups. Critical ethnography will present the problem-posing concept of education, a narrative model of spiritual formation, as a means of becoming a stronger congregation. Awareness alone is not good enough. Our theology must be enacted. Riverdale First will also seek to model spiritual formation in a multicultural setting. Though this project begins by developing a critical ethnography, it will result in action--the demonstration of a narrative model for spiritual formation in a multicultural congregation.

Ministry Issue

The lack of fellowship among the twenty-three ethnic and cultural groups is due to a lack of recognition and understanding between them. People do not fellowship because they really do not see one another as distinct and unique individuals or groups. They have become used to assimilating, to glossing over their differences, rather than acknowledging, learn about, and even cherishing those differences. Once one observes the differences, then one has to work at keep the relationship going. A non-interventionist attitude has negative implications for ministry.

The twenty-three groups that comprise the church worship together yet have little fellowship with one another. When a person of direct African descent participates in the worship service, they are just considered African; no one shows interest in their country of origin or their tribal/ethnic identity. Such behavior does not recognize that Africa is comprised of numerous cultural and ethnic distinctions with each one crying out for recognition of their individuality and homeland.

Worshippers gather together on Sunday mornings, yet lack the most basic knowledge and understanding of one another's cultures, at best making assumptions and generalizations regarding each group, and certainly showing little or no interest in finding out particulars. Because of this lack of understanding and depth in relationships, as a whole, African and Caribbean groups in the church do not take initiative in ministry leadership positions. For example, of the ten members of the 2015-2016 Church Council, all are black, with the exception of one officer who is from the Caribbean.

Where are the Africans, and other ethnic groups? When the Africans are asked to accept leadership positions, the response is varied but typically leads to non-involvement in the Church Council. They want this church to be their church, but at least for now they neither feel as though this is their church nor are they prepared to invest in making it theirs by taking on leadership responsibility. This researcher has seen the development of ethnic churches in the area, and witnessed conversations of some groups in Riverdale First expressing the fact that if they are not treated fairly, meaning if they are not recognized, then they will go to their own cultural church.

This researcher feels that if this phenomenon continues, "non-recognition or misrecognition will inflict harm, [and] can be a form of oppression, imprisoning people in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being"⁴ in this congregation. As well, due to this lack of authentic recognition, power struggles may evolve in the relations between the groups. This lack of authentic recognition of one another is partly due to a lack of understanding of the other ethnic groups, and partly to a sense of complacency or resignation within each cultural group.

⁴ Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 25.

Another reason many Africans do not participate is fear. There are numbers of people who have challenges with immigration authorities, mostly because their work visas have expired. They do not desire to take positions of leadership because of the attention it would draw to them, fearing this could potentially lead to their deportation. Whatever the rationale for a lack of involvement, groups that are not recognized typically can take this lack of interest only so long before they seek spiritual support elsewhere, with their own ethnic group.

Ralph Ellison voices the notion of inauthentic visibility in his book, *Invisible Man*. Ellison states in his prologue, "I am an invisible man.... I am a man of substance, of flesh and bone, fiber and liquids--and I might even be said to possess a mind. I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me...when they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination--indeed, everything and anything except me."⁵ It is this feeling of being invisible that this researcher wishes to explore in this study. Every human wants to be accepted for who they are, as a person, as an ethnic person; in other words, they want to be authentic, they want to be fully themselves. At the heart of authenticity is being recognized and respected as being a person of a particular culture, without being expected to diminish or subliminate one's particular voice or identity.

A critical analysis of the dynamics between the groups will assist the congregation toward improved recognition and respect between the groups. It is the intention of this study to enable Riverdale First to have a dialogue among the ethnic groups, improve recognition between the groups, and out of this improved relationship to

⁵ Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (Franklin Center, PA: The Franklin Library, 1980), 3.

develop a model of spiritual formation in which all are recognized as authentically Christian, regardless and yet respectful of each one's cultural heritage.

To address this lack of recognition between groups, the researcher uses information from critical ethnography, and proposes a narrative model of spiritual formation from the resulting action research. It is hoped that the resulting model of spiritual formation will also help other congregations in their multicultural efforts. Other models are used by other United Methodist churches in metropolitan Atlanta that consider themselves multicultural, but in these churches the various ethnic groups tend to worship and do ministry in separate areas of the church campuses. Riverdale First rejects this type of practice, for it diminishes the authenticity of each ethnic group, and makes no attempt for everyone, despite their differences, to live together as the body of Christ.

It is not uncommon for divided or struggling churches to create a mission and vision statement in an attempt to unify the congregation and give them a common purpose. Books such as Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life*, Herb Miller's *The Vital Congregation*, and Ken Callahan's *12 Keys to An Effective Church*, all place a lot of emphasis on churches creating such mission and vision statements. Their models are based on homogeneous congregations. This approach lacks an understanding of the complexity of ethnographic relations in multicultural settings. A more thorough and nuanced approach to relationship building needs to be undertaken in dealing with spiritual formation within multicultural churches such as ours, and such relationship building needs to happen before a congregation engages in mission and visioning. By performing a critical ethnographic analysis of the various groups and cultures of a particular church, and by extension by suggesting to other multicultural churches the

value of a narrative model of spiritual formation, the researcher hopes that this project will show greater understanding of the dynamics of the various ethnic groups present, and proposes the practice of equal recognition to such congregations, as suggested by Charles Taylor, in so doing building a solid foundation of mutuality among cultural groups jointly engaging in ministry.

The empirical data is quite revealing: the twenty-three disparate groups that comprise the membership of Riverdale First represent twelve different African countries/ethnic groups, six different Caribbean countries, besides Hispanic, Jewish, Korean, White American, and African American members. What attracted these groups to this church? One of the researcher's hypotheses is that they are attracted to this church's polity, doctrine, and pastoral leadership style, which he surmises resonate with the ecclesial systems familiar to them from their homelands. Many members come from cultures in which Anglicanism, Roman Catholicism, Methodism, and Pentecostalism are dominant. At Riverdale First, they recognize some of these familiar qualities and feel that in this church they will be able to retain their cultural identities. They imagine that Riverdale First will provide space for them to have their spiritual needs met, to identify with their homelands, and welcome them to this new congregational context. Yet, the researcher also assumed that these members were having some of their cultural needs met elsewhere. The research speaks to this concern.

What is it that prevents individuals from entering into fellowship with one another? Perhaps they feel a tension between their identities, afraid that something they hold dear will be stripped away if they enter into relationship with someone who is different from them. Or perhaps they live in fear of their immigration status being

compromised, and so would rather not open up to others. Perhaps they fear that the other will negatively stereotype the culture they hold dear.

With the ever-changing demographics of Riverdale/Clayton County in Georgia, the local church has an unrivaled opportunity to welcome the stranger/other in our midst. Riverdale First is already offering something unique and attractive to these new persons to our community--but it can and must do more. The lack of the recognition among members has consequences for the church's ministry and leadership, and for the level of care within the congregation and community. What can Riverdale First do to further develop and deepen relationships between cultural groups? How can it deepen and extend its ministry?

Projections of U.S. population trends from 2012-2060, exhibited in Appendix C, forecast increasing diversity in this country. From the census data we note that, with the exception of the white population, every ethnic group is projected to increase in size, making the country more diverse and shifting the balance among ethnicities. In light of this increasing diversity, churches would be wise to adapt their attitudes and behaviors, outlook and outreach, something this researcher suggests can best begin through increased sensitivity training through recognition and dialogue.

Intent of the Project

The purpose of this dissertation project is to increase recognition and awareness of the other among the twenty-three ethnic groups represented in Riverdale First. This research process will use the framework of critical ethnography to examine the dynamics of these groups of Riverdale First. Inevitably, some voices in such a setting become more dominant than others. All voices cry out for liberation. Because of the fact that liberation

causes change, and because increasing understanding and recognition is an act of liberation, the goal of the resulting narrative model of spiritual formation is to facilitate better, more liberated relations among the various ethnic groups.

The church is a living, breathing organism that seeks to become what God wants it to be. This sense of becoming involves asking critical questions and following up on them with action. This researcher will propose a move from “*what is*” to “*what could be*” in this church, by creating and then implementing a model of spiritual formation that deepens and improves group relations. That some ethnic groups are still crying out for recognition means that they are still oppressed. The church is in the business of liberation.

The use of ethnography to hear all voices and then to bring about liberation and mutuality is a matter of justice. It is a matter of ensuring that all voices are heard, and none minimized. The process of critical ethnography will examine the demographic data of the situation, and listen to developing narratives of the ethnic groups. Such listening leads to recognition and recognition to authenticity among groups in such a multicultural setting. Mary Moschella says, “the power to speak to tell one’s own story is integrally related to the power to change.”⁶ Authenticity and recognition are vitally important elements in this liberating process.

The researcher’s model of spiritual formation in a multicultural setting is narrative in nature. By listening to the narratives of the ethnic groups, a greater narrative is developed. The theological wisdom of the people is heard, as are their fears, their hopes, and their dreams. By listening and by being listened to, liberation occurs. At first, such

⁶ Mary Clark Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2008), 151.

listening will be modeled in a workshop setting. With time and practice, the expectation is that people will begin to listen in all situations.

The listening aspect of the narrative model proposes to seek a "Justice of Recognition"⁷ between the various groups--a just recognition of the individual, of one's culture, and of one's ethnicity, what Ralph Ellison describes as looking for "me" without the trappings; the essential me, the real me, the uniqueness of me. This "me" is another way to articulate what Charles Taylor describes as one's "self." With so much talk about "me" and the "self," there is a danger of narcissism, a concern this researcher addresses in the section on Taylor's concept of self. This research only mentions these terms at this stage because they are an important aspect of recognition.

This project has parameters. Though multiculturalism and spiritual formation are key components of the project, it is the narrative aspect of it that is central: eliciting stories from members of the various ethnic groups, listening to those stories, and through doing both, achieving recognition of each one's particularity. The narrative approach to improving relations among ethnic groups in a multicultural setting must remain central. Otherwise there is a risk that multiculturalism becomes merely an artifact, rather than central to the church's identity.

The scope of this project is to do research on the praxis of ministry in the local congregation. An extensive discussion regarding the dynamics of doing multicultural work is left to other projects. The parameters of this project are the ethnographic critique of Riverdale First. This process will honor the praxis of the church and its people, and report those results.

⁷ Taylor, *Multiculturalism*, 25.

This researcher acknowledges that this research process will only be able to take a “snapshot” of the congregation since it is not a longitudinal study, and thus will miss a great deal of the dynamism of this multicultural context. Nonetheless the hope is that the initiative this project takes in recognizing and engaging all constituents of the congregation will lead to the different cultural groups working together in this community. The research process limited to engaging in an ethnographic critique and then proposing a model for multicultural ministry for a multicultural context.

Definition of Terms

Spiritual Formation

This study follows the definition of spiritual formation proposed by M. Robert Mulholland, Jr. in *An Invitation to A Journey*. He says that spiritual formation is “a process of being conformed to the image of Christ for the sake of others.”⁸ Mulholland breaks down this process into four parts: it is “a process of being conformed” from “the self” to “the image of Christ” to “making an impact on others.”

As Mulholland states, God is thoroughly involved in the spiritual formation process. Our lives are full of incidents and circumstances, and with each choice we make, God is involved or we are making a spiritual impact on God’s work. The aim of this project is to offer to Riverdale First (and by extension to the church universal) a narrative model for spiritual formation through the framework of critical ethnography in a multicultural setting. By giving voice to the various groups, listening to their narratives, and identifying systems that help and hinder the recognition of those voices, this

⁸ M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., *An Invitation to A Journey: A Roadmap for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 15.

researcher can formulate a model for spiritual formation that moves through the process of Mulholland's four-part definition of spiritual formation.

The application of Mulholland's formula works well at Riverdale First. The church has stated that it wants to grow closer to God, hence "being conformed." The recognition of the self is the second component of Mulholland's method. The third is "to conform to the image of Christ." This process is essentially accomplished by adhering to what Jesus articulated as the greatest commandments, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and might; and to love our neighbor as ourselves. The work of multiculturalism involves the love of neighbor, in this case, of seeing the image of Christ in fellow Christians, regardless of their culture and ethnicity, all the while not negating their culture and ethnicity. Finally, "making an impact on others" involves recognizing others for who they are, and appreciating their authenticity, while doing the work of the church.

The church is the spiritual center of the community. People come to Riverdale First in order to grow spiritually and strengthen their relationship with God. As described earlier, the work of spiritual formation in the midst of so many different ethnic groups is dynamic. How does it happen? Where does it happen? Is it fragmented? Is it even important where it occurs? These questions will be answered through this research process.

Transformation

A cursory definition of transformation in the church would simply be that of change, but I do not feel this to be adequate, because it is too broad. Yet neither do I agree wholeheartedly with Kenneth Pergament's definition in *Spiritual Transformation*

*and Healing: Anthropological, Theological, Neuroscientific and Clinical Perspectives*⁹ of transformation as being quantum change or loss of spirituality. Yet, this definition is also too broad.

A better definition would be the one proposed by Johnathan Jackson—that transformation is an “awakening to the awareness of God.”¹⁰ This researcher believes that transformation does not necessarily have to involve a loss of spirituality, although it may; neither does transformation have to involve a cataclysmic or catastrophic event. Rather, as Jackson states, it typically involves “a changed reality,” “a new understanding,” and “a heightened level of awareness.” All of these descriptions add to the justice of recognition, i.e., “awakening to a new level of awareness not only of God, but of other cultures and ethnicities.”

A newcomer to this country may retain their native knowledge and awareness of God, but in their new context they may also grow into a new awareness of God, through being in dialogue with other cultures and ethnicities. This type of transformation only stretches and strengthens their understanding and relationship with God. A similar shift occurred when European Jews arrived in this country. While maintaining old world faith and customs, they transformed the synagogues in the South to look more like Southern churches. Such transformation happens whenever people move from place to place.

⁹ Kenneth Pergament, “The Meaning of Spiritual Transformation” in *Spiritual Transformation and Healing: Anthropological, Theological, Neuroscientific and Clinical Perspectives*, Joan D. Coss-Chioino and Philip Hefner, eds. (New York: Altamira Press, 2006), 12.

¹⁰ Johnathan Jackson, “Forming a Spirituality of Wisdom” in *In Search of Wisdom: Faith Formation in the Black Church*, Anne E. Streaty Wimberly & Evelyn L Parker, eds. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 158.

Yet transformation can also be risky because it can provoke the ire of the powers that be.¹¹ The researcher has observed that often North Americans approach newcomers as though Americans do not need to do any transformative work, that they think the newcomers are the only ones that must change. In the church, this attitude should not be our refrain. Looking at God through the eyes of others can and will cause transformation in our spirituality as it relates to justice issues. Defensive mechanisms, such as hegemony, can only lead to elitism and separation, hindering any transformation that might improve congregational relations.

Second, Brewer and Jackson in *Wesleyan Transformations*,¹² state that from a Wesleyan perspective, transformations can occur on many levels, though they focus primarily on transformations at the personal, social, religious/churches, and earth levels. This researcher's use of their work is restricted to religious/ecclesial and social transformation.

Transformation does occur among the different ethnic groups at Riverdale First. There is a give-and-take dynamic between groups, particularly as it pertains to holding on to one's ethnicity and upbringing, and yielding to the movement of God as displayed and learned by observing God in other ethnic groups. This give-and-take dynamic involves change; it involves increased awareness of God, which also increases awareness in the individual; and ultimately it involves becoming a new person in a new cultural context. Yet transformation also causes unrest in the individual because people long to return to

¹¹ Rico Palaca Ponce, "Transformative Spirituality and Mission," *International Review of Mission: World Council of Churches*, 101.2, (2012): 325.

¹² Earl D.C. Brewer and Mance C. Jackson, Jr., *Wesleyan Transformations* (Atlanta: ITC Press, 1988).

the familiar. Yet for us Christians, just as everything changes so must we change if we are to be conformed to Christ.

Multiculturalism

The most concise and engaging definition of multiculturalism is that proposed by Charles Taylor—multiculturalism as “the recognition of various cultural identities.”¹³ In our democratic state, this recognition carries with it notions of self-awareness, self-identity, and equal value. It is this notion of “the self” that causes problems for those who do not believe in multicultural work; and this is due to the fact that “the self” is often “whitewashed” or “glossed over.” The aim of multiculturalism is not to make a homogeneous community; rather heterogeneity through mutual respect and recognition is its objective.

Wilkerson states that the term “multicultural originally referred to the cultures of particular racial or ethnic groups, and some scholars continue to refer to multicultural education” in a narrow sense as chiefly for those considered marginal to the dominant culture. Yet other scholars “extend the definition of multicultural education to include differences of gender, region, social class, sexual orientation, and handicapping or other exceptional conditions.”¹⁴ For the purpose of making this research manageable, it will be restricted to culture, region, and class, with greatest emphasis on culture and ethnicity.

At Riverdale First, the term multiculturalism could be limited to six groups: Black Americans, White Americans, African Americans, Caribbean Americans, Hispanic Americans, and others. Yet this researcher finds such delineations too narrow and

¹³ Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 9 and 25.

¹⁴ Wilkerson, *Multicultural Religious Education* 2.

restrictive. Black Americans may speak the same language, but Africans do not. Caribbean Americans may speak English, but they have different cultural influences such as Spanish, Dutch Reformed, and English. This research project expands the work to refer to all 23twenty-three ethnic groups, inclusive of all voices, and studies spiritual formation interchangeably between culture and ethnicity.

Ethnic/Ethnicity

Ethnicity refers to a group of people who share a common heritage, language, culture, religion, and ideology. In biblical times, *ethnos* literally meant, “foreign people.” In modern times, it refers to racial affinities, which can be diminutive and restrictive, such as Bosnian Serbs, Palestinian relations to Israel and Judaism, and south of the border concerns.

This researcher prefers a more expansive definition. For ethnicity hints at ethnocentricity, which has the tendency of elevating or emphasizing one group over another. This is not this researcher’s goal. Instead it is to hold a discussion about self-determining freedom and identity, but also about how various groups relate to one another.

There are two groups that need clarification. If the various African tribal groups are delineated, why not do so with the Black Americans from different U.S. states? By its purest definition of ethnicity, the African tribal groups are treated as different ethnic groups because there are clear and distinct traits, languages, and cultures associated with each of those groups; whereas with Black Americans, the traits are less distinct, though still obvious. Case in point: Black Americans as a general rule, speak the same language, with regional linguistic traits, whereas African Americans from different African tribal

groups have their entirely different languages, such as: Nigerian Igbo, Nigerian Hausa, Nigerian Yoruba, and Nigerian Ijaw. These tribal groups have to be independently recognized, as there are histories of wars and familial associations that have to be taken into account if recognition of the “self” is to be taken seriously.

Culture

Nancy Adler stated, “culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; essential core of culture consists of traditional ideas and especially their attached values.”¹⁵ Culture also refers to distinctive values, norms, experiences and ways of viewing reality.¹⁶ Within this project, the researcher will note cultural distinction for descriptive purposes only, all the while linking culture and ethnicity into one description.

Cultural differences are evident at Riverdale First through several means. Among Black Americans the sense of time differs considerably to that of White Americans, and also to that of African Americans. An example would be that Black and African Americans’ worship services and funerals often last several hours. Differences in food is also demand consideration—and explanation. Variations in clothing are admired and sometimes even appropriated into other cultures, such as among Black Americans and African Americans. All such differences need to be handled carefully to avoid hurt feelings and alienation between cultural groups.

¹⁵ Nancy H. Adler, *International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior* (Cincinnati, OH: South Western College Publishing, 1997), 14-15.

¹⁶ Wilkerson, *Multicultural Religious Education*, 3.

Race

This researcher agrees with W.E.B. du Bois who states that in the U.S., “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line.”¹⁷ The U.S. is one of the most color conscious nations on the planet! There are obvious economic and historical reasons for this, including of course this country’s long history of enslaving Black Americans. Race is a social construct, and in some circles it has been constructed for personal and national gain.

Nevertheless, for the purposes of this project, race will be considered mainly in regard to Black Americans and African Americans. This researcher will use race in describing Black Americans as different from Africans in terms of their ethnicity and ethnographic impact.

Self

The term “self” can refer to many things: a spiritual self, a moral self, a philosophical self, an intellectual self, a physical self, an emotional self, etc.-- all aspects of a person’s essence. Charles Taylor says, “the self is a modern sense of agency.”¹⁸ Taylor describes the self as a human being, as people—meaning that they have a unique and complex ability to be reflective, aware, and to formulate an identity.¹⁹ This ability to identify the “self” makes us unique from other forms of creation.

This researcher find Taylor’s definition to be informative and yet, measured by my earlier descriptions, not inclusive. Taylor implies the self is in the philosophical realm. This researcher believes the self includes the essence of an individual, but as it

¹⁷ W.E.B. du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York, NY: Barnes and Noble, 2003), 3.

¹⁸ Taylor, *Sources of The Self*, 113.

¹⁹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, 32.

relates to all aspects of the individual. For example, there is an ethnic self and a cultural self, which informs one's philosophical self. The ethnic and cultural self, in ethnic and cultural groups, calls out for distinction, recognition, and authenticity.

Taylor sounds a caution by noting that this term at times edges toward narcissism.²⁰ One criticism against Taylor's notion of the self is that it devotes too much attention to the self, or the individual. Yes, it is true we live in a narcissistic society, but we cannot "throw the baby out with the bathwater." An affirmation of and authentication of the recognition of the individual cannot be ignored. There cannot be a discussion about groups without talking about individuals. Indeed, Taylor says that multiculturalism is centered on the politics of recognition, the politics of differences of different selves, and the politics of equal dignity of the self. Though many are more aware of the African articulations of unity and communalism, there is also a distinct emphasis on maintaining one's "Africanness"—which has both individual and communal aspects.

Pastorally speaking, if a pastor can recognize not only the *imago Dei*, but look at each individual, no matter of what race, culture, or ethnicity, then congregants are seen and recognized in all their dignity. Moviemaker James Cameron knew exactly what he was doing when he incorporated in the movie *Avatar*,²¹ the words "I see you." That is to say, I recognize you. As American Civil Rights icon, Jesse Jackson said, "I am somebody." This notion of the self is hugely important in establishing relations between visitor, church member, and the pastor.

²⁰ Charles Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 4.

²¹ "Avatar" directed by James Cameron. (Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 2009.) DVD.

Authenticity

Charles Taylor's *The Ethics of Authenticity*²² defines authenticity as "the moral ideal behind self-fulfillment... that of being true to oneself." Being true to oneself is the fulfillment of being true to God, that is, being true to the fact that God made you. Anything less than that is not being true to God, or to one's self. This is behind the moral ideal of the 1960's affirmation: "I'm black and I'm proud." It says that you do not have to be anyone other than who you are, though the predominant U.S. view is one of assimilation. We see this tension among the early arrivals of every ethnic group who came to America, needing to remember who they are and where they came from, and yet being told by Americans that for their survival they must fit in.

In the work of multiculturalism, the aim is not homogeneity, but rather heterogeneity. The aim is not for everyone to be a copy of everyone else, nor is it to blend in; instead, the aim of multiculturalism is to be true to one's divinely created self, to be real, to be genuine, to be authentically oneself. Opposition to multiculturalism in many instances comes from those who use fear to make everyone conform. Hierarchical systems of class, race, and so forth use this method to keep the status quo. To truly respect the other's self, one must value difference, not qualify it.

Yet such authenticity often takes a while to achieve. The Civil Rights Movement didn't just pop onto the scene fully formed in the 1960s. Already immediately after the Civil War in this country, there were movements to educate blacks in the South on a large scale; there was the Harlem Renaissance Movement; there was the push for integration in the Armed Forces after World War II; then came the bus boycotts and Brown versus

²² Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 15.

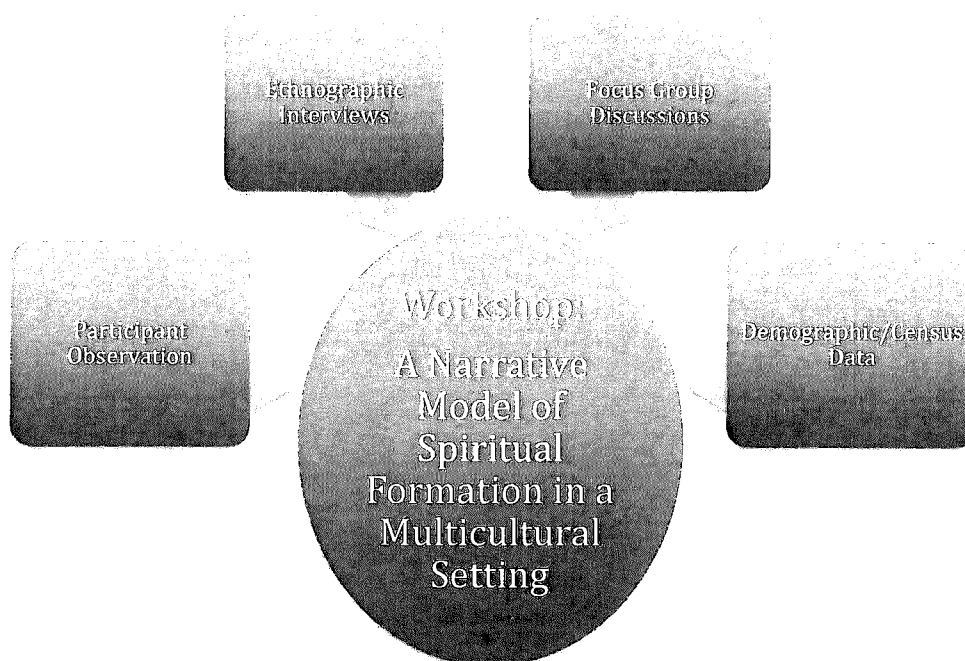
Board of Education in the 1950s. Even in the midst of all of these movements, the voices of the Black Community were not in unison, sometimes for very good reason, such as the real threat of being killed. Even though the voices for change and recognition were steadfast, transformation and recognition took time. So it is with authenticity. Authenticity is the ideal, and it is the goal. Being true to one's self has cost, and all the more so if one does not prepare the way.

Methodology

A mixed method approach was utilized in this research work, resulting in an action research workshop on a narrative model for spiritual formation in a multicultural congregation. This process also had a qualitative component, particularly in the ethnographic design of the project. A look at perspectives, expectations, and assumptions of the individuals, of the cultures, and of the ethnic groups in this study will provide a picture of this multicultural setting. The process is quantitative in terms of the correlational design of looking at one group versus another group. The study process ends with the mixed method approach, which is the combination of both qualitative and quantitative research designs.

The diagram below shows the flow of information through the research process. Each smaller component contributes to the central part of this process, the workshop. Each smaller section adds to the recognition of various groups and the need for that recognition, through the narrative process.

Table 1.0 Methodology



The end result of the study is a narrative model. The listening that occurs in such a model invokes recognition. It is exactly this practice of listening that propels Riverdale First to a new awareness of recognition. Change is inevitable in life, especially change as meaning that God is not through with us, that God is propelling the church forward. Embedded within this methodology is recognition of everyone, as a basis for improving interpersonal relations.

There are models for multiculturalism, and improving relations in multicultural settings. There are models for spiritual formation. There are even narrative models: narrative models for multiculturalism, and narrative models for spiritual formation. This study implements a narrative model for spiritual formation in a multicultural setting.

Outline of the Dissertation

Chapter I introduces the ministry issue, describes a lack of awareness and the need for recognition among the various cultural and ethnic groups, and articulates the

intent of the project and the demographics of the setting. The chapter also defines the key terms of the project. Chapter II describes the ministry setting, frames the issue around the need for recognition, and shares the motivation for addressing the ministry issue. Chapter III provides the conceptual framework of the work through the opinions of others who have studied the ministry issue, from biblical to theological sources on the issue of multiculturalism and critical thinking. Chapter IV describes the methodology employed in the ministry project. First, it describes and explains the researcher's method of using critical ethnography and a narrative model of spiritual formation in a multicultural United Methodist church. Chapter V summarizes the results of the research and analysis, which will be able to assist Riverdale First United Methodist Church in strengthening relations among its members. Chapter VI proposes the evolved and strategic narrative model for spiritual formation in a multicultural congregation. This model is unique in that it proposes a model of spiritual formation based on listening group of persons from various cultures and ethnic groups.

Summary

Effective congregational relations do not occur in a vacuum. They require planning and work—all the more so in Riverdale First's case; with twenty-three different ethnic groups, for effective relations to occur a process must be developed to create an ethic of recognition of those ethnic groups. This researcher is proposing both critical ethnography as a means by which to elicit data about the cultural groups, as well as putting together a narrative workshop of spiritual formation in a multicultural setting to facilitate recognition and increased understanding between the groups.

With the changing demographics in city, county, state, and U.S. population, it is vitally important to Riverdale First' survival that the church keep an open door to evangelism and outreach in the ever changing community. With many foreign born persons constantly arriving in Clayton County, much dialogue needs to occur between ethnic groups within Riverdale First in order to foster understanding, minimize harmful prejudices, and remove barriers to church growth.

In light of the changing dynamics of cultures and ethnicities, Riverdale First has an opportunity to redefine man-made constructs of race, culture, and ethnicity. When the church is at its best it, members relate to one another in peace and respect, which is unique as an approach to multiculturalism and difference in general. The methodology of mutual recognition and authenticity used in this study can increase that dialogue and model intercultural relationships of other regard, respecting difference, uniqueness, and individuality. For true multiculturalism respects the individual, and fosters self determining freedom and equal recognition.

CHAPTER II

MINISTRY CONTEXT

The Ministry Setting

Riverdale First United Methodist Church (hereafter Riverdale First) is located in Riverdale, Georgia, immediately south of Hartsfield Jackson International Airport, the world's busiest airport. This location alone, means that the city of Riverdale is particularly accessible to new international arrivals. The suburban, middle-class city of Riverdale is part of geographic region known as the Southern Crescent, the region south of the City of Atlanta.

Riverdale First had its beginnings in the late 1800s as a white Methodist Church. The city of Riverdale and Clayton County more broadly are communities that have been in transition for decades. Prior to its racial integration, the population was predominantly white middle class. With the demise of Eastern Airlines in the 1990s, airline employees migrated to other airlines, and thus people moved to other airline hub communities. African Americans flocked to this southern suburb in great numbers for better housing and location. Two other transitions made a huge impact upon the city, county, and the church, namely the influx of native African immigrants and the collapse of the urban governmental housing of the City of Atlanta. To put it bluntly, these "undesirables" flocked from Atlanta to Clayton County.

With the change in the racial demographic of the Southern Crescent of the metropolitan area, Riverdale First recognized that it needed to make a change in mission

outreach if it was to survive. Therefore, the church requested that the North Georgia Annual Conference appoint an African American as associate pastor to help in its transition. He was the first pastoral staff member of African American descent. Despite his efforts, and as a result of several other transitions, the church unfortunately never settled on its identity and relations within the congregation became further strained.

Demographics Changes of Riverdale and Clayton County, Georgia and the U.S.

Several demographic shifts have occurred in the city of Riverdale and Clayton County, shifts that mirror changes that likewise occurred in the State of Georgia as well as the U.S. as a whole. Counties became less white, with an increase in the number of minorities.²³ Neighboring Henry County saw its white population fall from 80% in 2000 to 49.8% in 2013. Gwinnett County, one of the most densely populated counties in the metropolitan Atlanta area saw its population fall from 67% white to 41.6% over the same period.²⁴

What used to be a hamlet by the airport has grown into a diversified suburban community. Riverdale's population in 2010 was 15,537.²⁵ Its racial demographic was 8% White, 80% Black or African American, 0.3% American Indian, 6% Asian, and 5.7% Hispanic. Foreign-born persons comprise 14% of the city's population. Even though the City of Riverdale's ethnic population plateaued from 2010 to 2014, the fast rise in ethnic population prior to that span, and the rise in the ethnic population expected by U.S.

²³ Jens Manuel Krogstad, "Counties with a White Minority Are Mostly in Sun Belt", Pew Research Center tabulations of 2013 Census Bureau Population Estimates. (http://pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/04/18/reflecting-a-racial-shift-78-counties-turned-majority-minority-since-2000/ft_15-04-02_whitesharemap.), 3.

²⁴ Krogstad, *Counties with a White Minority Are Mostly in Sun Belt*, 3.

²⁵ US Census Bureau, 2010, quick facts.

Census Bureau, only strengthens the case that the church needs to ensure that its ministries reflect those changes. (See Appendix B.)

Clayton County is a middle-class suburban county. Its population is 267,542. Its racial demographic is 24% White, 67% Black or African American, 4% Asian, and 5% Hispanic. Foreign-born persons make up 15% of the county population. Of the surrounding counties that form the Southern Crescent of Metropolitan Atlanta (South Fulton-Clayton-Northern Fayette-Western Henry County), Clayton County has the highest percentage of foreign-born persons.²⁶

Riverdale First is a typical Black middle-class congregation in that it is conservative in its biblical hermeneutic and ideology and yet moderate to liberal in its social outreach and political approach.²⁷ Most of the members do not attend a Bible study at Riverdale First UMC, and instead rely on “selected texts” to justify their social beliefs, such as abortion, drugs, homosexuality, justice issues, pastoral authority, or even community witness. The congregation is roughly 20% children and youth (<age 17), 10% young adults (ages 19-30), 40% adults (ages 31-60), and 30% seniors (ages 60+).

The church is organized according to the typical Methodist Church Council format, which is comprised of ministry chairs. This administrative body governs all decisions of the church. As it relates to the pastor and the denomination, the church has a Lay Leader, as well as a Pastor Parish Relations Committee (PPRC) to advise the pastor and ecclesiastical authorities. The PPRC works with the pastor to ensure pulpit stability, pastoral needs, and facilitation of the vision of the congregation. Being a United

²⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, 2010, Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA Metro Area.

²⁷ John J. Dijulio, “Supporting Black Churches: A New Agenda,” *Pew Research, A Religious Portrait of African Americans* (Washington, D.C: Pew Research Center, 2009), 2 and 19.

Methodist congregation, Riverdale First participates in an episcopal form of ecclesiastical leadership.

Previous Attempts to Address the Issue

The demographic transitions that have occurred in the community surrounding Riverdale First have had huge impacts upon the church. First, the collapse of Eastern Airlines in the early 1990s led to the demise of the city of Riverdale, Clayton County, and the entire southern region of metropolitan Atlanta. Second, the change in racial and economic demographics caused by the collapse of the public housing market in Atlanta resulted in many poorer and minority persons moving to Riverdale and Clayton County. Riverdale First was not unaffected. These changing demographics, along with the congregation's failure to seize the opportunity that came with the racial shifts led to the appointment of the church's first African American pastor—the researcher. With this appointment, “white flight” from the church greatly affected the church's operations and ministry. Under his pastorate, the congregation underwent several transitions: from majority White American to upper-middle-class African American to increasing numbers of first generation Africans.

Since the researcher's arrival as pastor almost eight years ago, the church has made several attempts to strengthen its place as a “full-time working church.” It hasn't fully accomplished this feat, but the church is stronger than it was. Worship attendance has increased from an average of forty to over 110 each Sunday. A prayer ministry has been organized and is heavily used by the church. A food bank is fully operational, and is embraced by the community. Seven eagle scouts have earned their rank, which is unheard of for a mostly Black church of this size. Yet, with all that said, for what purpose and to

what end are we in ministry? At this church, it seems that a person comes up with a ministry idea and makes it happen, with no sense of how that idea relates to other already existing ministries.

Other things have hindered the church's development too. Earlier attempts to create mission and vision statements did not consider the actual diverse ethnic and cultural composition of the church. The failure of the implementation of those attempts was multifaceted. First, in the previous white pastoral administrations, the church failed to adjust to the changing community demographics; therefore, all attempts at vision and mission development and implementation were racially skewed. Second, with Riverdale First's first African American pastor, insufficient finances brought about by the mass exodus of the (wealthier and) white members after the arrival of the black pastor, hampered any real attempts at diversity and inclusion, and the resulting vision and mission statements were more the consequence of the pastor's suggestions than the truly mutual work of pastor and congregation.

It was not until the researcher entered the Doctor of Ministry degree process that he began to look at the empirical data, and that, eventually, there began to be a shift in the congregation's understanding and vision. What he found was that there are twenty-three different ethnic groups that comprise the membership of Riverdale First United Methodist Church (RFUMC). These groups come from twelve different African countries/ethnic groups, six different Caribbean countries, and also include Hispanic, Jewish, Korean, White Americans and Black Americans.

Something has attracted these groups to this church, but what? This researcher believes that they are attracted to the church's polity, doctrine, and pastoral style and

leadership, which resonate with the ecclesiology with which they are familiar from their homelands. Many come from cultures where Anglicanism, Roman Catholicism, Methodism, and Pentecostalism are dominant. They see these familiar qualities of worship at Riverdale First United Methodist Church and feel somewhat at home there in a strange land. However, the researcher believes that some of their cultural needs are also met elsewhere. This researcher's investigation will reveal those aspects.

Given this influx of members from other cultures and countries, a certain understandable tension exists in the congregation. It is primarily the dominant ethnic groups and the emerging ethnic groups that are reticent to recognize the divine worth in other persons who are very different from themselves. This researcher's task, as guide, is to engage congregational leaders in considering how God recognizes and values each person in the congregation, and therefore how they might imitate such recognition as people of Christ. This is something that was not given attention in previous attempts to rejuvenate and integrate the church.

Framing the Issue

The Africans and Caribbeans know their identity and cultural heritage. The white members of Riverdale First know theirs as well. The black Americans have a good grasp of their recent identity and cultural heritage. It's the interaction of these qualified "horizons of significance,"²⁸ or states of being and emerging identities that need to be explored and improved for the congregation to be effective as a unit or body. To lessen the identity or authenticity of an individual or group is to lessen their significance, and

²⁸ Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 39.

concomitantly to value and magnify their identity and authenticity is to ascribe them their due significance as children of God.

The question of how to recognize and strengthen the relationships of twenty-three cultures and ethnic groups can usefully begin with the fact that Riverdale First is a Wesleyan context, specifically United Methodist. What draws Wesleyans together for spiritual formation? Even though Riverdale First is connected to the larger denomination, some in the church were raised Anglican/Roman Catholic/AME/UMC, and still others are from congregational churches and have little or no understanding or appreciation of the history of the Wesleyan movement. The church's liturgy follows the order in the UMC Book of Worship. Along with a traditional Wesleyan emphasis on grace, this liturgical structure provides the familiarity that enables and strengthens the strained inter-congregational relationships. In short, United Methodists in Africa follow the liturgy of the same UM Book of Worship as Black American United Methodists. Of course, this would not be as true of those ethnic groups who come from non-Wesleyan churches, but still they often share some common liturgical components and traditions. Comments to the pastor suggest that these non-Wesleyan members of Riverdale First are drawn to the pastor's "Baptist preaching style."

Second, the researcher will be observing spiritual formation practices among the various multicultural groups, in so doing gathering information on the human and spiritual development of different people. Difference extends far beyond the church's already very diverse cultural demographic. Because Riverdale First has an open door policy, and because of its location on the south side of Atlanta, an unusually high number of persons come to the church both after leaving nearby penal institutions and with

chemical addictions. Therefore, holding discussions with both middle-class persons who have a "high ecclesiology" and with persons with serious life challenges will take an enormous amount of nurture, practical wisdom, education, and patience on the part of the pastor and the congregation.

Third, the fact that Riverdale First is a multicultural congregation highlights the need for ethnographic critique as a means to identify difference and then improve relations between different cultural, sociological, and ecclesial groups. Of the many ethnic groups under one roof, some are particularly nurtured by Wesleyan theology, others by liturgy, others still have a particularly high regard for the pastor, and yet others bring other aspects of their faith traditions from previous churches to Riverdale First. Still, no matter where a specific group is or has been nurtured, they are drawn to Riverdale First, and for that reason the church has a challenge and opportunity to tend to their spiritual formation.

Finally, given previous failed attempts at improving relations in the church, teaching and implementing an ethic of recognition is vital to the church's future effectiveness. In planning a future for the church, this consideration is paramount as a beginning to doing ministry in the local church. What Ralph Ellison's character in *Invisible Man* states could be said by any number of Riverdale First's members: "When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imaginations-indeed, everything and anything except me." This practice is unacceptable for local church ministry. It does not value the individual, or his or her distinctiveness. Local church ministry must begin with honoring each person's self and all that is entailed by that.

Therefore, such conditions for significance must be established for new arrivals in this new context. Whether they are from Nairobi, Freetown, Cape Town, Harare, Port au Prince, Lexington, Jersey suburbs of New York City, or small hamlets in South Georgia, new arrivals to Riverdale are expanding their horizons of significance. Riverdale First must assist them in their quest to be all that they can be, particularly to live into their fullness as children of God. Riverdale First is their home and God is their helper.

Motivation for Addressing the Ministry Issue

The researcher has been driven by the search for acceptance his entire life, as a result of his experience of being educated in a segregated school system in rural Alabama and then being compelled to integrate in those same systems. Observing a Roman Catholic classmate being ostracized in class by fellow classmates and witnessing the tenth grade teacher vilify him because of his differing religious beliefs, forged a sensitivity in him regarding how people in power treat those who are different, as did seeing women rejected for church membership because they wore “men’s” clothing, i.e., pants, the result of self-serving of uninformed exegesis of a particular biblical text. So too does the researcher find the church’s mistreatment of gays is heart wrenching, as is also discrimination against black men in the workplace, and segregation in the itinerancy of his own supposedly connectional denomination. Such attitudes and practices have made the researcher desire everyone to be recognized and included.

In its thirteen-year history of being a majority black congregation, Riverdale First has expended much effort and yet failed at forming a vision/mission for the church. Given the fact that the church also has a history of being unwilling to recognize and accept the area’s changing demographics, this researcher realized that if attention were

not given to the changing demographics, the church would become ineffective at evangelism and cease to grow. But with the changing demographics in the church, attention needs to be given to these shifting cultural and ethnic dynamics.

When this researcher arrived at Riverdale First in 2008 as its pastor, he envisioned growth as likely to come mainly from the surrounding black population. He also expected some growth through believers coming from other denominations, and from those new to the area who were seeking the contemporary relaxed worship style to which they had been accustomed in their previous church. The influx of so many ethnic minorities has caused friction with a few members, but by and large the church has welcomed newcomers and has grown.

Yet although Riverdale First averages over one hundred members attending worship, the many different ethnic groups have not grown closer and formed a cohesive body of believers. Nor have members taken much interest in the cultural backgrounds of these newcomers, and relations between them are strained or non-existent. The researcher therefore began discussions with the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee to see in what direction the church should proceed. Accepting the fact that the "*church should be the spiritual center of the community*," two themes emerged: unity and spiritual growth.

In light of the changing demographics of the surrounding communities and counties, and particularly in light of the increasing African population at Riverdale First, the task of this ministry/research project became clear, as the next chapter reveals.

Summary

Riverdale First is a unique multicultural United Methodist Church that includes persons from twenty-three ethnic groups. The church wants to believe that its doors are

open to all, but its practices belie that desire for inclusivity. In order to embrace those from all twenty-three groups, the church has to start by recognizing the worth and authenticity of each individual, which among other things means becoming more familiar with each one's cultural heritage. Riverdale First does not need the motto of the denomination, "Open Hearts, Open Doors, Open Minds" in order to adopt diversity; diversity is already abundantly evident at Riverdale First. Yet in order to do ministry better, and to do it together as one body, the church must take advantage of the gift of such great diversity in its midst and solicit the gifts and ministry engagement of all of the cultural groups.

With the changing demographics in city, county, state, and nation, it is vitally important to Riverdale First's survival and ministerial flourishing that the church keep an open door to evangelism and outreach in the ever-changing community. With so many foreign born persons arriving in Clayton County, much dialogue needs to occur between the many groups that are part of Riverdale First in order to foster understanding, minimize harmful prejudices, remove barriers to church growth, and bring to the church excitement about its ministry shared by all.

This unique opportunity is exciting and also challenging. The church does not segregate ethnic groups onto different parts of the church campus. Nevertheless, due to a lack of education and desire to know about the other and to work together (as well as an understandable desire for familiarity, particularly among those far from their geographic home), it has become customary for persons of some ethnicities to gravitate to people of their own culture and ethnicity for spiritual support. So in principle they acknowledge Methodism's principles of connectionalism, but in practice they often separate. The

researcher nonetheless hopes and believes that a theological impulse for better relations among groups does indeed exist.

Therefore, attention must be given to educating and nurturing relations in order to manage the diversity and multiculturalism and come together as one body of Christ in this church. A model must be developed and utilized to constantly nurture relations between the different ethnic groups. This model must have as its goal the shaping of Christians to conform to the image of Christ in the sense of embracing others, and honoring and recognizing their particularity and authenticity. The demographic statistics demand it.

CHAPTER III

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Connecting Conceptual Framework and The Wesleyan Quadrilateral to the Ministry Issue

The ministry issue of recognition and bettering ethnic (group) relations is not unique to Riverdale but is present within all congregations composed of different groups with different levels of power. Because of its Wesleyan heritage, Riverdale First United Methodist Church has the Wesleyan Quadrilateral assisting with the issue of recognition and relationship development. This dissertation research project offers a complementary tool with which to address the ministry issue; its framework consists of the Bible, Theology (Wesleyan), Spiritual Formation and Faith Development, and Multiculturalism. By combining the Wesleyan Quadrilateral with this conceptual framework, this researcher believes the church has a useful framework with which to direct the conversation about the ministry issue of mutual recognition and bettering ethnic (group) relations. This researcher acknowledges this to be a liberal interpretative relationship, but nevertheless believes the relationship to exist and be useful.

United Methodist forebears in the faith were “grounded in Scripture, informed by Christian Tradition, enlivened in Experience and tested by Reason.”²⁹ This is the United Methodist concept of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. It is not static, or etched in stone with

²⁹ Neil M. Alexander, ed. *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012), 45.

regards to order. There are nuances, according to jurisdictions (regions), as it relates to emphasis on different qualities of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. This researcher's presentation of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral allows for those nuances, while still offering the Wesleyan framework as the process for our theological task.

Scripture has been the theological starting point of United Methodists. However, recent narrative research, story-telling, and story-linking in liberation theology has proposed that "lived experience" is more accurately the starting point in our modern day task of theologizing.³⁰ We interpret scripture out of our lived experiences. As part of our denominational faith, scripture is primary for United Methodists in reflecting upon our theological task. Therefore, it is only for the express purpose of holding to disciplinary standards that this dissertation's initial question is "What does the Bible say about...?"

Why this contestation? A thorough examination of Mark 11:12-25 suggests that Jesus was reordering Temple worship to be inclusive of the Temple's original intent, as supported by the Hebrew Testament references. This dictate of inclusivity, as a mandate from Jesus, relates to recognition of and authenticity for everyone. For, how can we say we are about inclusivity in worship if we label persons with qualitative distinctions?

Second, our Christian Tradition informs our theological reflection, and for us Methodists does so particularly through our Wesleyan theology. The modern day refrain of John Wesley's statement that "the world is my parish" is and has been our marching orders since the denomination's founding. This refrain reminds us not just to think locally, but also to act globally. Our missionary and evangelical tradition has been to invite all to Jesus Christ. Even though regional nuances divided the denomination over

³⁰ Anne E. Streaty Wimberly, *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 24.

the issue of slavery, the tradition of The United Methodist Church has always been against slavery, with words of abolition recorded from the founder himself, John Wesley. Given John Wesley's inclusion of Africans as some of his first converts, clearly his intent was to be inclusive and recognize everyone.

Third, "How have we lived out our experience, especially as it relates to spiritual formation and development"? Equating experience with the reflective discipline of spiritual and faith development is essential to doing theology in action. The work of Kegan and Fowler reminds us of the usefulness to ministry of the scientific study of human behavior and development—in short, of our experience.

Fourth and finally, with Reason, as a United Methodist, this researcher is able to test our theological tasks through critical reflection, specifically in a multicultural community. The old church axiom "Come, let us reason together" still rings true. It is very much true that the eventual critique and the analysis of research and narrative data that we gather will enable us to do theology-in-action more effectively as a church.

A note of clarity and emphasis: this researcher has stated that the sources of our theological guidelines, as United Methodists, are Scripture, Tradition, Experience and Reason. The United Methodist Book of Discipline is clear in emphasizing "Scripture's primacy for faith and practice," as well as placing tradition before experience and reason.³¹

While this researcher appreciates each element of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, for this particular research context he would prefer to rearrange the order thus: Experience, Bible, Tradition, and Reason. The researcher strongly agrees with what Ann Wimberly

³¹ Alexander, *The Book of Discipline*, 86.

that “the entire story-linking process”³² is pivotal. That process progresses like this: engaging the everyday story, engaging the Christian Faith Story in the Bible, engaging Christian Faith Stories from the African American Heritage, and engaging in Christian Ethical Decision Making. The point is that scripture is typically interpreted through the lens of lived experience!

As to the denominational theological task, this dissertation is being framed according to the order of The United Methodist Book of Discipline, with the hope that one day even this book will be changed by the General Conference of The United Methodist Church to reflect the global and ethnic variety of the church, which begins with individual believers, their selves, and their lived experiences.

That being said, and respecting the United Methodist order of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral, this researcher offers Mark 11:12-25 for exegetical and homiletical dialogue. The biblical text is often misappropriated, its meaning altered to mean what a particular reader wants it to mean, in the case of our Markan text, to mean political upheaval or temple destruction. Based on inquiry into the sources of Mark 11:12-25, this researcher asserts that inclusion is the primary emphasis. Inclusion has everything to do with the work of multiculturalism and giving “recognition” to everyone, which is the rationale for this dissertation.

Biblical Sources and Concepts: Mark 11:12-25

Mark 11:12-25

12. On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. 13. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see whether perhaps he would find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. 14. He said to it, “May no one ever eat from you again.” And his disciples heard it. 15. Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who

³² Wimberly, *Soul Stories*, 33.

were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of those who sold doves; 16. and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. 17. He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written, 'my house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations? But you have made it a den of robbers.'" 18. And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching. 19. And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city. 20. In the morning as they passed by, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. 21. Then Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered." 22. Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. 23. Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, 'be taken up and thrown into the sea, and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you. 24. So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. 25. "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses." (NRSV)

Biblical Introduction and Thesis Statement

Mark's reporting of Jesus reordering Temple worship brings him into direct conflict with Temple authorities. Jesus' provocative action is often used as an example by those desiring insurrection, revolt, and insurgency, but that can be problematic. Initially, several questions arise out of this text. What is the meaning of the cursing of the fig tree? Why did Jesus "clear/clean" the temple? Is there a connection between the temple narrative and the two fig tree narratives, and why does Mark end the entire pericope with instructions on prayer?

This researcher's claim is that Mark's presentation of Jesus cleansing the temple, interspersed between the two fig tree narratives, not only represents hegemonic struggle, but this struggle leads to Jesus teaching about authentic and inclusive worship, and prayer. Daniel Kirk even goes so far as to say, "if there is a narrative link between the closing verses appended to the pericope of the fig tree and the temple-clearing episode, it

is to be found in the theme of prayer.”³³ This researcher agrees with the assessment that a connection exists between the unproductive nature of the fig trees and the misuse of the temple, and that it gives Jesus an opportunity to teach about intentionality and utility.

Some have argued that this correlation cannot be made, since Jesus in subsequent chapters talks about the destruction of temple worship.³⁴ Jesus’ talk about destroying the temple could mean a rebuke of the way in which the temple was being run. Jesus’ words are for building, rebuilding, and not destruction. For Jesus even stated that He came not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfill them.

This researcher has been trained in the traditional historical critical method of biblical criticism. He acknowledges the development over the last quarter of a century of a new way of biblical investigation--postcolonial biblical criticism. Nevertheless, what is presented is an investigation under the rubric of traditional historical biblical criticism, with a hint of postcolonial “signifiers.”

Biblical Contextual Analysis

As a postcolonial discourse, Mark presents his gospel in the context of the Roman *imperium*.³⁵ This was a system to further the interests of the Roman Empire. Naturally, this system had its impact upon the local governing authorities and on Jewish life, particularly Herodian temple worship.

Simon Samuel says that Mark’s portrayal of Jesus is “neither [a] pro- nor an anti-colonial one. Instead it may properly be viewed as a colonial/postcolonial conundrum

³³ J.R. Daniel Kirk. “Time for Figs, Temple Destruction, and Houses of Prayer in Mark 11:12-25”, *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 74, Issue 3, (July 2012): 545.

³⁴ Vanessa Lovelace, Assistant Professor, ITC, Classroom discussion: IATA 928 Biblical Reflection Seminar, 12/3/14.

³⁵ Simon Samuel, ed. *A Postcolonial Reading of Mark’s Story of Jesus* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2007), 5.

affiliative and disruptive to both the native and alien colonial discourses of power.”³⁶ His analysis shows the difficulty surrounding the meaning not only of this pericope but also of Mark’s Gospel as a whole.

A.-J. Levine states that while Mark quotes Jewish scriptures often, he “expresses ambivalence or even antagonism to Jewish religion centered upon the Temple in Jerusalem.”³⁷ This would give us a better idea of what was likely in the mind of Mark, his intentions, and his goal for writing.

The community in which this text occurs is a heterogeneous blending of Hellenistic and Roman times, in a Jewish religious context. This is a hybrid society, very difficult to grasp and impossible to summarize in a single formula. It includes Roman governmental authorities and the elite speaking one language, and the peasants speaking another; a hodgepodge of Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic if you will.

The intended audience of this pericope is quite literally decided by the location of this altercation of temple cleansing: the Gentile Court. What is the relationship of the Gentile Court to the Temple? In my analysis, I aim to show that the Gentile Court was a part of the “household” of the Temple of God, which included people making trades, and temple officials receiving taxes, and Roman authorities.

The Herodian social system had the Jewish peasantry paying tithes, Roman tributes, land rents, tolls, and debts to the Sanhedrin judicial system, payment that was

³⁶ Samuel, *A Postcolonial Reading of Mark’s Story of Jesus*, 6.

³⁷ Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Z. Brettler, eds. *The Jewish Annotated New Testament* (New York, NY and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 55.

made on the Temple grounds.³⁸ The Sanhedrin in turn paid the Roman tributes to either the Prefect or directly to Rome.

The supreme court of the land, the Sanhedrin, ultimately decided how the Jewish civil aspects of the law were to be interpreted. Before 70CE, when the Temple was destroyed, the Judean elite controlled the Sanhedrin. The court vigorously backed those with whom they could make money, namely the creditors. Therefore, the manipulation of debt, taxes, etc., all in the name of “sacred” debt records, contributed to the growing agrarian problems.

There was always conflict between Jesus and the religious authorities. The episode in the temple only intensified that conflict. All of the entities at the temple would have had problems with Jesus reordering the life of the temple. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders, all had something to lose, namely authority and money.³⁹

There are two schools of thought with regards to Mark’s authorship. Historically, this Gospel was thought to have been written by John Mark, an associate of Peter, and later even mentioned by Paul. Most of what we know about him is by early church tradition and not directly as the author of this Gospel. The second person thought to have authored this Gospel is Mark, an interpreter of Peter. Both of these writers’ names are given only through tradition and not scholarship.

³⁸ Douglas E. Oakman, “Cursing Fig Trees and Robbers’ Dens: Pronouncement Stories in Social-Systemic Perspective: Mark 11:12-25 and Parallels,” *“Semeia”* no. 64: 259. ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials EPSCOMhost (accessed November 24, 2014).

³⁹ Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark: Jesus Authorities, Disciples* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989), 86.

Mark's Gospel's source is the "Q" tradition (from the German "Quelle" or source), which is dated around 65-70 CE.⁴⁰ This date is important because of the social setting of Mark. The aforementioned date is around the time of the Period of the Second Temple, which was from 516 to 70 CE.⁴¹ The actual destruction of the temple came from the domination of Rome around 63 BC.⁴² From this can be inferred that Mark may have been influenced by, or possibly involved in, a subversive plot to redact Hebrew Scriptures, even Jesus' own sayings, to push the notion of the Temple's destruction, with impending Roman ascendancy.

Biblical Formal Analysis

In early Jewish documents, the word "gospel" does not appear.⁴³ Therefore the evolution of the word to identify this genre is only recent, although the first chapter does state that Mark is bringing "good news" or "euangelion" (εὐαγγέλιον) and along with the other three gospels, forms the synoptic gospels. This good news is not intended for a selective few but for everyone.

The story of Jesus' last days in Jerusalem is often referred to as the Passion.⁴⁴ This is the last week of Jesus' life before his crucifixion. Therefore, leaving his brand, sharing his vision, and re-ordering worship make sense as events in this pericope. This pericope occurs at the beginning of the Passion story in a series of narratives: first, the cursing of the fig tree narrative; second, the cleansing of the temple narrative; third, the

⁴⁰ Gary R. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1966), 35.

⁴¹ Larry R. Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period: A Guide for New Testament Students* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 17.

⁴² Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period*, 20.

⁴³ Levine, *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 56.

⁴⁴ Levine, *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*, 57.

Markan discussion surrounding the cursed fig tree narrative; and finally, a proclamation on prayer.

From the fig tree narratives on we move to the impending demise of the temple. I suggest that Mark cleverly uses the cursing of the fig tree to introduce us to the idea of things not accomplishing their intended use. Form critically, it is a brilliant use of a seemingly insignificant and obscure text.

This pericope presents a narrative that intertwines the conflict between Jesus and the religious authorities of the day. To adequately convey his message to his audiences, Jesus uses his antagonists. Jesus criticizing the Temple *cultus* only infuriates them even more. The events of this conflict lead to a crescendo of the week's activities and to Jesus' eventual death on the cross.

In the short narrative on prayer, which functions rather like an epilogue, Jesus' words, "*Amen I say to you,*" underline the importance and certainty of what he will say. Jesus teaches how faith in God empowers prayer. He uses rhetoric to exaggerate the lifting up and throwing of a mountain into the sea, only to proclaim what is humanly possible.

Detailed Biblical Analysis of Mark 11:12-25

Verse 12-14. On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see whether perhaps he would find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. He said to it, "May no one ever eat from you again." And his disciples heard it.

Gordon Leah states that according to Matthew, when Jesus curses the fig tree, it withers immediately.⁴⁵ But Leah observes in Mark that the tree isn't reported to have

⁴⁵ Gordon Leah, "Lifting the Curse: Reflections on Retribution and Restoration", *European Journal of Theology* 22, no. 1 (2013): 19-20.

been affected by Jesus' words until after the temple cleansing episode. The placement by Mark gives a much more dramatic and powerful impression.

Jesus seeing a fig tree was not problematic, nor was Jesus finding nothing except for leaves on the fig tree indicating anything amiss. The difficulty with this pericope is with Jesus cursing the fig tree with no leaves "*for it was not the time for figs*," Now that is problematic and requires explanation. A first glance makes Jesus out to be a spoiled brat, a divine being who can't get his way and curses a fig tree! This does not make Jesus look divine. But is there something else going on?

Jesus could reasonably expect to find fruit in various stages of ripeness on the fig tree. To be sure, botanically speaking, new growth produces in the fall the majority of the year's crop, roughly 90%. The fruit on the new growth, representing the major part of the fig harvest for the year, would be available at this time. But the cursing of the fig tree takes place in the spring before the Passover, which should mean that leaves should have recently appeared on the tree, towards the end of March. Therefore, from a botanical point of view, it is not the right season for there to be fruit on the fig tree.

Oakman suggests that the problem is not about *when* but *why* Jesus did not find fruit. Oakman answers this query in light of the social system, arguing that the Judean oligarchy (the priestly upper crust, the village and town lay nobility, and the scribes) all participated in the mistreatment of the lower class. Thus some farmers were not financially able to manage their fig tree orchards, and this led eventually to the metaphorical exclamation of there being no figs on the fig tree.

From this vantage point, Jesus visits a fig tree that has gone to wood because of intention or neglect. The fig tree's barrenness again testifies to the shift in the agricultural

priorities of the elites. By cursing the fig tree, Jesus in effect curses the social system that has led to its neglect. If the fig tree had not been neglected (Mark implies this by “for it was not the season for figs”) then under ordinary circumstances figs could be expected from this tree.⁴⁶

Chance observes that, “one might note that the fruit of the fig tree often appeared before the leaves appeared, so that seeing a tree in leaf could lead one to expect to find fruit on it, even if the fruit would not have been fully ripe. Hence, from a distance, Jesus might have at least expected to find some kind of fruit on the tree.”⁴⁷

This researcher does acknowledge several places in the Old Testament where the withering of fig leaves symbolized impending destruction. Gordon Leah quotes Dennis E. Nineham as saying, “the fate of the fig-tree symbolizes the fate awaiting Jerusalem and the Jewish people and religion.”⁴⁸ Perhaps that is the case in Mark.

Verses 15-16. Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of those who sold doves; and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple.

The words, “*and entering the temple,*” signify not Jesus entering the sanctuary, but the precincts of the Temple Mount. Where exactly in the temple precincts Jesus encountered the moneychangers and traffickers of sacrificial animals is unknown. It is

⁴⁶ Leah, *Lifting the Curse: Reflections on Retribution and Restoration*, 261.

⁴⁷ J. Bradley Chance, “The Cursing of the Temple and the Tearing of the Veil in the Gospel of Mark,” *Biblical Interpretation* 15, (2007): 270.

⁴⁸ Leah, *Lifting the Curse: Reflections on Retribution and Restoration*, 20.

commonly said that Jesus entered the “so-called Court of the Gentiles.” But this is no more than a guess.⁴⁹

So while the physical location of Jesus’ actions in the Temple has been referred to as the “Court of the Gentiles,”⁵⁰ I suggest that Mark is using this location to reinforce the inclusive nature of the intended purpose of temple worship. What better way for him to talk about inclusivity than in divine worship, as opposed to being a place in which people were separated?

What is also surprising is that no immediate effort is made by the temple police, the business people, or the pilgrims to stop Jesus from interrupting their commercial enterprise. We do not have an indication of whether the disciples assisted Jesus or not. Maybe his surprising action caught everyone off guard, for this was, many would consider, the most radical thing Jesus ever did.

Scholars disagree over the actual meaning of this text. Most scholars refer to this text as a “cleansing,” indicating that Jesus is making a statement that Temple worship has shifted from its original intent. (Isaiah 56:7, Jeremiah 7:11, and 1 Kings 8:41-43). No matter what the original intended use of both Isaiah and Jeremiah, Mark’s usage of these selected scriptures is, I suggest, making his point about inclusivity and utility.

Other scholars, such as E.P. Sanders, think that Jesus’ activity is best understood as a prophetic action to symbolize the Temple’s destruction, thus the notion of “clearing” the Temple. This in turn would give rise to leftist and radical notions for a violent

⁴⁹ Craig A. Evans, ed. *Word Biblical Commentary*. 34B. Mark 8:27-16:20 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 171.

⁵⁰ Kirk, *Time for Figs*, 510.

overthrow of systems, i.e., the reference of this text with Jesus' pronouncement of the destruction of the Temple.

Herman Waetjen vigorously argues that Jesus was not "cleansing the temple."⁵¹ He further states that Jesus' ending the payment of the temple tax and the sale of doves terminated all activity in the sacred precinct signifying the end of the cult and its hierocracy.⁵² This, in Waetjen's opinion, is what led to the sacred aristocracy's scheming how they might destroy Jesus. This sacred aristocracy conducted business in the Gentile Court, but this still was part of the "household" of God. I'm sure Waetjen's statements are accurate, but this only further reinforces my opinion that Jesus was reordering Temple worship, even if it was not part of the sacred precinct. The point Mark was making was for inclusivity of worship.

Waetjen's argument can only be explained as a part of this greater pericope with the fig tree and prayer narratives being interdependent of one another. The argument that the cursing of the fig tree, the cleansing of the temple, the discussion surrounding the withered fig tree, and prayer teachings are all related to getting Jewish worship back to where it was designed and desired, "a house of prayer for all nations." Waetjen does make a salient point regarding the destruction of the temple, but that is more powerfully stated elsewhere, such as Mark 13:1-2 and not here in Mark 11: 15-18.

In cleansing the temple, Jesus condemns the social system of the Herodian Temple, without necessarily envisioning the end of sacrifice.⁵³ He is advocating for the

⁵¹ Herman C. Waetjen, *A Reordering of Power: A Socio-Political Reading of Mark's Gospel*. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989), 182.

⁵² Waetjen, *A Reordering of Power*, 182.

⁵³ Oakman, *Cursing Fig Trees*, 266.

eradication of unscrupulous business endeavors in the “household” of God. He is reminding Judaism of God’s call to make them a light to the nations, and for God’s house to be a House of prayer for all nations.

Verse 17a He was teaching and saying, “Is it not written, my house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations”?

The image of the Temple as God’s house, familiar from the Old Testament, implies by extension God’s household, thus the extension to Jesus speaking in the Court of the Gentiles. Jesus mounted a sustained and deliberate challenge to the religious exclusion of his day.⁵⁴ The Jewish Temple in Jerusalem was made up of concentric courtyards of increasing degrees of holiness. The Court of the Gentiles was a part of that system.

J. Bradley Chance and J. R. Daniel Kirk both give detailed analysis of Mark’s use of redaction criticism to weave Jesus’ message about authentic worship, growth, and prayer. Kirk gives the best description that this researcher has seen of Mark’s quotations of Jesus saying: “*my house shall be a house of prayer for all nations,*” as coming from Isaiah 56:7. Perhaps it is not sacrifices *per se* that Jesus opposes in the pericope, but rather the exclusion of some people from participating in the “house of prayer” that God has declared should be for all nations. In the context of Isaiah, such inclusion in the “house of prayer” did not mean that Gentiles would be provided a “place of prayer” in the outer precincts of the temple.

Mark’s presentation of Jesus’ sayings shows Jesus’ intent behind Temple worship. Jesus denounces the national and religious exclusivism, which denies Israel’s

⁵⁴ Paul Germond and Steve De Gruchy, *Aliens in the Household of God: Homosexuality and Christian Faith in South Africa* (Cape Town, South Africa: New Africa Books, (1997).

call to be a “light to the nations (Gentiles)” (Isaiah 49:6).⁵⁵ It is in this light that Jesus’ criticisms of the temple establishment cannot be adequately probed and understood apart from consideration of Isaiah 56:7.⁵⁶ This Isaiah passage describes an eschatological event in which the nations of the world come to Jerusalem for worship.

Criticism of Mark’s redaction of the Isaiah reference is valid in that it is postexilic. This not only represents a period of possible anti-Jewish sentiment on Mark’s part, but in the intent of temple rebuilding. Could this be another vision for rebuilding?

Furthermore, aside from the postexilic argument, i.e. Mark being influenced by anti-Jewish sentiment, King Solomon in his temple prayer of dedication, 1 Kings 8:41-43 states that the temple should be built in Israel so that all who are not in Israel can equally receive aid from God and enjoy God’s blessings.⁵⁷ This included “foreigners,” which Isaiah 56 did not do. This comparison between Mark, Isaiah, and 1 Kings is a powerful statement against the temple establishment, and further supports Solomon’s understanding of the purpose of the temple. Just because the temple has never served as a house of prayer for all nations doesn’t negate its original intent.

Verse 17b “But you have made it a den of robbers”

During Markan times, the Temple as a religious system existed to alleviate debts incurred to God—whether financial debts or debts of sin. Jesus encountered a system of

⁵⁵ Lamar Williamson, Jr., *Mark. Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1983), 207.

⁵⁶ William R. Telford, “The Barren Temple and the Withered Tree,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Press: Supplement Series 1* (Sheffield, England, 1980): 40, 143.

⁵⁷ Evans, *Word Biblical Commentary, 34B. Mark 8:27-16:20*, 178.

Temple tax.⁵⁸ Temple scribes recorded people's indebtedness. These debts had to be expunged in ways acceptable to the official interpreters of the sacred traditions. The buying and selling, as well as the money changing, supplied these needs. The people who controlled the Temple trafficked in goods that the Herodian Temple system mandated.

Jesus is ushering in a new system, one that is different from the sacrificial system of the Herodian Temple worship. He is ushering in a system that no longer prolongs indebtedness, but one where "all" will be able to share in worship.

Kirk goes so far as to say that we should interpret the words attributed to Jesus as communicating their true lexical meaning: that the people have turned the temple into a place where they envision themselves safe, despite idolatrous or unjust actions committed in other spheres of life. In other words, the citation is not a call to cease commerce or to purify the buying and selling occurring in the temple, but a warning against thinking that the temple will harbor God's people safely when they are otherwise not acting the part of God's faithful people. This takes hermeneutics to another level that requires investigation as a single entity.

Verses 20-25. In the morning as they passed by, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. Then Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered." Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, 'be taken up and thrown into the sea, and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you. So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

Immediately after the disciple's recognition of the cursed fig tree, Jesus says to them: "*Have faith in God.*" This contributes to Waetjen's argument that Jesus is initiating a new world order without temple worship. Whether this is spoken

⁵⁸ Oakman, "*Cursing Fig Trees*," 265.

metaphorically about Jesus' own death or the eventual temple destruction is open for interpretation. Jesus words are a model for action, but then again, he states in Matthew 5:17, "*I come not to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfill them.*" Waetjen's argument gets us away from the inclusive nature of Jesus ministry.

Jesus exhorts and empowers us to pray authentically and effectively by placing our complete and confident faith in the unlimited power of God. Through our total faith and God's forgiveness, we are assured of the efficacy of our prayer.⁵⁹ By forgiving others, boundaries are torn down and we become more of an inclusive community.

Synthesis of Biblical Concepts

This researcher believes that Mark's presentation of Jesus cleansing the temple, interspersed between the two fig tree narratives, not only represents hegemonic struggle, but that this struggle leads to Jesus teaching about authentic worship (inclusive of all), and bathed in prayer. Mark interweaves the fig tree narratives only to introduce the message of utility. These narratives of fig tree and temple cleansing are bound together by a social system. In contrast, there are other arguments that state that Jesus furthers the notion of the destruction of the temple, but this researcher has argued that this destruction talk was for a reordering and not destruction.

Reflection on and Theological Interpretation of Mark 11:12-25

This researcher does acknowledge that it is a possibility to infer that Mark's intention is to associate Jesus' words with Temple destruction, in light of Roman historical incidents. This researcher would offer a word of caution. Just as Christianity

⁵⁹ John Paul Heil, *The Gospel of Mark as a Model for Action: A Reader-Response Commentary*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 231.

obscures the cultural events behind scripture and Jewish life to further its cause, the same argument could be made of Jewish writers justifying theirs, in the midst of this emerging new faith. Such skewing would have affected the intended purpose of the text.

Since the setting for this biblical passage is temple worship, inquiry into biblical worship should be considered. Hebrew Scriptures give specific instructions as to how divine worship is to occur; it also gives the damaging effects when worship is selfish and meaningless. Mark, whether through redaction or political exploits on his part, uses Hebrew Scriptures, along with the sayings of Jesus that can have numerous implications for the eventual "church." What evolves from this interchange in the temple is a reordering of the way worship was conducted.

As stated earlier, my methodology is from the traditional historical biblical criticism approach. This researcher acknowledges some shortcomings in this as it relates to current postcolonial biblical criticism, with which he is unfamiliar. More study into this Markan pericope is warranted. Nonetheless, the researcher has raised questions from within the culture and "beyond the margins."

Mark's use of the word, *ethnos* or *ethnosin*, which means human race or nations or in particular, the Gentiles, introduces a worldview depicting the inclusive nature of God and Jesus' eschatological desire. This cannot be ignored nor negated. It is fundamental in describing the nature of God, and God's quest to be in relation to humankind, all ethnicities.

This researcher has been very intentional to sticking to the text, and steering away from giving personal beliefs and criticism due to the practice of exegesis and hermeneutics. Of course he realizes that he is not completely objective, but the researcher

has made every attempt to stay true to the text, whenever possible, only giving opinion after first making an objective analysis. Remaining true to the exegetical process can only give rise to further investigation based upon what this researcher has achieved exegetically.

This researcher can draw parallels between Riverdale First United Methodist Church being in mission to Clayton County, GA and its environs and the worlds of both the Isaiah and Markan texts. For the church to miss this opportunity to bear fruit would be as though Jesus were re-uttering those words of cursing the fig tree/or cleansing the temple, because of our unproductiveness or misguided worship. But Riverdale First United Methodist Church is attempting to engage the community, and ensure better relations with all people.

Riverdale First UMC is comprised of twenty-three ethnic groups. Yet as a whole, the Southern Crescent in which the church is located has more people, and more ethnic groups to invite, aid, and welcome into the "house of God," than are currently represented. Mark quoting Isaiah, whether rightly or wrongly, only reiterates the mandate of 1 Kings mandate to inclusive prayer; that inclusivity only expresses the need for recognition of all groups--indeed everyone.

Theological Reflection

Contextual theology prompts the serious researcher to reflect critically and constructively upon the praxis of current events. As Stephen Bevans states, "there is no such thing as 'theology'; there is only contextual theology-feminist, black, liberation,

Filipino, Asian-American, African, and so forth.”⁶⁰ In short, theology must be particular. It “is possible only within the context of culture.”⁶¹ It is within this experience and context of culture that this researcher will reflect upon contemporary times of the ethnic groups at Riverdale First United Methodist Church.

At the heart of such reflection is doing practical theology. It is a process of interpreting what is happening in Riverdale First United Methodist Church. It is not merely problem solving, as Richard Osmer states, but it is a mystery to venture and explore.⁶² The means to accomplish this task is through priestly listening, which is primary in the role of the researcher in narrative theology.

In Part Two of David Tracy’s *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism*,⁶³ Tracy centers his work on interpreting the classic and the contemporary through “analogical interpretive eyes.” Tracy attempts to answer the major question of how, “in a culture of pluralism, each religious tradition must finally either dissolve into some lowest common denominator or accept a marginal existence as one interesting but purely private option.” His proposition is that in avoiding privatism, we need to articulate genuine claims of religion to truth, which is similar to what Charles Taylor means by subjectivism. Both Taylor and Tracy present analogical theology and philosophical “self” theology from an “all is well” view. This can be problematic from the oppressed person’s point of view. Though sometimes they speak from a privileged

⁶⁰ Stephen Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology: Faith and Cultures*, Revised and Expanded Edition (Marykoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), 3.

⁶¹ Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology: Faith and Culture*, 6.

⁶² Richard Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 3.

⁶³ David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York, NY: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2013.)

viewpoint, they still both make monumental contributions to the work of the self and the ethic of recognition.

Tracy states that there may be some way to formulate our common hope and our uncommon experiences of the uncanny into the rubric of an analogical imagination. In many respects, the work of multiculturalism is not only about observing empirical data, but also a process of envisioning and realizing the authenticity of another's existence, in this world and the one to come. This process and conversation must occur first, before any talk of mission and vision.

In the local black church, no discussion of liberative practices could occur without the inclusion of the work of James Cone. Even though this researcher's primary emphasis is on multicultural work, as the demographics will show Riverdale First is still predominantly a black congregation, a fact that cannot be ignored. Yet, Cone's work enlightens all multicultural work due to his liberative conversation.

As is true of the other previously mentioned theologians, Cone fundamentally believes that theology is contextual. In *A Black Theology of Liberation*⁶⁴ he makes the claim that since blacks have been oppressed, legitimate Christian theology is a black theology of liberation. True liberation addresses the needs of the oppressed--those unrecognized and underutilized groups in the church. In this sense, Cone gives a critical and liberative eye to this research process and to the oppressed person's point of view, which is that God is with us--not an us-versus-them--but simply that God is with the oppressed. Certainly this notion propelled me in my research to seek God, particularly in the midst of the silent and the under-represented ones.

⁶⁴ James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 7-8.

Wesleyan Theology

Riverdale First United Methodist Church takes its historical theology from the Wesleyan movement begun by Charles and John Wesley. As a priest in the Church of England, John Wesley's ministry took a turn on Aldersgate Street when his heart became "strangely warmed," a transformation that eventually started a movement and later a new denomination in the U.S. This movement embraced the authority of Scripture and personal salvation through grace as the means of the transformation of the world.

Within Wesleyan theology, two historical documents help to describe the movement's spiritual formation and identity: The Articles of Religion of the Methodist Church and the Confession of Faith of the Evangelical United Brethren Church. John Wesley, founder of the movement that later became known as Methodism, wrote these documents in 1784.⁶⁵ They are helpful not only in informing us of the history, heritage, and order we received from Wesley, they also give us the foundational underpinnings on which the new church would form itself, i.e., its doctrinal beliefs.

Those doctrinal beliefs are: the importance of Scripture, beliefs directing us to God, beliefs giving us identity, beliefs strengthening faith, and the notion that theology is for all.⁶⁶ These are not to be confused with the much more recently named Wesleyan Quadrilateral, which describes how we make sense of life as Christians, specifically as Methodist Christians, through Scripture, Tradition, Experience, and Reason. As United Methodist, the Wesleyan Quadrilateral assists us as we wrestle with complicated and complex social and theological issues. The Articles of Religion and the Confession of

⁶⁵ Norman P. Madsen, *This We Believe: The Articles of Religion and the Confession of Faith of The United Methodist Church* (Nashville, TN: Graded Press, 1987), 5.

⁶⁶ Madsen, *This We Believe*, 10-13.

Faith more directly deal with our formation as Wesleyan Christians. Take, for example, immigration reform. We Wesleyan Christians may doctrinally regard immigrants as human beings created by God, but using the Wesleyan Quadrilateral assists us in looking at the theological tasks, which at times may conflict with our doctrinal beliefs. This is the tension we face as Wesleyan Christians between doctrine and praxis. We see it exemplified also in the praxis of various jurisdictions, or geographical governing bodies, of The United Methodist Church.

Now, what does this have to do with spiritual formation? As Wesleyan Christians, we are formed by our doctrinal beliefs, handed to us by John Wesley. Each one of those beliefs direct us to God. Many church conversations today are in tension, pitting traditional means of formation (Bible study) against relationship building teams such as cell groups. Some are less invasive and offer traditional means of Bible Study, whereas others are more engaging and constructivist in contemporary times.

Bishop Robert Schnase, a United Methodist bishop, writes in *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*, that effective churches today must be involved in intentional faith development.⁶⁷ Schnase states that today's church can do both styles of spiritual formation classes--traditional Bible study groups, as well as occasional faith building groups.

Several African American churches nationwide provide good examples of faith development in practice: Ben Hill UMC and Cascade UMC (traditional Bible Study groups) and Impact UMC's (cell and spiritual formation groups), Atlanta, GA; and Windsor Village UMC, Houston in TX (prayer ministries), to name four. Each of these

⁶⁷ Robert Schnase, *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 59.

churches have designed and utilized effectively the various routes to spiritual formation in a United Methodist context.

African American Wesleyan Constructs

Carlyle F. Stewart, III is a United Methodist pastor of Hope Church, a thriving African American United Methodist Church in suburban Detroit, MI. He offers twelve principles for prophetic ministry in African American church growth.⁶⁸ Of Stewart's twelve principles, here I focus on two: The Positive Norms of African American Culture (his second chapter), and The Three Principles of Prophetic Education (his fifth chapter). The general tone of Stewart's work is that of offering theological directives through the concept of "prophetic ministry."

Stewart proposes three principles of prophetic education for the African American Church. He notes that one of the basic problems that has crippled the black church in the past is the climate of repression, which teaches people not to investigate, challenge, or critically appraise the Scriptures or other religious tenets.⁶⁹ He further states that the prophetic educational program designed to help churches grow must be meaningful, relevant, and open to the needs and aspirations of God's people. This can be accomplished by both Bible studies and well-crafted prophetic sermons, for example.

As "Interpretation," Stewart emphasizes the need to develop a hermeneutic that supports the goals of prophetic black church growth. Churches must become innovative in their models and approaches. Programs that fulfill this directive include rites of passage programs, black cultural institutes, holistic spirituality, and even jazz as sacred

⁶⁸ Carlyle Fielding Stewart, III, *African American Church Growth: 12 Principles for Prophetic Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994).

⁶⁹ Stewart, *African American Church Growth*, 95.

music. The latter would be a natural for Riverdale First United Methodist in that our church musician is a full-time jazz musician.

Stewart proposes "Application" as the final principle of prophetic education. The church is good at telling people what to do, but often fails to tell them how to do it. Stewart says "the *how* will depend largely upon the *what*, and the *what* is predicated upon the *who*."⁷⁰ He is lacking in specificity on this last application. I surmise any proposed model or construct would depend on that last statement of how, what, and who.

Eugene A. Blair, in Stewart's *Growing the African American Church*, states that "we live in a time of tremendous change and transformation in all sectors of our society. The strategic transformation of African American congregations to meet these changes is an ongoing process."⁷¹ Blair and Stewart's work reflects the changes occurring at Riverdale First. Their call for analyzing, critiquing, perceiving, believing, thinking, and behaving all affect the congregation's spirit and mission. Auxiliaries of the church cannot afford only to hold meetings. They must be keenly aware of new horizons: the growing edges, the new areas of awareness. Effective churches recognize those horizons and effectively work the landscape of those horizons.

Critical Theory

Having identified and improved relations between the ethnic groups, there are several critical theories that influence systems relations in multicultural work. Stephen Brookfield states, "theory can be judged as useful to the extent that it helps us understand

⁷⁰ Stewart, *African American Church Growth*, 109.

⁷¹ Eugene A. Blair, "Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying: Planning, Guiding, and Sustaining Spiritual Formation in the African American Congregation for Church Growth" in *Growing the African American Church*, Carlyle Fielding Stewart, ed., (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 111.

not just how the world is but also how it might be changed for the better.”⁷² Paulo Freire reminds us that the banking concept of education will never propose to students that they critically consider reality. Both Brookfield and Freire offer critical theory to Riverdale First as tools to change the present reality of groups not recognizing one another into one of relating to one another more deeply.

In *The Power of Critical Theory*, Stephen Brookfield presents critical theory as a perspective that can help educators in tackling dilemmas, contradictions, and frustrations. He examines the work of theorists (Foucault, Fromm, Marcuse, Marx, and Herbermas to name a few) who serve as antecedents to his proposition. One can appreciate his implication of Marx as a critique of capitalism, and a critical study of hegemony: the dynamics of political, economic, racial and cultural oppression. He takes empirical realities and dominant ideologies, and critiques them. His work on critical race theory particularly enlightens one to the plight and pursuits of African Americans, particularly his attention to Cornel West’s prophetic pragmatism and political analysis. As a conclusion, he offers several areas of resistance to critical theory and suggestions as to how critical theory can aid the educator. Brookfield offers a framework to understand how adults learn, especially in the area of educational pursuits in multicultural settings and ethnographic studies. This will be discussed at a greater depth in the analysis section of this dissertation.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire has opened new avenues to understanding humanity, as well as introducing a new frontier in educating adults. This book is over forty-five years old, and yet it feels to the first-time reader like an invitation

⁷² Stephen Brookfield, *The Power of Critical Theory: Liberating Adult Learning and Teaching* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005), 7.

into a new and fresh world. Freire offers hope to the oppressed. Whereas Cone offers liberation theology to the radicalism of the 1960s in the black liberation movements, Freire offers liberation theology to the economically oppressed. He treats people as people and not as objects. Reading his work, one is left with the feeling that he treats people as God's emissaries--my words not his. They are delicate. They are precious, so precious that what we can learn from the oppressed liberates all of us. In other words, he sees us, he recognizes us.

Freire's concern for humanity is crucial for understanding and doing multicultural work. He states, "while both humanization and dehumanization are real alternatives, only the first is the people's vocation."⁷³ Just as we do not live in a post racial society since the election of the U.S. first black president, Freire notes that in the midst of so many societal advances, neither do we live in a classless society. This is what he offers to Riverdale First, subconsciously raising the question, "Are all groups represented?" and "Are all voices recognized and heard?" People coming to this church can seek recognition without having to fit into some economic or social class.

Conscientizacao, or learning in the midst of hegemony, is fundamental to Freire's liberation theology. The concept of *conscientizacao* is most helpful in the development and rise of consciousness and thought for persons who newly arrive in this country. Those new arrivals tend to retain the culture and customs of their homeland, while developing new levels of consciousness. In short, they merge the old with the new. In the midst of multiculturalism, *conscientizacao* not only is a measurable and recognizable instrument, but a necessary one as well. In some ways, Freire's work resembles that of

⁷³ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2000), 43.

James Fowler, who will be discussed later. Fowler builds on the stages of human development and the quest for meaning.

With the multicultural work at Riverdale First, Freire's description of *conscientizacao* can aid the congregation in becoming sensitive to persons at different levels. For instance, persons arriving on these shores arrive at different socioeconomic levels. It is incumbent on the pastor and congregation to recognize this in meeting the needs of those persons, as well as those born in the U.S. For recognition occurs first, joint ministry follows.

Jane Vella employs Paulo Freire's work on dialogical education as the centerpiece of her critical pedagogy. She believes that dialogical education can help make society a place of peace, and that ideally the classroom is a place of peace, a place of dialogue, not domination.⁷⁴

Many African Americans reject critical theory as too Eurocentric, and have thus formulated critical race theory as being more applicable to the African American community. Adherents to this group include Maulana Karenga, Bernard Boxhill, bell hooks, Lucius Outlaw and Cornel West.⁷⁵ Their commentary offers a critique not only of American life but also of the systemic relationship between American and Black American life. At times, this critique is viewed harshly because of the economic and assimilation pressures on the Black community. That critique only gives authenticity to the Black American voice.

⁷⁴ Jane Vella, *On Teaching and Learning: Putting the Principles and Practices of Dialogue Education into Action* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass), xix.

⁷⁵ Brookfield, *The Power of Critical Theory*, 275.

Whereas critical theory has offered a framework in assessing the research process, critical race theory has revealed the uniqueness and contributions of Black and African cultures, that operate differently than White or European cultures. This is why it is especially important in the church to make this distinction so that it may serve as a model for the wider community. Whether critical theory or critical race theory, either theory support Riverdale First in becoming a stronger congregation. Different does not imply less than, just different.

Spiritual Formation and Faith Development

***Stages of Faith* by James W. Fowler**

In his work, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*, James Fowler offers a means to identity, which he calls the quest for meaning in life, and for spiritual formation, which he calls faith. I extrapolate from Fowler's work how it sheds light on the search for meaning of person who arrive newly in this country, bringing their hopes and assumptions to this land of opportunity. They wonder where they will find opportunity—particularly as people of faith.⁷⁶

It is the commitment to life's goals that this researcher believes is where spiritual formation occurs. So how does spiritual formation occur in a multicultural setting? If Riverdale First can recognize others in their authenticity, then new arrivals to this country can find meaning in the church, with the help of God, as opposed to wandering aimlessly in the community. The church has the history and it has the tools to do this.

Fowler describes a theory of seven stage-like developmentally related styles or stages of faith: infancy, early childhood, childhood, adolescence, young adulthood,

⁷⁶ James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 1981).

adulthood, and maturity, each of which have particular characteristics. His appreciation of those who came before him (Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg) makes clear the origins of his stages of human development. At times his offering is highly technical in its psychological and developmental approach, but still the overall narrative is helpful in identifying stages of faith in one's particular context.

In assessing the relationship potential of members of Riverdale First, one has to ask at what stage of faith development each individual is. Simply throwing out the question of "Where are you spiritually formed?" is not sufficient. With ethnic groups in a multicultural setting, one has to ask not only where, but also how, when, and with whom were you formed spiritually? It may be with a friend in the church, or it may be with a fellow compatriot from the homeland, but recognition is occurring somewhere. Assessing the faith development of individuals is crucial. Without this work, the researcher is left working with assumptions and not facts. Such work is crucial in helping Riverdale First to understand its own developing pilgrimage of faith. Thus, Fowler's work helps us to understand the meaning of our lives, as well as our own spiritual formation and faith development, in a multicultural setting.

***The Evolving Self* by Robert Kegan**

It is one thing to discuss the fact that everyone has a "self." Robert Kegan states further that the self evolves. Drawing from Jean Piaget, Kegan in *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development*⁷⁷ invites the reader to a highly personal process of learning and development. He takes the reader on a journey from ego or personality development and the constitution of the self, to a broader construct of what he

⁷⁷ Robert Kegan, *The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

calls "the evolution of meaning." Like Fowler, Kegan assists the individual in finding meaning, which he believes occurs in stages.

This idea can be very helpful to Riverdale First and to persons seeking meaning and spiritual development. Life is about growing, living, learning, and hopefully evolving. Kegan calls this personal development. Personal development involves different aspects of the self: the incorporative self, the impulsive self, the imperial self, the interpersonal self, the institutional self, and the inter-individual self. Each aspect of the self has its ebbs and flows as it gives and takes. Growth and loss are characteristic of each stage in development.

In proposing these stages, Kegan rationalizes that in order to understand another person in some fundamental way, you must know where the person is in his or her evolution. To the pastor this is crucial, as it is to the ethnographic researcher. The pastor as shepherd of the souls of a church, is constantly assessing the psychological state and development of individual members of a congregation.

In the multicultural context of Riverdale First, assessments are never static, always ongoing. Particularly as persons come to this country or state or town from elsewhere, they are ever evolving, ever growing, ever learning. Their awareness of God, people, and things are ever evolving. Likewise, when persons from Africa or the Caribbean or the neighboring town come to Riverdale First, the church is evolving as it intermingles with these new arrivals. Transformation is inevitable.

Kegan's is a wonderfully informative work on the evolutionary stages and nature of human development and will aid this neophyte researcher in the evolutionary aspects

of recognition and human development, which are crucial in the cultural relations of individual members of tribes and ethnicities.

***In Over Our Heads* by Robert Kegan**

*In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*⁷⁸ Kegan brings together the cultural demands and emerging mental capabilities of life. Yet unlike others, this work does offer a useful account of the complexities of persons' mental demands, and the challenges of the various life stages. Kegan teaches and sympathizes with the burdened shoulders and mental demands of contemporary culture. His work explains a lot of attributes of Riverdale First members, both past and present, who are overwhelmed with two jobs and family, all the while dealing with the need for spiritual formation.

The demands of modern life in a multicultural setting reinforce the need for "recognition" and how difficult that can be to give, especially for the pastor, amidst everything else.

Dividing life into stages, Kegan proposes three orders of consciousness: social perceptions, point of view, and mutuality/ interpersonalism. How much emphasis there is on each order of consciousness will depend on the mental demands of each stage of development. With great sensitivity, he offers insights into the challenges of youth and adolescence. He shows how the logical-cognitive, social-cognitive, and intrapersonal-affective principles manifest from age two to adolescence and what a person at each stage is mentally capable of doing. In the chapter on parenting, Kegan adds to the previously mentioned three levels of consciousness that of institution or institutional affiliation, with

⁷⁸ Robert Kegan, *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994).

its call for clarity of ideology and self-authorship. He notes that adults have interior tasks and exterior tasks according to the decade of their lives in which they find themselves.

Kegan now moves into a most critical area to the work at Riverdale First, what Kegan calls "curricula." Here he seeks an individual's narrative. At Riverdale First, the pastor/researcher must be acutely aware of these curricula, for otherwise imposed values can erroneously be placed on expectations and understandings of various cultures. This resonates with Taylor's idea of authenticity of recognition. If persons are not allowed to be authentic, but exist in assimilation mode, then imposed values are transferred and a person does not develop into his or her full self. Kegan's "curriculum" is used in the researcher's model of a narrative model of spiritual formation in a multicultural setting. The emerging narrative is the curricula of the people.

***Soul Stories* by Ann Streaty Wimberly**

Whereas Kegan and Fowler contribute to the subject of the "self" in spiritual development, in *Soul Stories: African American Christian Education*, Ann Wimberly looks at the stories that frame the "self's" existence. Both offer identify of the self in spiritual formation, as well as factors contributing to the development of the self.

Wimberly states that "we live in an evolving narrative."⁷⁹ That narrative becomes more complicated when an individual moves from the familial setting of home in a foreign land and places themselves in a new foreign land. Their new context raises questions in them, forces them to evolve in some way. They often answer those questions with reference to their ancestral roots. In African and Black American communities, those ancestral roots are spoken of mainly through stories or narratives.

⁷⁹ Ann Streaty Wimberly, *Soul Stories*, 3.

Story telling is a liberative process. As black Americans, we've had an interesting journey. If we work with the assumption of our ancestors leaving Africa and arriving on American shores as slaves, then liberation from oppression is necessarily a theme, even in our language, even in our narratives. Our consequent quest for liberation asks: "Where did I come from?," "Why did this happen to me?," and "How do I get myself out of this situation?" These are common themes among individuals who arrive at Riverdale First. In developing models of spiritual formation, the researcher/pastor has to take into consideration the journey of the individual if he is to know in what spiritual direction he or she is heading.

Wimberly is most helpful to this dissertation project with her idea of the story-linking process for it connects self-recognition to others. Wimberly's four-phase model begins in Phase One by engaging everyday stories by inviting persons to reflect critically on case studies. Phase Two engages the faith story of the Bible. She pushes the participant to focus on a biblical text, entering as a partner, recognizing God's activity in the story, and responding to God. Phase Three engages one's history, more particularly one's African (Black) American heritage. Phase Four engages decision making, taking into account God's call for concrete action, and our own concrete response.

The process I propose for recognition of the other and creating an environment for bettering relations recognizes the identity of the self and moves persons to share and link their own narratives with others in their context. It is in some ways similar to Wimberly's four-phase model.

Introduction to Multiculturalism

Carlyle F. Stewart, III in *African American Church Growth*, with his twelve principles of “Valuing the Truth of One’s Own Existence” shares an understanding of the norms of Afrocentric values and culture which is helpful in the Riverdale First context. Stewart posits that “valuing the truth of one’s existence as a primary mode of being and acting in the world, is philosophically known as the legitimation of one’s beingness.” This coincides with Trunell Felder’s notion in “Counsel From Wise Others” of “identity and self-definition.”⁸⁰ Johnathan Jackson’s article, “Forming a Spiritual Wisdom,”⁸¹ illustrates this point as well when he states that “the self” must be the starting point in forming a spirituality of wisdom.⁸² The work of multiculturalism begins with a healthy sense of the “self,” recognizing the other’s self, and the relationship between the two. There can be no healthy discussion of multiculturalism unless one has a clear definition of “self.”

***Multiculturalism* by Charles Taylor**

Charles Taylor develops the greatest philosophical association between the self and multiculturalism in *Multiculturalism: Examining The Politics of Religion*.⁸³ This work insists on the necessity of equal recognition for all, which is at the heart of this dissertation project. The point of “equal recognition” is where Taylor rephrases the

⁸⁰ Trunell Felder, “Counsel From Wise Others” in *In Search of Wisdom: Faith Formation in the Black Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 95.

⁸¹ Jackson, “Forming A Spiritual Wisdom,” *In Search of Wisdom*, 164.

⁸² Jackson, “Forming A Spiritual Wisdom,” *In Search of Wisdom*. 164.

⁸³ Charles Taylor, *Multiculturalism: Examining The Politics of Recognition* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 41.

discussion of multiculturalism on the self. His book is not just a treatise on the self, but on the politics of recognition of the self in a multicultural milieu.

The notion of equal recognition gets to the heart of what it means to be Christian. It should be easily practiced in our churches. Why is it not? I suggest that we have co-opted a secular view of tiers, rankings, and classes based upon economic, social, and even racial status within the church. Taylor's point about equal recognition pushes the church to return to the basics of what it is to be a follower of Christ.

In my long experience of the church, membership was often based on standing in the community and the shade/color of one's skin. Even in today's church, there is still a question of who is welcome to come in and who is not, be that the homeless, addicts, gays, or children. Equal recognition challenges those notions of difference. All are welcome equally as children of God.

On the national and political level, the notion of equal recognition is often dismissed as liberal or egalitarian in order to enforce the status quo of dominance, even though for political purposes this dismissal does not erase the Christian concept of love of neighbor, God, and self. It may not be popular, but the idea and realities of a multicultural society cannot be ignored.

Taylor also proposes a new ideal of authenticity, one that adds integrity to the process of relating. Such authenticity calls for each person to discover their own identity and that identity depends on dialogical relations with others. Instead of resorting to stereotypical norms, integrity and authenticity assess the gifts and abilities of the individual self.

Taylor's essay on the politics of recognition has its critics, but I think it rescues a valued subject from unreasonable extremes. The mere mention of the word multiculturalism in some circles only elicits political extremist initiatives to keep systems and order to a privileged few. As Reginaldo Braga states that if there is an adequate critique of Taylor, it is that he generally speaks in the voice of the dominant culture, and only occasionally to that of the minority voices.⁸⁴

Taylor's essay, and the varied responses to it, offers a template for greater dialogue at Riverdale First between persons with differing political views. Riverdale First is no different from other churches in which some take great pride in deconstructionism, which leads the church nowhere. Taylor uses language that resonates with Christian virtue; language such as nonrecognition or misrecognition, equal recognition, the ideal of authenticity, the politics of difference, politics of equal dignity and respect, politics of multiculturalism; all such language gives an intelligent means to building relationships.

All this gives this doctoral project a valuable starting point and framework in working with people of many cultures. It begins with understanding the self, then moves to the politics of recognition, the politics of equal respect/dignity, and the politics of multiculturalism. This will be challenging to some who have been co-opted into the greater society's view that we must place one another on different qualitative levels of importance, and to others who believe that assimilation into homogeneity is preferable--which is what Taylor calls "a cardinal sin against the ideal of authenticity."⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Reginaldo Braga, D.Min. Advisor, The Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, GA, 2016.

⁸⁵ Taylor, *Multiculturalism*, 38.

For Riverdale First, or any church for that matter, to be effective in the spiritual development of its members respect for authenticity is mandatory and primary. The politics of equal recognition and unique identity calls for respect and equal dignity. At Riverdale First, it's all about recognizing and valuing the unique integrity of each individual.

Sources of The Self by Charles Taylor

Taylor's seminal and largest work, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*,⁸⁶ traces the development of an extensive array of sources concerning the modern self. Taylor postulates that who we are is an evolution from "out there" to an inward discovery of the self. Therefore, when we talk of multiculturalism at Riverdale First, we are taking a snapshot of the present, but it is only the latest picture in a long line of pictures in development. That has huge implications upon people who are migrating from other lands to our communities searching for meaning and recognition.

When an African comes to these shores, what sources do they bring with them? When a Caribbean comes to America for a better job, what sources are they bringing with them to contribute to the life of Riverdale First? These sources have to be identified. In talking to members from foreign lands, one begins to identify these sources, such as Roman Catholicism, Dutch Reformist, Muslim, Methodism, Pentecostalism, and others. When a black American comes to Riverdale First from South Georgia, what sources do they bring with them? When a white American female comes to Riverdale from Kentucky, what sources do they bring with them?

⁸⁶ Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 91-107.

Taylor takes a Eurocentric approach to the subject of multiculturalism and revisits Plato's moral sources and relates them to Augustine's "inwardness." Likewise, Howard Thurman in *The Inward Journey*⁸⁷ notes that the answers to our search for meaning lie inward. Such a journey inward can only strengthen the relations among the twenty-three ethnic groups at Riverdale First. In talking to and listening to persons of all ethnic groups, spiritual and faith development occur by linking the sources in their faith formation to your sources and mine. It is in this journey inward that Howard Thurman says we find meaning. Persons arriving at these shores are also looking to the church to give them answers and meaning for their new context.

***The Malaise of Modernity/The Ethics of Authenticity* by Charles Taylor**

Taylor's work, *The Malaise of Modernity*⁸⁸ is his original lecture in the Massey Lecture series at the University of Toronto, which later appeared in the U.S. as *The Ethics of Authenticity*.⁸⁹ Taylor's discussion on "horizons of significance" is particularly enlightening. He states that with horizons "one of the things we can't do, if we are to define ourselves significantly, is suppress or deny the horizons against which things take on significance for us." This is and is not true. It is valid in the sense of an oppressed person not being able to identify themselves because of their historicity of oppression; they are incapable of knowing and identifying themselves. Two cases in point: consider the "illegal immigrant" afraid to self identify due to fear of being deported; and consider the gay person afraid of being "outed" and being fired from a job or estranged from family as a result. The denial of one's horizons is warranted in both cases, I suggest. But

⁸⁷ Thurman, *The Inward Journey*, 13-14.

⁸⁸ Charles Taylor, *The Malaise of Modernity* (Toronto: House of Anansi, 1991).

⁸⁹ Taylor, *The Ethics of Authenticity*, 1.

Taylor is right that if, for example, a person has been raised in an environment of self-determination, then they have it within themselves to continue to determine their path, against this same horizon of significance.

In this presidential election year of politicking, Taylor's malaises and his talk about authenticity is ever in church members' conversation. So too is it present in the flood of protests in the aftermath of unjust judicial verdicts and violent attacks against blacks by police officers. Taylor's work offers a choice of who we are (in *The Need for Recognition*), which is a major undercurrent of the "Black Lives Matter" campaigns which we see from the streets to the Oscar Awards show on television. Taylor also suggests how we arrived at this point (*The Slide to Subjectivism*), which we see all too often in political campaigns; and how we can move forward (*Against Fragmentation*).

All of these works support the development of the self as crucial in our multicultural society, and in the politics involved in multicultural work. It is the process of the recognition of the self, and the changes that the self undergoes in response to societal and personal influences that keeps integrity and authenticity real, as opposed to placated feelings that lead only to superficial homogeneity.

Practical Application in Ministry Setting

Kevin Gushiken's work, "Spiritual Formation and Multiethnic Congregations,"⁹⁰ suggests several practical approaches to spiritual formation within the context of a multiethnic congregational setting. His background is evangelical and his approach to spiritual formation is congregational, which will aid this researcher in recognizing spiritual formative practices on a congregational rather than an individual level. Arenas,

⁹⁰ Kevin Gushiken, "Spiritual Formation and Multiethnic Congregations," *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 4, no. 2 (2011): 195.

influences (both individual and social), characteristics and agents, all provide approaches to spiritual formation in a multiethnic setting. Because his setting is congregational, this work is very practical for the local church. Gushiken makes the point that “the multiethnic church expression is shared community, embracing the perspectives and traditions of each ethnic group by inclusion in leadership, celebrating traditions, and respecting racial differences.”⁹¹

With increased diversity in this country, and attempts to curtail the recognition of multicultural recognition, Gushiken’s work and that of congregational multicultural efforts in general, makes this work on spiritual formation all the more relevant. Alongside local church’s efforts to remain homogeneous, Gushiken’s work offers a practical congregational model to multicultural spiritual formation. For Riverdale First he offers both individual and social arenas for spiritual formation. As a drawback, he offers more insights on spiritual formation and less on ethnicity. This researcher would have appreciated more discussion on spirituality in the midst of multi-ethnicity. Maybe Riverdale First can offer a model to the discussion on spiritual formation, all the while not sacrificing the influence and very visible presence of multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity.

Summary

A relationship exists between the modern United Methodist concept called the Wesleyan Quadrilateral and the conceptual framework of this dissertation. Our United Methodist forebears in the faith were “grounded in Scripture, informed by Christian

⁹¹ Gushiken, *Spiritual Formation and Multiethnic Congregations*, 196.

Tradition, enlivened in Experience and tested by Reason.”⁹² This is the Wesleyan Quadrilateral.

Given the importance of earlier discussion on liberative story-linking and the emphasis of lived experiences as important to narrative research, this dissertation begins with “What does the Bible say?” Scripture is the starting point and is primary for United Methodists in reflecting upon our theological task. Second, our Christian Tradition informs us through our Wesleyan Theology. Third, “How have we lived out our *Experience*, especially as it relates to spiritual formation and development”? Fourth and finally, through Reason, this researcher can test our theological assumptions through critical reflection, specifically in a multicultural community.

Thus, framing this researcher’s literature review around the Wesleyan Quadrilateral embraces our Scriptural undergirding, such as Mark 11:12-25, our Wesleyan theology, spiritual formation and faith development and finally, multiculturalism and critical theory as we consider multicultural relations and recognition of other selves at Riverdale First.

Like Fowler, Kegan offers assistance to Riverdale First in its search for meaning and relevance. Meaning and relevance are tools, which the church offers to new arrivals in their new context. This dissertation research project, with the aid of Fowler and Kegan, enables the church to find the origins, processes of people’s identity, habits or activity, and the phenomenon of multiculturalism.

Taylor on the other hand, provides the most contribution to this multicultural work. His thoughts on equal recognition explain the predicament of churches based on

⁹² Neil M. Alexander, book editor. *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*. (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012), 45.

status and racial profiling. On the other hand, and his point is that equal recognition brings us back to the true nature of the church, being Christ-like. In the arena of multiculturalism, work cannot be accomplished until the principle is applied. It is at the beginning stages at Riverdale First that our work has begun.

The demands of modernity call us to examine what is modern and what is religious. For the new arrivals to Riverdale First, they will have to wrestle with the applicability of the old and the new. Listening to their stories, as well as developing models of spiritual formation will have to take into account the evolution of the self in these modern and demanding times.

CHAPTER IV

THE MINISTRY PROJECT

Objectives

With regards to methodology, this researcher will use the “Five Stages of Critical Ethnography” framework from Cohen, Manion, and Morrison’s *Research Methods in Education*⁹³ along with Edward Wimberly’s *A Narrative Model For Long Range Planning*.⁹⁴ Cohen et al., offer the framework for the research, and Wimberly’s model offers greater depth to develop a working narrative model of spiritual formation in a multicultural congregation.

First, this researcher’s methods of using critical ethnography, as designed by Cohen, et al., offered the empirical data and research framework in addressing the problem of a lack of congregational relating to one another. Inquiry and listening is at the forefront of acquiring information from the various groups at Riverdale First.

Wimberly’s Long Range Planning Model was a launching pad from which to develop a narrative model of spiritual formation in a multicultural setting. This method of inquiry is about “getting people from different cultural backgrounds to tell and listen to stories, and how these stories set the stage for a larger story which eventually helps the church to tell a new story.”⁹⁵

⁹³ Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion, & Keith Morrison, *Research Methods in Education*, 7th Edition, (New York, NY: Routledge, 2011), 244.

⁹⁴ Edward Wimberly, *A Narrative Model for Long Range Planning*, June 1995, updated February 8, 2012. (A personal working document).

⁹⁵ Wimberly, *A Narrative Model for Long Range Planning*, 1.

Participants in the Study

This research project was prompted by a question from one of the church's own members about not knowing about the twenty-three different ethnic groups within Riverdale First. This ministry and dissertation project will study the twenty-three different ethnic groups. Out of 358 members of this congregation, this researcher, at the outset intends to utilize 81 random participants in this study: black Americans (40); white Americans (4); Hispanic Americans (2); Jamaicans (1); Haitians (3); individuals from: St. Kitts and Nevis (1); Aruba (1); U.S. Virgin Islands (1); Nigerians- Ibo (8); Nigerians-Hausa (1); Nigerians-Yoruba (1); Nigerians-Ijaw (1); Benin (1); Zimbabwe (5); South Africa (1); Liberia (4); Sierra Leon-Creole (1); Sierra Leone-Temni (3); Sierra Leone-Loko(1); Ghana (1); and finally one (1) Jewish American staff member who, knowing us so intimately, can offer keen insights of from another faith perspective. There are three other groups who are occasional members. These are from Korea, Ethiopia, and Kenya; the researcher will reach out to them for comments. This rough sampling comprises the researcher's initial impressions of the congregational makeup. (See Appendix D for the actual Ethnic Composition of Riverdale First United Methodist Church.) The research aims to reflect as fair as possible the actual percentages of the congregational makeup.

The researcher worked closely with two facets of the leadership of Riverdale First in assessing the research and ministry issue. First, the Lay Leader is a very trusted, mature, and open-minded person with whom the researcher can easily work. Second, the Pastor Parish Relations Committee is the ministry area assigned to work with the Pastor in fulfilling initiatives, goals, and plans.

Five Stages of Critical Ethnography (What is to be done?)

With regard to methodology, this researcher's project will use the five stages of critical ethnography that Cohen, Manion, and Morrison⁹⁶ identify, as well as an adaptation of Edward Wimberly's "A Narrative Model For Long Range Planning."⁹⁷ This researcher's rationale is that Cohen, et. al, offer the framework for the research, and Wimberly's adapted model offers more depth to stage 5 of the critical ethnographic framework with what should develop into a new model for ministry in a multicultural setting..

The five stages of critical ethnography are: 1) Compiling the primary record through the collection of monological data; 2) Preliminary reconstructive analysis; 3) Dialogical data collection; 4) Discovering systems relations; 5) Using system relations to explain findings. It is at Stage 5 that this researcher will incorporate an adaptation of Wimberly's model specifically to address the problem of a lack of congregational relations, supported by data obtained from the prior four stages.

Stage 1. Compiling the primary record through the collection of monological data.

This involves participant observation, both from this researcher and others. Using colleagues to employ this technique in an organized way will enhance the research by adding other perspectives. This process will validate, invalidate, or expand the researcher's existing perceptions and observations. This technique of fact gathering does have its weaknesses, for example, that observations are subjective. In reality, all research has some subjective element to it; the researcher is not completely divorced from whatever he/she is researching. But with sincerity and integrity, relevant information can

⁹⁶ Cohen, et al., *Research Methods in Education*, 244.

⁹⁷ Wimberly, "A Narrative Model for Long Range Planning."

be obtained. This tool will aid in compiling a description of the ethnic composition and utilization of ethnic groups in the ministries of Riverdale First, including its evangelistic pursuits in the church's environs.

A mixture of open and closed ended questions was utilized. They were not designed to question or challenge people's attitudes, but rather to receive what has happened in the interviewee's immediate or prior history, as well as what is already happening at the church. Intentional effort was given to get interviewees to describe events rather than to elicit anticipated patterns of behavior.

Clayton County, Georgia and U.S. demographics gave additional information regarding the racial trends and population of Clayton County, of Georgia, and of the U.S. as a whole. Such information can inform Riverdale First of its potential to do multicultural witness and evangelism in its multicultural community. It also informs the church about actual and anticipated regional, state and national trends, thereby preparing the church for those transitions.

Stage 2. Preliminary reconstructive analysis. This involves the "taken for granted" components of a situation. This analysis uses individual interview and focus group discussions to identify the value systems, norms, and key concepts of specific ethnic groups such as are among the Nigerians (Ibo, Hausa, Yoruba, and Ijaw). This aids the researcher in identifying value systems, norms, and key concepts among other groups, such as African Americans.

David L. Morgan's *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research*⁹⁸ reminded the researcher that such use of focus groups cannot replace the information gathered by

⁹⁸ David L. Morgan, *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research* Volume 16, 2nd ed. (London: Sage Publications, 1997), 8.

participant observation or interviews. Yet focus group interviews do allow participants from specific groups to participate in a discussion regarding their specific ethnic group, without interference from other ethnic groups. As Morgan states, “focus groups allow a naturalistic ability to observe group behavior.”⁹⁹ It is a useful approach when trying to determine cause and effect.

Carl Savage and William Presnell in *Narrative Research in Ministry*¹⁰⁰ push this researcher to “listen to the interviewee’s story scripts,” that is, to identify and honor the narrative in each person’s story. The first task will be to listen to the person’s history. Studying the culture, geography, foods, smells, and the music all helps to compile a rich narrative of a person’s experience. Each person becomes a living document. As Savage and Presnell state, “while there may be no agreement on universal stories or ‘truth,’ there may be agreement on the universal condition.”¹⁰¹

Mary Clark Moschella’s *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice*¹⁰² has changed the way this researcher does pastoral ministry, helping to dig deeper to understand the undercurrents of various cultures and ethnic groups.¹⁰³ She helps this researcher to realize that the preacher is not totally detached from the persons studied; rather, they are critical participants. Vital to this study and analysis of Riverdale First is the retelling of the personal stories, family stories, group stories, faith stories, their religious *habitus*, and cultural histories of each culture and ethnicity.

⁹⁹ Morgan, *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research*, 10.

¹⁰⁰ Carl Savage and William Presnell, *Narrative Research in Ministry: A Postmodern Research Approach for Faith Communities*, (Louisville, KY: Wayne E. Oates Institute, 2008).

¹⁰¹ Savage and Presnell, *Narrative Research in Ministry*, 39.

¹⁰² Moschella, *Ethnography as a Pastoral Practice: An Introduction*, (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2008), 5.

¹⁰³ Moschella, *Ethnography*, 6.

Stage 3. Dialogical data collection. This is where the participants' "voice" is heard. Interviews were used in conjunction with focus groups and ethnographic work. This process is utilized as a check against the information that the researcher received from the focus group on the assumption that what a person says in a group setting might be different from what that person says in private conversations. That information can be used to test hypotheses. This tool assists in researching the question, "What is the nature of the spirituality and the forces that hold this multicultural church together?" The more informal this process, the better the results tend to be.

Edward Wimberley's *Recalling Our Own Stories*¹⁰⁴ is written for religious caregivers, and brings a lot to the discussion of narrative research. As he states, "religious and professional caregivers are powerfully influenced by cultural expectations."¹⁰⁵ These expectations not only ring true for professionals but for congregants as well, especially when one has twenty-three ethnic groups in the same congregation. Wimberly highlights the concept of "mythology," which needs to be dealt with in multicultural settings. In the above mentioned book by Wimberly, he defines mythology as "the beliefs and convictions that people have about themselves, their relationships with others, their roles in life, and their ministry."¹⁰⁶ Here, "mythology" is only utilized when revealed by the interviewer/respondent; otherwise this process becomes a more exhaustive undertaking than is possible in this study; it takes enormous amounts of time to delve into what is objectively true or not true in a person's recalling of their life stories. Nevertheless,

¹⁰⁴ Edward P. Wimberly, *Recalling Our Own Stories: Spiritual Renewal for Religious Caregivers* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997).

¹⁰⁵ Wimberly, *Recalling Our Own Stories*, xi.

“mythology” cannot be ignored in listening to people who are undergoing transformation in a new context, such as many new arrivals to this church are.

Stage 4. Discovering system relations. This stage involves identifying other cultural involvement among various groups. Even within the observation of African groups at Riverdale First, there exists hierarchy and levels of dominance. Further study of the system relations between cultural and ethnic groups can only enhance the understanding of relations between these cultural groups. This can be achieved through every method in this research process by asking appropriate questions and more importantly by listening.

Since the setting for this project is in a congregational setting, pastoral influence is a matter to consider. System relations identify those markers of pastoral influence and pastoral transformation in the midst of multicultural exploration. It helps to know the personality and leadership style, ideology and theology of the pastor to recognize those influences. It should be easily understood that a good match between the pastor and congregational philosophy is essential in doing multicultural work. Even with good matches between the congregation and pastor, the changing dynamics of cultural and ethnic demographics may cause the pastor to change as well. The detection of those markers of change will aid in the system identification recognized and utilized.

Stage 5. Using system relations to explain findings. This stage seeks to explain the findings in light of critical theory and critical race theories, i.e., matching and fitting research findings within a theory. This will assist in the analysis of the concept of hegemony at Riverdale First. It will help the researcher to evaluate whether a new stage

¹⁰⁶ Wimberly, *Recalling Our Own Stories*, 4.

in the spiritual evolution of the congregation has been achieved and to identify where transformation is occurring, may occur, and should occur.

A Narrative Model for Spiritual Formation at Riverdale First United Methodist Church,
a Multicultural Church

For the practical aspect of ministry, Wimberly's narrative model for long range planning will be useful in this ethnographic framework. Wimberly states that his model, "is designed for local congregations and other organizations to identify the plot undergirding its basic activities and ways of being a church related organization."¹⁰⁷ In the context of Riverdale First, it will help the researcher understand what is already happening as regards spiritual formation in this multicultural setting and what might be possible in the future.

The undergirding plot at Riverdale First is evolving. This dissertation deals with the emerging plot and describes it in the framework of a narrative model, which can help to structure a future plot for the church. The proposed model is strategic, being narrative in process, geared toward spiritual formation in purpose and design, and multicultural in setting and mode. Whereas Wimberly's model relates more specifically to long range planning for churches, this researcher aims to apply, adapt, and expand it to a narrative model of spiritual formation in the multicultural setting at Riverdale First.

Summary

The ethnographic research process searches for the data of the multicultural ministry context. At the conclusion of the ethnographic process, a narrative model for spiritual formation will be employed. This researcher's proposed model is intended for a group setting, as opposed to individual discussions and revelations. It would be easy to

¹⁰⁷ Wimberly, *A Narrative Model for Long Range Planning*, 1.

incorporate a model for long range planning, or mission and vision development, into this framework, but it is the opinion of this researcher that that process will not address the research problem of better relations among ethnic groups in a multicultural setting. A workshop format, the researcher believes, would more easily elicit description and analysis of the congregation's basic beliefs. This participatory model will be used to identify what Wimberly calls "the plot under-girding the church's basic activities and ways of being a church."¹⁰⁸ In a multicultural setting, if underlying values and assumptions are not identified, then how can authenticity and recognition occur and be valued? This model addresses those concerns.

¹⁰⁸ Wimberly, *Recalling Our Own Stories*, 1.

CHAPTER V RESULTS, ANALYSIS, AND SUMMARY

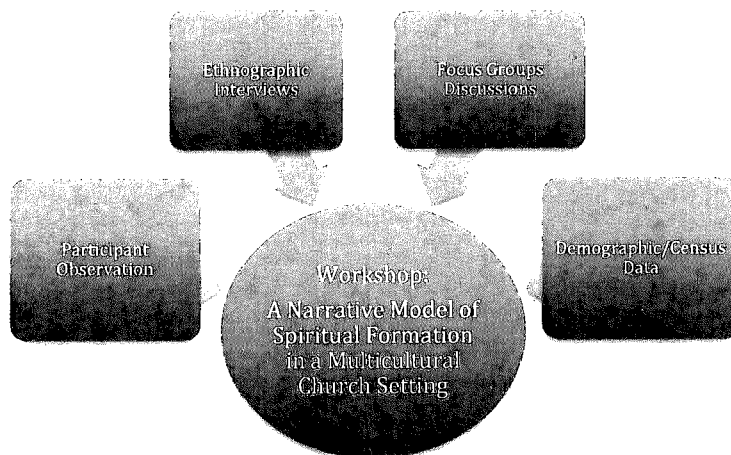
Summary of the Problem

With twenty-three ethnic groups in one congregation, Riverdale First faces the dilemma of improving relations among those ethnic groups. This project has shown that by developing an ethic of authenticity and recognition among the ethnic groups, and listening to and connecting one another's stories, relations between ethnic groups can be improved.

Results and Analysis: Introduction

The centerpiece of this research is the "Workshop: A Narrative Model of Spiritual Formation at RFUMC, A Multicultural Congregation." The research methods--participant observation, demographic data, focus groups, and ethnographic interviews, support and validate what happens prior to the workshop, during the workshop, and after the workshop ends.

Figure 2.0 Results and Analysis Framework



Participant Observation Results and Analysis

By inviting five United Methodist pastors to worship and preach at RFUMC, this researcher hoped to gain outside viewpoints and impressions of the church. The setting was for those collaborations was Sunday morning worship and evening revival services. Their preaching occurred over a one-year period, while their reflections and observations were shared during the intensive two-month research period of this project.

Table 1 Participant Observer Results

Level of Involvement	4 high	1 moderate		
Personal Perspectives (Bias)	5 Very Important			
1. Overall Impression	1 Satisfactory	3 Good	1 Great	Comments: Very hospitable, Friendly, Inclusive
2. Is there anything that stands out?	2 Accepting	1 Cool Spirit	1 Lacking in unity (bus stop mentality)	1 Good relations between lay leadership and pastor
3. Positive images	1 Engaging	1 Encouraging	2 Welcoming	1 Cordial Relations
4. Negative images	2 Visual cosmetics need attention	1 Coolness	1 Lacking in unity	Inclusive of diversity and yet superficial
5. Observations of various cultural/ethnic groups present	1 Observed no real racial diversity	1 Positive images displayed in the clothing of members	1 Multiculturalism not readily noticeable	2 Good to see several cultures involved
6. Inclusion: Worship	3 Average	1 Good	1 Great	
7. Inclusion: Ministries	2 Average	2 Do not know	1 Minimal/Somewhat participation	
8. Any	3 No answers	2 Average		

evidence of exclusion		Other cultures visible but not in leadership		
9. Any evidence of cultural mistreatment	4 No	1 Sporadic incidents		
Other Comments: Good Impression, Potential, Leadership Intentional About Inclusiveness				

Analysis of Results from Participant Observation

Overall, the five preachers invited to Riverdale First had good impressions of the church. When they were invited to the church, they were not informed that their visit had a dual purpose: preaching and serving as a participant in this research process. Therefore, their observations were descriptions after the fact/or event.

As to personal perspectives or biases, all five pastors communicated that multiculturalism was very important in the life of this church. However, I believe that this response was influenced by my introduction of the subject, because later these same individuals noted that they did not observe noticeable multicultural communities within Riverdale First.

The descriptions of the site and general observations were mixed. Two of the preachers stated that there was "no real diversity or multiculturalism not noticeable." I believe this to be the normative expectation of persons who have no vested interest in multiculturalism but are merely observers; they see what they choose to see, and not what exists. In later discussion in the focus groups, some stated this observation as a belief. With regards to inclusion and exclusion, the visiting preachers observed that the worship services were generally inclusive though they also noted a lack of multicultural diversity in the leadership.

Demographics of Riverdale First along with Census Data Results and Analysis

When this researcher first began this process, he believed that there was a general impression that Africans and Caribbean people were well integrated into the church, and that no noticeable differences in participation existed. The participant observer process mentioned reinforced this view. Yet the demographic data from the investigative process of interviews revealed not just White, Black, African, and Caribbean cultures, but a total of twenty-three distinct cultures within this one congregation, all demanding recognition.

Appendix D lists all various cultural groups at Riverdale First. Within the black culture, eleven U.S. states are represented. A deeper look at this group reveals that subcultures exist between the northern, southern, urban, and rural areas. But individuals in these subcultures typically share the same language—English-- which makes the African cultures distinctly different, given their many tribes and “tongues.”

While there is a small White representation at Riverdale First, individuals within this group are noticeably different. For example, rural white attitudes in Kentucky are affected by Southern Baptist ideology, whereas, white rural attitudes in Georgia are more evangelical in tone. Whites from Louisiana have been at Riverdale First only a very short time, and more research on them is necessary. The last group within white culture at Riverdale First is from the U.S. Midwest; members of this group tend to be very accommodating of different racial attitudes and identities.

The largest group studied is members of various African cultures, which comprises seven countries and twelve tribes. Each tribe has its own language and culture. The Nigerians comprise the largest group, but this is divided into Igbo, Yoruba, Housa, Falani, and Ijaw members. Members from Benin are recognized as distinct, yet within the

Riverdale First context they tend to affiliate with the Nigerians. Next, are the three tribes from Sierra Leone, the Lo, Creole and Temni tribes. The next group is Zulu but from two different African countries, South Africa and Zimbabwe. More specifically, the South African tribe is Zulu and the Zimbabwean tribe is Ndebele Zulu. The Kru tribe represents the Liberians. The last African group identified is the Ghanaians, from the tribe of Gha.

Individuals from St. Kitts and Nevis, Jamaica, Aruba, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and El Salvador represent the Caribbean and Hispanic cultures. Even though their English accents are heavily British, their need for recognition is equal to that of the Africans.

This leaves the last composite group of Jewish (Staff), Kenyan, and Korean visitors. Of particular note is Riverdale First's keyboard player who is a member of the Jewish faith. Though he has left other churches where Judaism was put down, he feels accepted at Riverdale First. The Kenyans and Koreans are long standing visitors to the church, but have yet to join. Apparently they have found not only acceptance at Riverdale First, but also a place to grow spiritually.

Analysis of Results from Congregational Demographics and Census Data

A demographic shift is taking place not only in the U.S., the State of Georgia, Clayton County, and the City of Riverdale, but at Riverdale First United Methodist Church as well. As the city, county, and the church become more ethnically diverse, new evangelistic opportunities arise for the church. But such opportunities demand that the church prepare itself for transformation that must happen if the diversity of cultures and beliefs is not to result in conflict.

Ethnographic Interviews Results and Analysis

There are twenty-three ethnic /cultural groups that comprise the membership Riverdale First United Methodist Church. The original intent of the researcher was to utilize eighty-one participants in this ethnographic interview process: black Americans (40); white Americans (4); Hispanic Americans (2); Jamaicans (1); Haitians (3); participants from: St. Kitts and Nevis (1); Aruba (1); the U.S. Virgin Islands (1); Nigerians- Ibo (8), Nigerians-Hausa (1), Nigerians-Yoruba (1); Nigerians-Ijaw (1), Benin (1); Zimbabwe (5); South African (1); Liberia (4); Sierra Leone-Creole (1); Sierra Leone-Temni (3); Sierra Leone-Loko (1); Ghana (1); plus one Jewish American (1) staff member who, by knowing us so intimately, can offer keen insights of from another faith perspective. There are three other groups from Korea, Ethiopia, and Kenya who are occasional members; the researcher will reach out to them for comments too. This rough sampling comprises the researcher's initial impressions of the congregational makeup.

However, because one third of the sample was not willing to be involved in this process, and another one third of the original eighty-one intended participants work two or more jobs, it became increasingly evident that they were not going to be available for interviews. Of the original eighty-one intended interviewees, the researcher was able to enlist twenty-five to complete this ethnographic process. Yet the size of the survey is not as important as the great insights and revelations from these interviews.

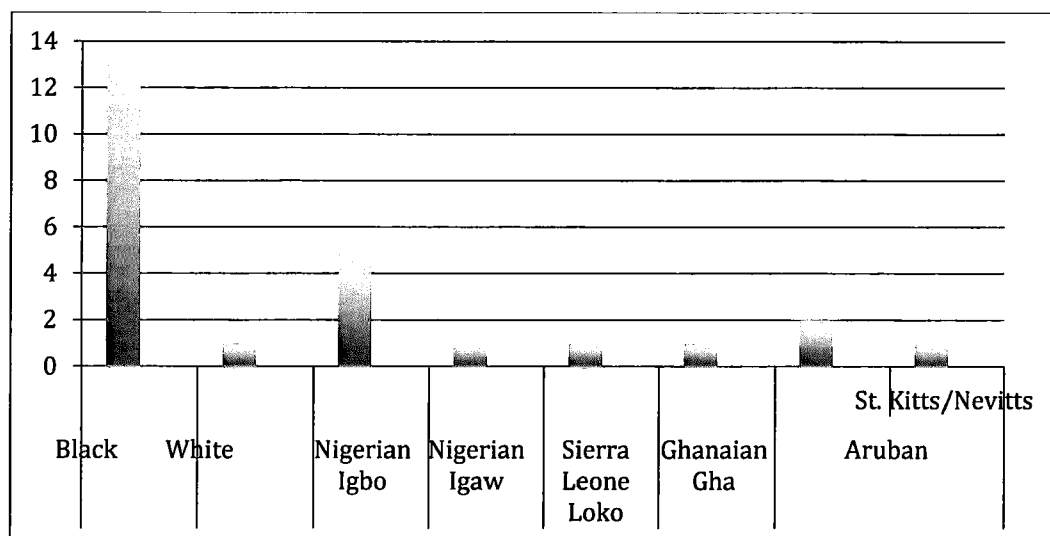
The surveys questions fall under six major headings--about: Cultural and Ethnic Identity, Spiritual Assumptions, Spiritual Values, Spiritual Needs, Spiritual Assessment of RFUMC, and Spiritual Fulfillment at RFUMC. Some questions were closed, but the

majority were open-ended questions. The aim was to elicit responses in the respondents' own words rather than through pre-set categories. Questions and responses follow.

1. What is your cultural or ethnic identity?

Black	13	White	1	Nigerian Igbo	5
Nigerian Igaw	1	Sierra Leone Loko	1	Ghanaian Gha	1
Aruban	2	St. Kitts/Nevitts	1		

Figure 2.1 Ethnic Identity



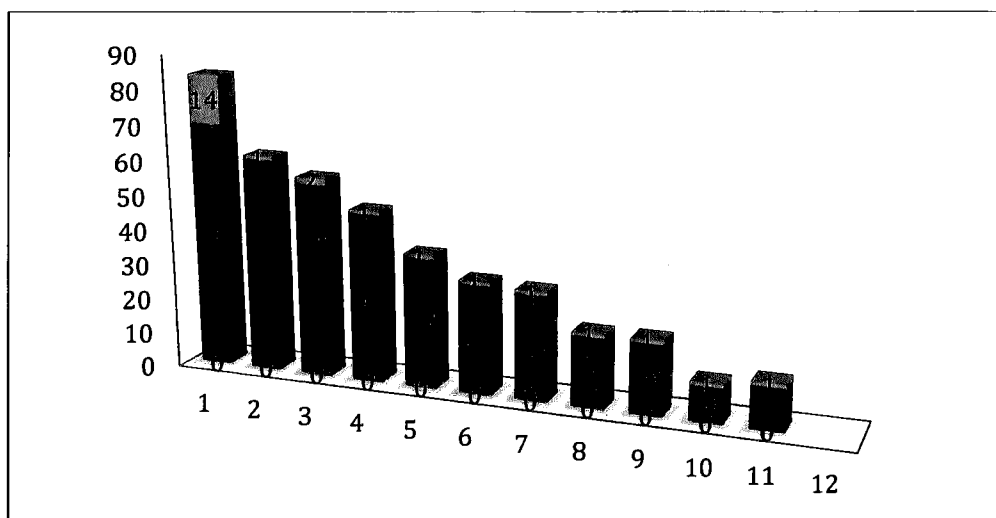
Analysis

Of the twenty-five individuals surveyed, over one-half were black; of the entire congregation, two thirds are black. The white and Caribbean interviewees also reflected the congregational percentages. Of the direct descendants of Africa, the number above represent the congregational percentages, with the exception of the Sierra Leone; congregational percentages are higher than those interviewed. Therefore, the ethnic makeup of the interviewees more or less accurately reflected the composition of the congregation as a whole.

2. How long have you been in the US?

1. US All of Life	70 yrs	14
2. Zimbabwean	61 yrs	1
3. Aruban	55 yrs	2
4. St. Kitts and Nevis	48 yrs	1
5. Nigerian	37 yrs	1
6. Ghanaian	31 yrs	1
7. Nigerian	30 yrs	1
8. Sierra Leone	20 yrs	1
9. Nigerian	20 yrs	1
10. Nigerian	10 yrs	1
11. Nigerian	12 yrs	1

Figure 2.2 Length of Stay in the U.S.



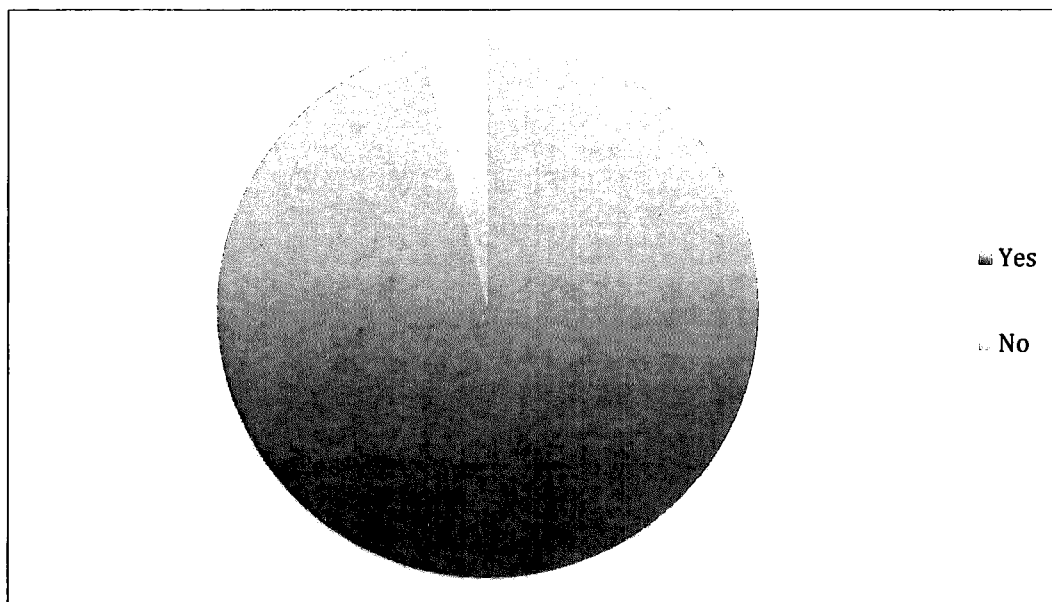
Analysis

Regarding the length of time particular members have lived in the U.S, of course these numbers would be skewed due to the fact that the U.S.- born members comprise two-thirds of the congregation. It is understandable, therefore, that the higher percentages from this survey would reflect those US-born members. But it was helpful to verify statistically that the Africans' and Caribbean members' length of stay in this country are pretty common across the board, ranging from twelve to forty-eight years.

3. Were you a Christian prior to coming to Riverdale First United Methodist church?

Yes 24 No 1

Figure 2.3 Prior Christianity



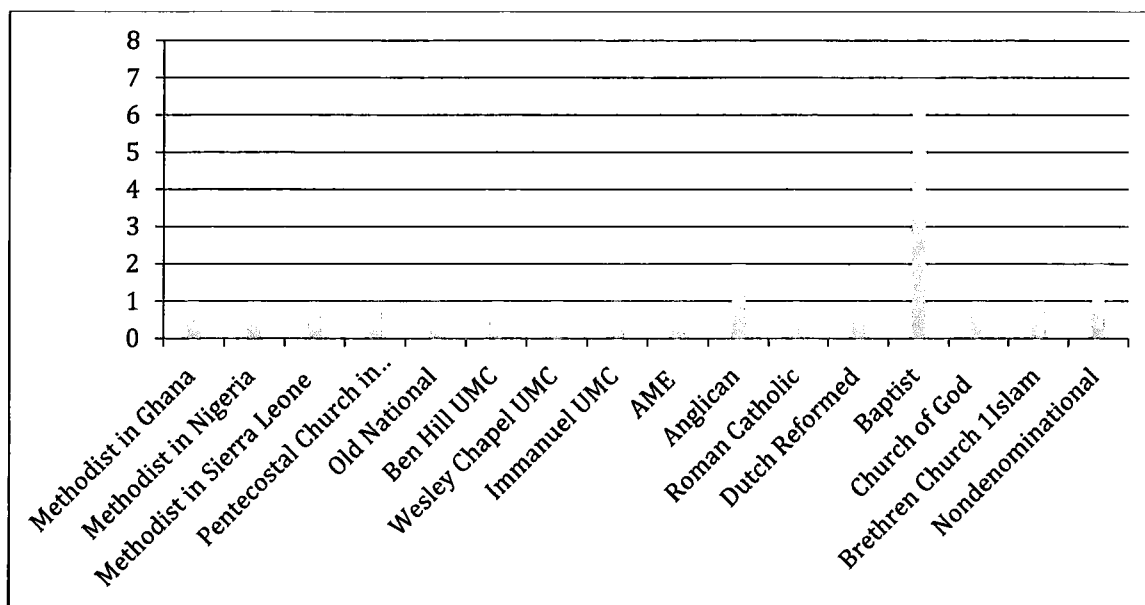
Analysis

That twenty-four of the twenty-five interviewees were Christians prior to their arrival at Riverdale First makes the task of integration much easier—since almost all interviewees have something important in common—their faith. The results suggest it could have been helpful to pursue this line of questioning further to ask about previous denominational affiliation and about theological bent.

4. What was your denomination in your original context?

Methodist in Ghana	1	Old National UMC	1	Anglican	2
Methodist in Nigeria	1	Ben Hill UMC	1	AME	1
Methodist in Sierra Leone	1	Wesley Chapel UMC	1	Brethren Church	1
Pentecostal Church in Nigeria	1	Immanuel UMC	1	Dutch Reformed	1
Baptist	7	Roman Catholic	1	Church of God	1
Islam	1	Nondenominational	2		

Figure 2.4 Original Faith Denomination



Analysis

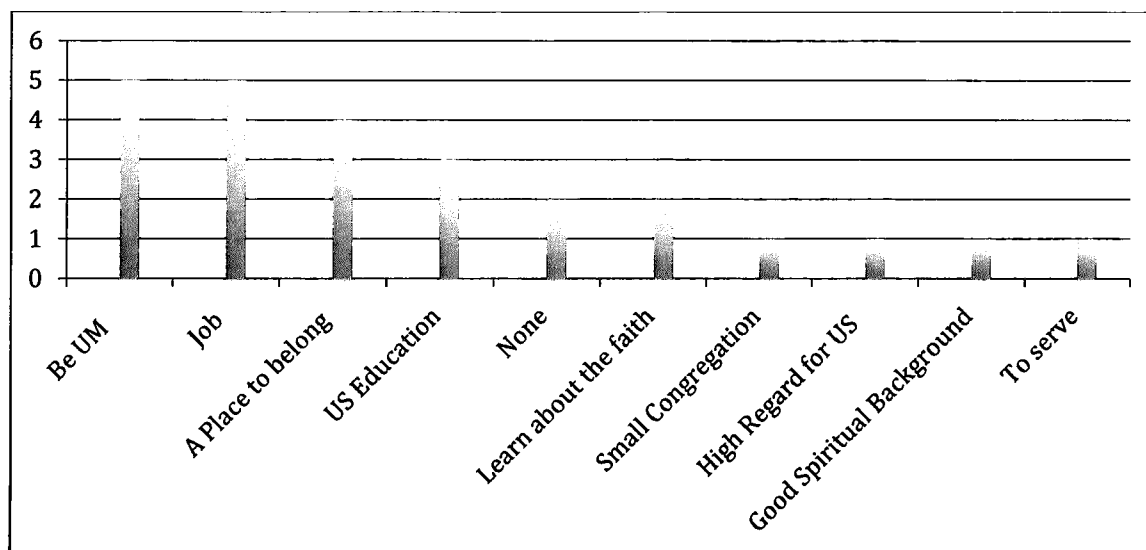
It is a commonly held belief in black churches throughout the U.S. Bible Belt that most of the members of local churches are either Baptist or former Baptists. The data from Riverdale First confirms that commonly held belief. Equally illuminating is the variety of the (former) denominational affiliations among members. Five are Methodist affiliated denominations, and if you include that with Anglicans and Roman Catholics, it signifies that one half of the persons interviewed in this congregation are used to some highly connectional and episcopal form of church government.

Spiritual Assumptions

5. What was your expectation coming to RFUMC?

Be UM	5
Job	5
A place to belong	4
US Education	3
None	2
Learn about the faith	2
Small congregation	1
High regard for US	1
Good spiritual background	1
To serve	1

Figure 2.5 Expectation

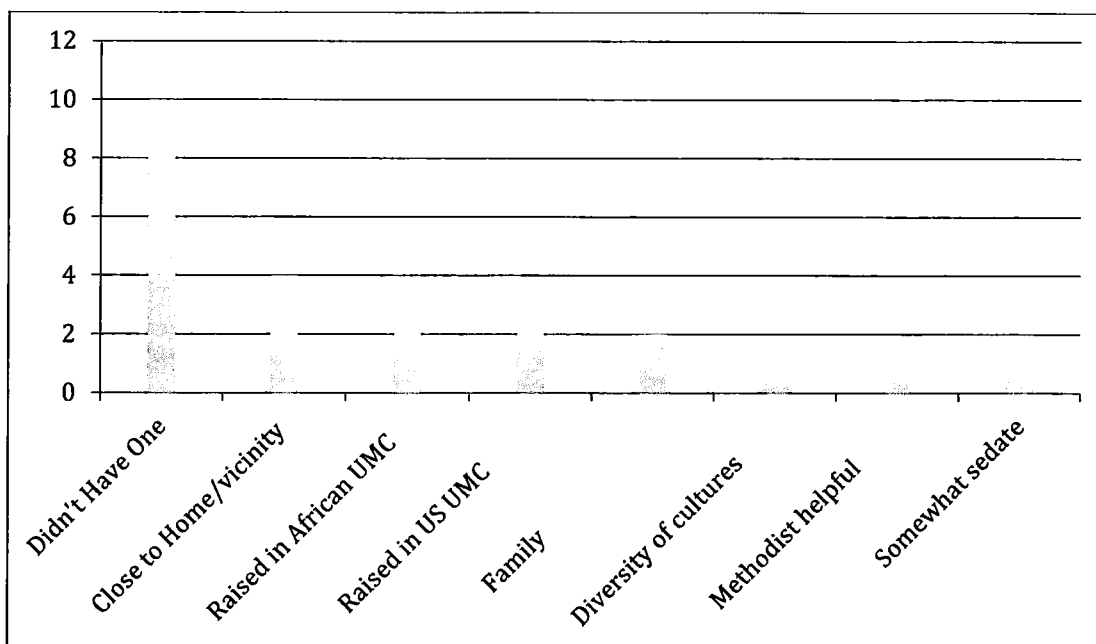


Regarding expectations of Riverdale First, one fifth interviewed stated a desire to know what it means to be United Methodist. Another fifth interviewed came looking for a job or wanting the church to help them look for a job. The remainder of the responses is varied, which indicates that people come to the church looking for spirituality/a faith community in a variety of ways.

6. What was your impression of the UMC prior to your arrival at RFUMC?

Didn't have one	10	Close to Home/vicinity	4
Raised in African UMC	3	Raised in US UMC	3
Family	2	Diversity of cultures	1
Methodist helpful	1	Somewhat sedate	1

Figure 2.6 Impression of UMC



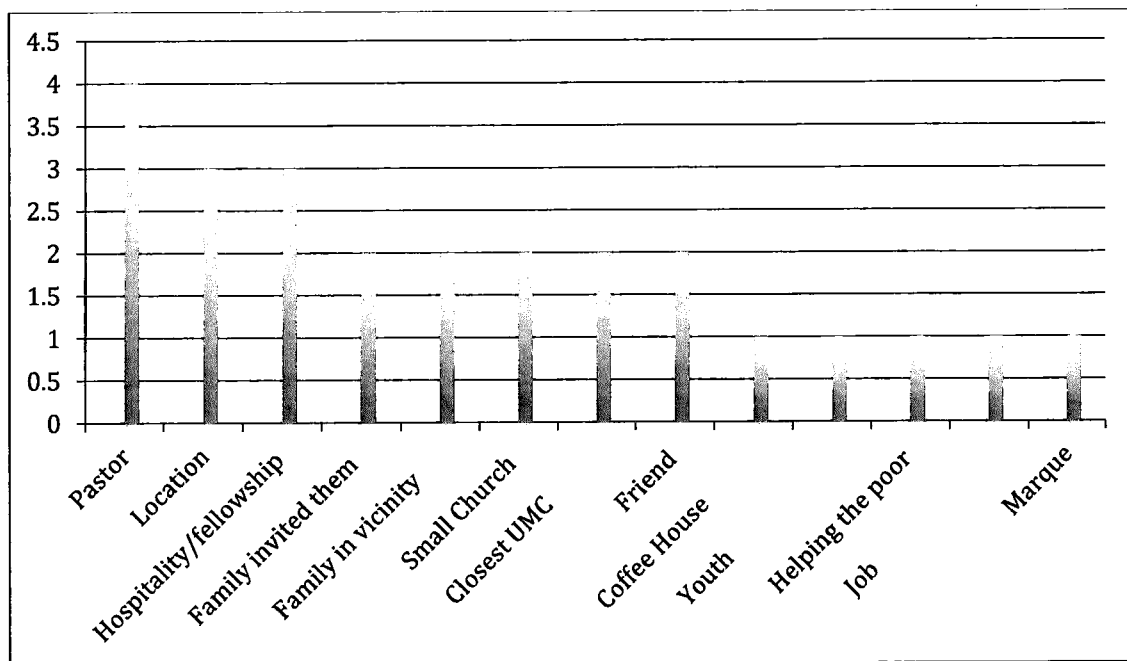
Analysis

Almost one half of those interviewed, didn't have an impression or at least didn't express an impression of The UMC. This may reflect the lack of relationship expressed earlier. I believe that where there is no relationship, there is less likely to be an awareness of one's history and mission, which is an assumption behind this dissertation. Regarding the remainder interviewed, the results are varied; some came simply because this church was in their neighborhood, or were joining family members already worshipping there, some felt an affinity with the cultures represented, and some expected a sedate worship experience.

7. What attracted you to RFUMC?

Pastor	4
Location	3
Hospitality/fellowship	3
Family invited them	2
Family in vicinity	2
Small Church	2
Closest UMC	2
Friend	2
Coffee House	1
Youth	1
Helping the poor	1
Job	1
Marque	1

Figure 2.7 Attraction to Riverdale First



Analysis

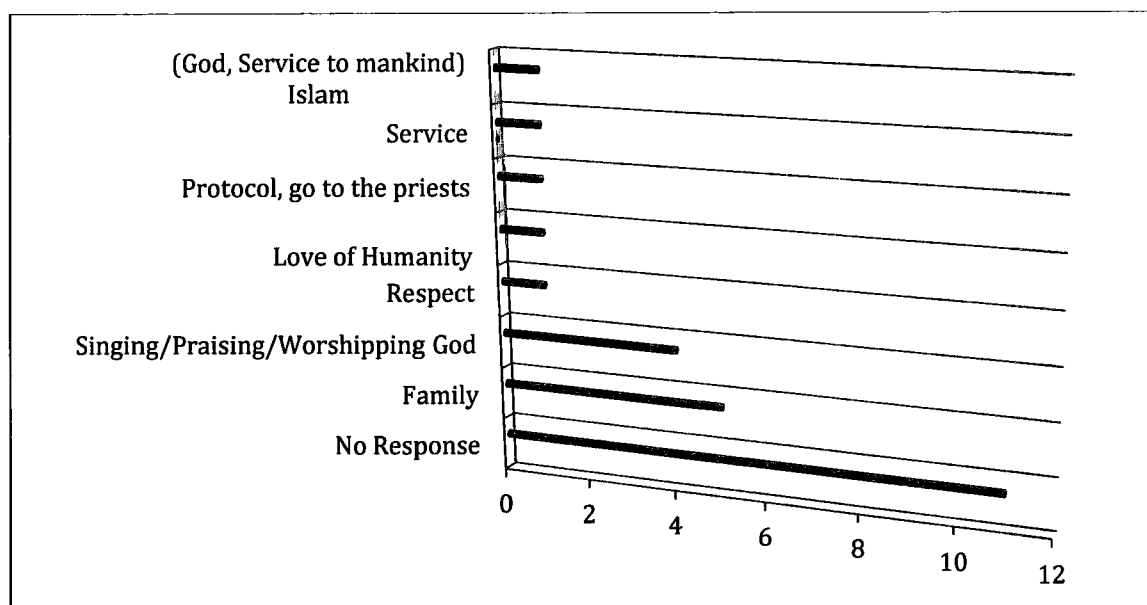
Persons were attracted to Riverdale First for four main reasons: pastoral influence, location, hospitality, family/friend, and ministries of the church. This aids the pastor and church leadership in charting a course for the future of the church.

Spiritual Values

8. What are the values of your culture/previous church/family life that you bring to RFUMC? (i.e., what's most important to you regarding church, family, community, and society?)

No Response	11
Family	5
Singing/Praising/Worshipping God	4
Respect	1
Love of Humanity	1
Protocol, go to the priests	1
Service	1
Islam (God, Service to mankind)	1

Figure 2.8 Values You Bring to Riverdale First



Analysis

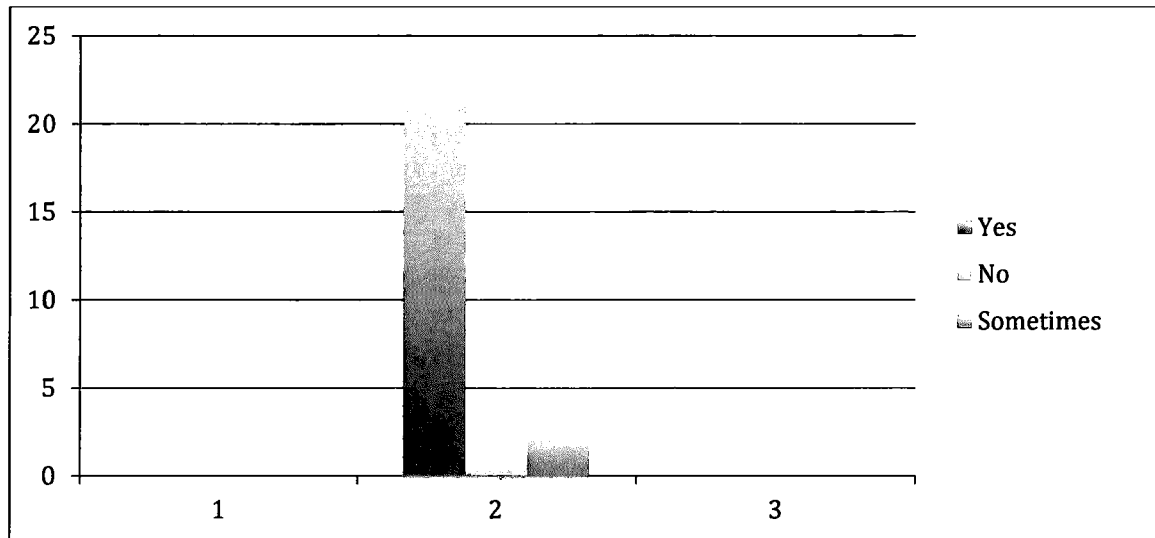
Regarding values brought from the interviewees' past experience to this congregation, I believe that there was both a general skepticism and inability to identify those values. I believe this is due to the fact that as the church has grown, nurture has been lacking. I assume that because they do not feel grounded and recognized, participants' responses were vague, if they answered at all.

Spiritual Needs

9. Do you feel as though Riverdale First United Methodist Church is a welcoming or hospitable church?

Yes 21 No 1 Sometimes 3

Figure 2.9 Hospitality of Riverdale First



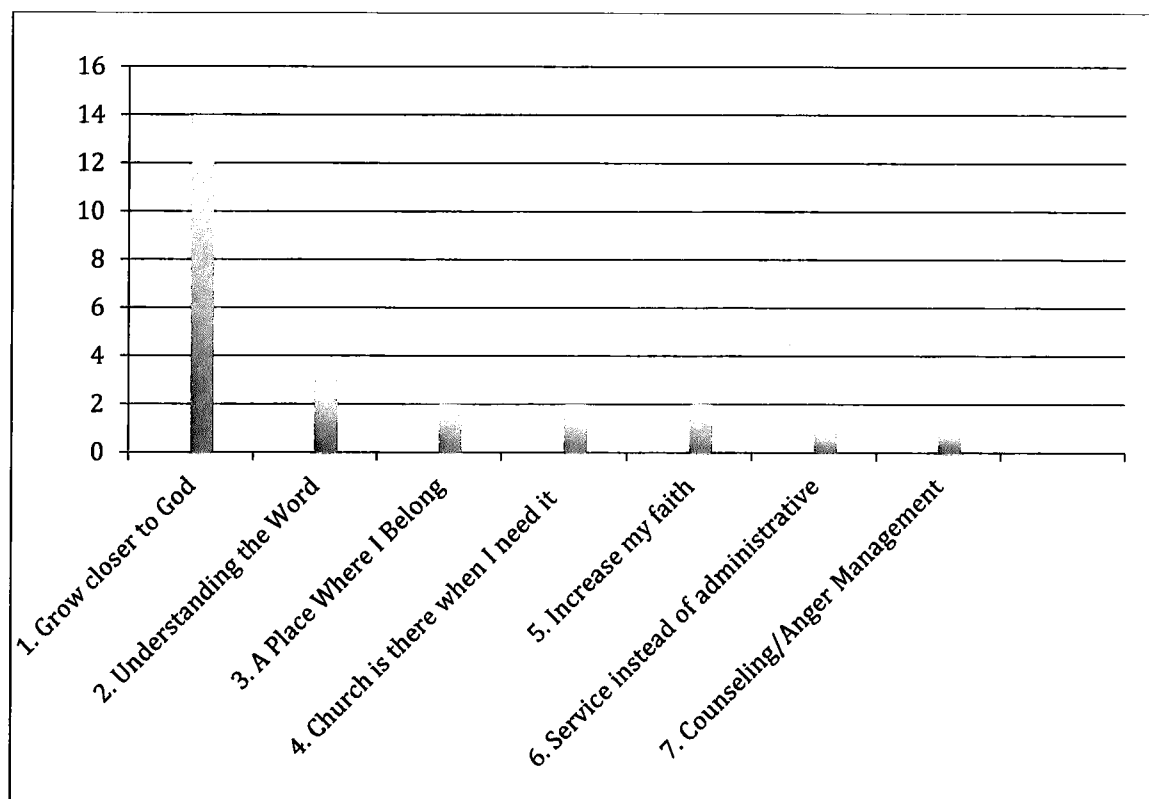
Analysis

The normative response to this question is that “all churches consider themselves hospitable.” Therefore, these numbers only state the obvious. To explore this question more deeply, I will have to ask other questions at other times.

10. What are your spiritual needs?

1. Grow closer to God	14
2. Understanding the Word	3
3. A Place Where I Belong	2
4. Church is there when I need it	2
5. Increase my faith	2
6. Service instead of administrative	1
7. Counseling/Anger Management	1

Figure 2.10 Spiritual Needs



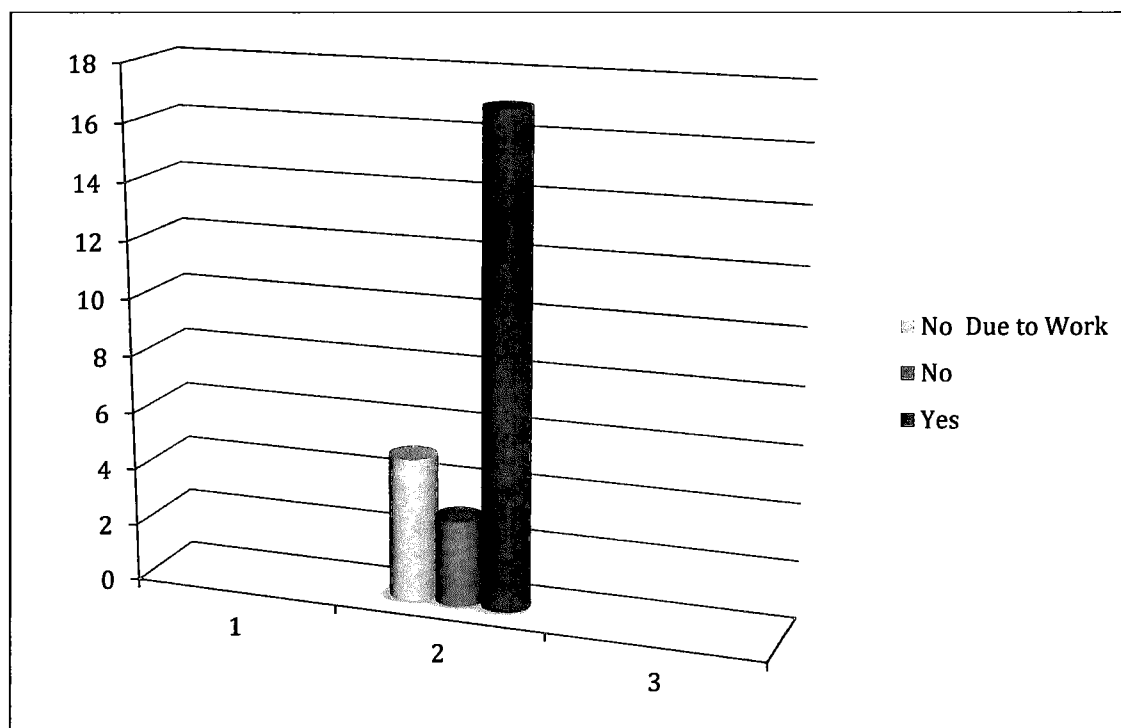
Analysis

As to spiritual needs, two-thirds of the respondents desired to grow closer to God. This aids the researcher, church planner, and pastor in developing programs and ministries for the church. The remainder of the responses are varied.

11. Do you attend a Sunday School class or Bible Study Class at Riverdale First United Methodist Church (If not, where, or why not?)

Yes	17
No (Due to Work)	5
No	3

Figure 2.11 Sunday School/Bible Study Class Attendance



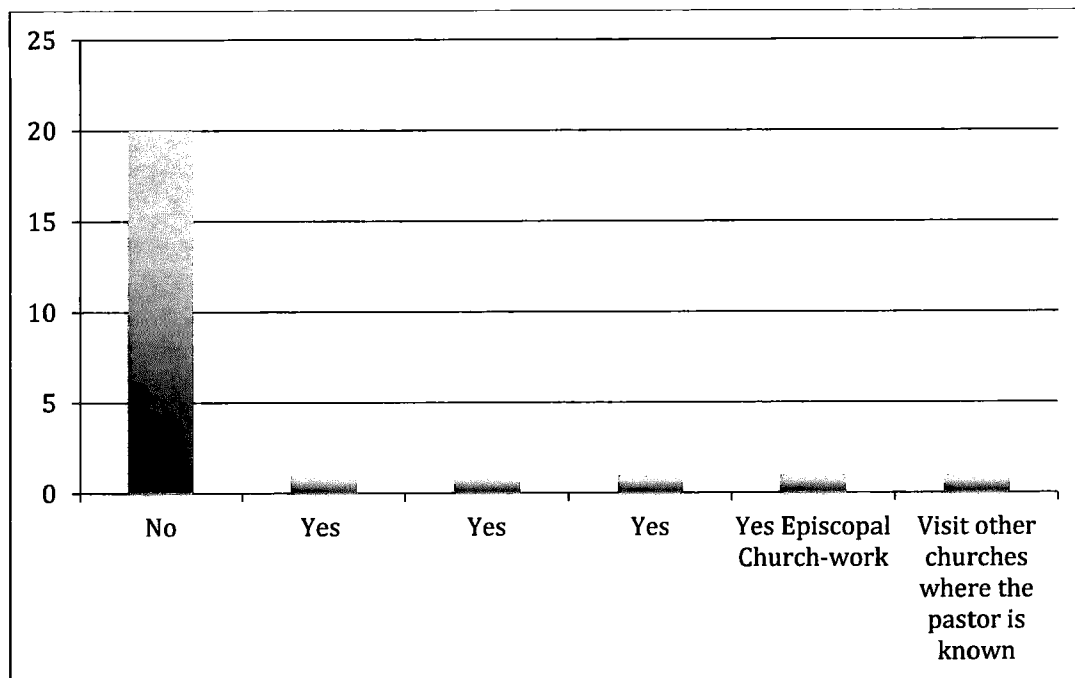
Analysis

On the surface, that seventeen of twenty-five interviewees state that they are in a Sunday School class or Bible Study class, should normally be a good sign. However, these numbers do not reflect the church as a whole. Those interviewed are generally among the most involved members anyway. (The regular weekly attendance of the Sunday School is eight to ten out of a congregation of three hundred and twelve; and only twenty-five of three hundred and twelve attend Bible Study.) What these ethnographic interviews do at least show is that the bulk of the interviewees are involved in spiritual development.

12. In addition to Riverdale First United Methodist Church, do you attend worship, bible study or other spiritual nurture classes anywhere?

No	20
Yes Redan UMC	1
Yes Circle of Prayer	1
Yes African Christian Fellowship	1
Yes Episcopal Church	1
Visit other churches where the pastor is known	1

Figure 2.12 Attendance Elsewhere



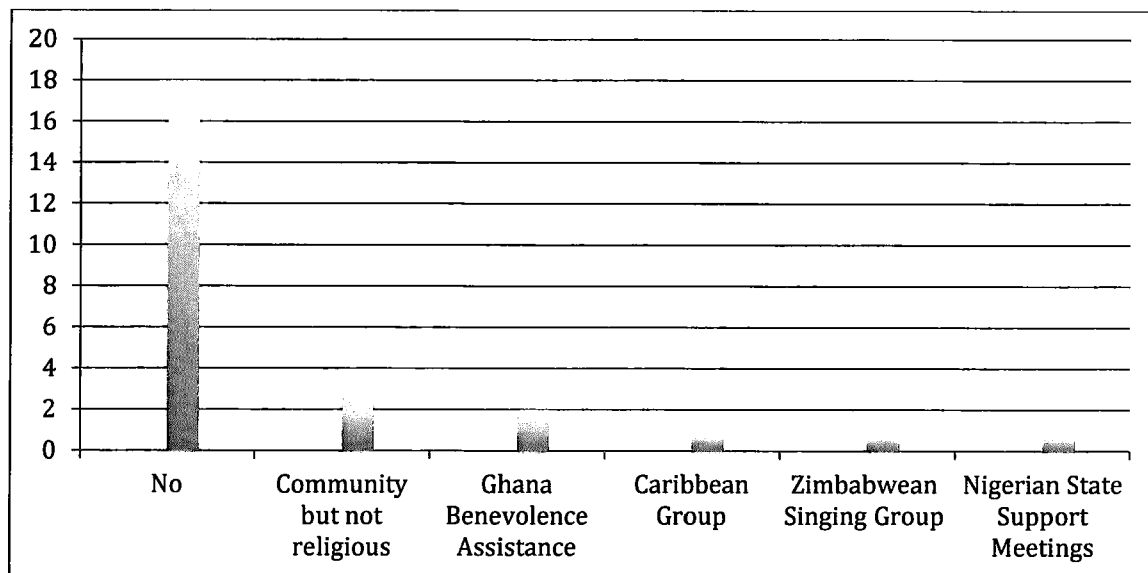
Analysis

An overwhelming number of the respondents, four-fifths, stated that they do not attend worship or other spiritual nurture classes elsewhere. This is quite revealing, and was what I expected. What this tells me is that the ethnic groups are behaving like U.S.-born citizens, in that virtually all are receiving their entire communal spiritual nurture at this church. This presents a great opportunity for the church.

13. Do you belong to a cultural or ethnic organization?

No	18
Community but not religious	3
Ghana Benevolence Assistance	2
Nigerian State Support Meetings	1
Zimbabwean Singing Group	1

Figure 2.13 Outside Cultural/Ethnic Organizations



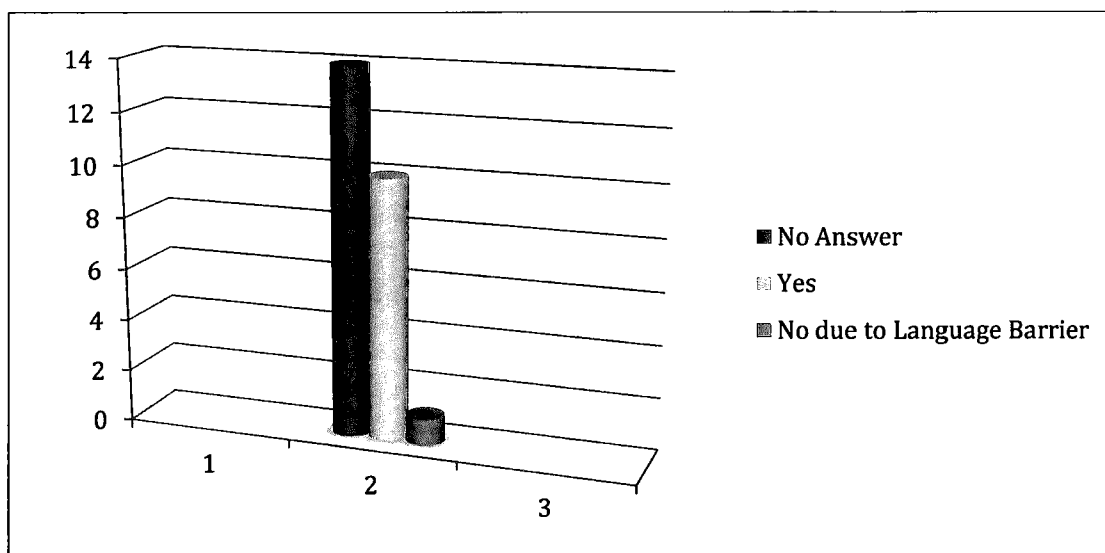
Analysis

It is quite interesting to see that eighteen of twenty-five persons interviewed stated that they do not belong to a cultural or ethnic organization. This validates my suspicion that most likely many persons of the congregation, both U.S.- born and foreign born, are working multiple jobs or their jobs are too far away to be involved in organizations.

14. Do you feel as though these groups would be welcomed at Riverdale First United Methodist Church?

No Answer	14
Yes	10
No due to Language Barrier	1

Figure 2.14 Outside Groups Welcome at Riverdale First



Analysis

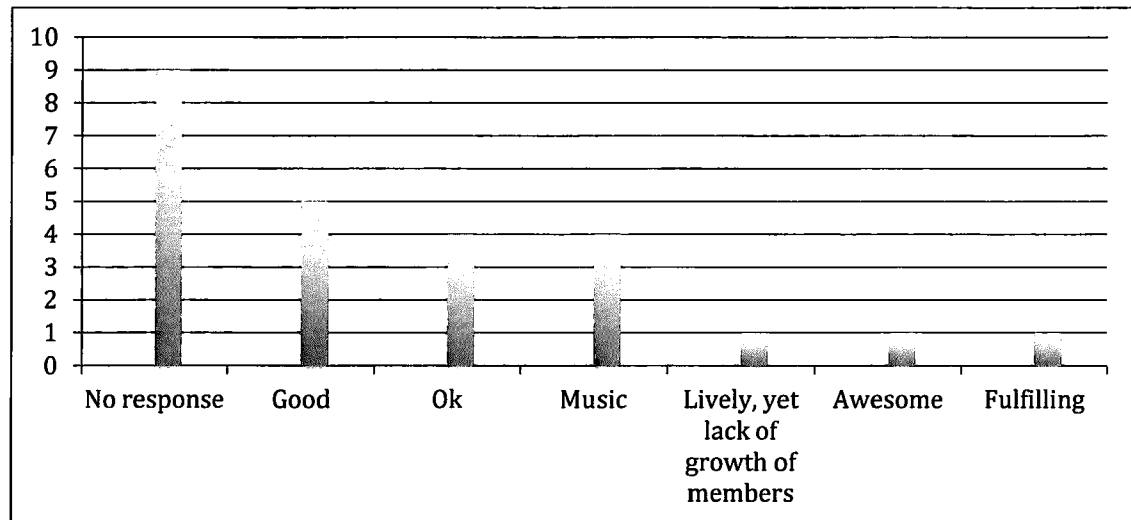
Almost half of all respondents stated that they had “no response” to outside groups meeting at the church. This should not be alarming, since I believe that this probably represents an indifference to outside groups meeting at the church; after all, they did not respond with a “no,” which would have indicated their opposition. At least ten out of twenty-five respondents responded favorably to the idea of outside groups meeting at the church.

Spiritual Assessment of Riverdale First United Methodist Church

15. What are your impressions of Riverdale First United Methodist Church Worship Services?

No response	9
Good	5
Ok	4
Music	4
Lively, yet lack of growth of members	1
Awesome	1
Fulfilling	1

Figure 2.15 Spiritual Assessment



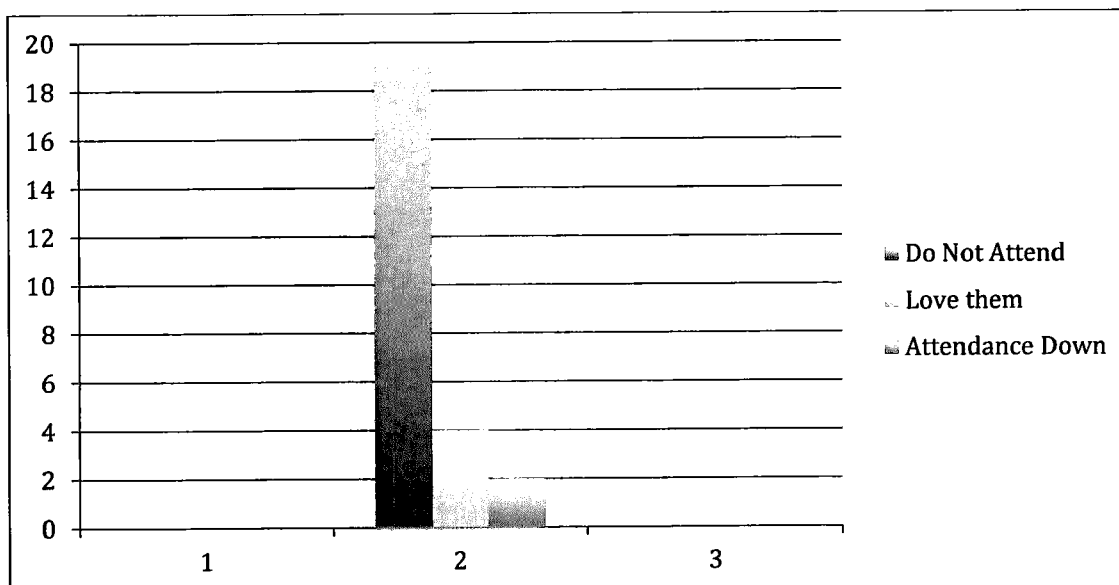
Analysis

The responses regarding impressions of Riverdale First worship services were mixed, with almost half indicating “no response”, with the remaining responses favorable. These no responses would suggest a lack of engagement and commitment. This can be addressed in follow-up listening sessions with emphasis on story-linking to sharing narratives and the building of relationships.

16. What are your impressions of Riverdale First United Methodist Church Sunday School Classes?

Do Not Attend	19
Love them	4
Attendance Down	2

Figure 2.16 Impression of Sunday School



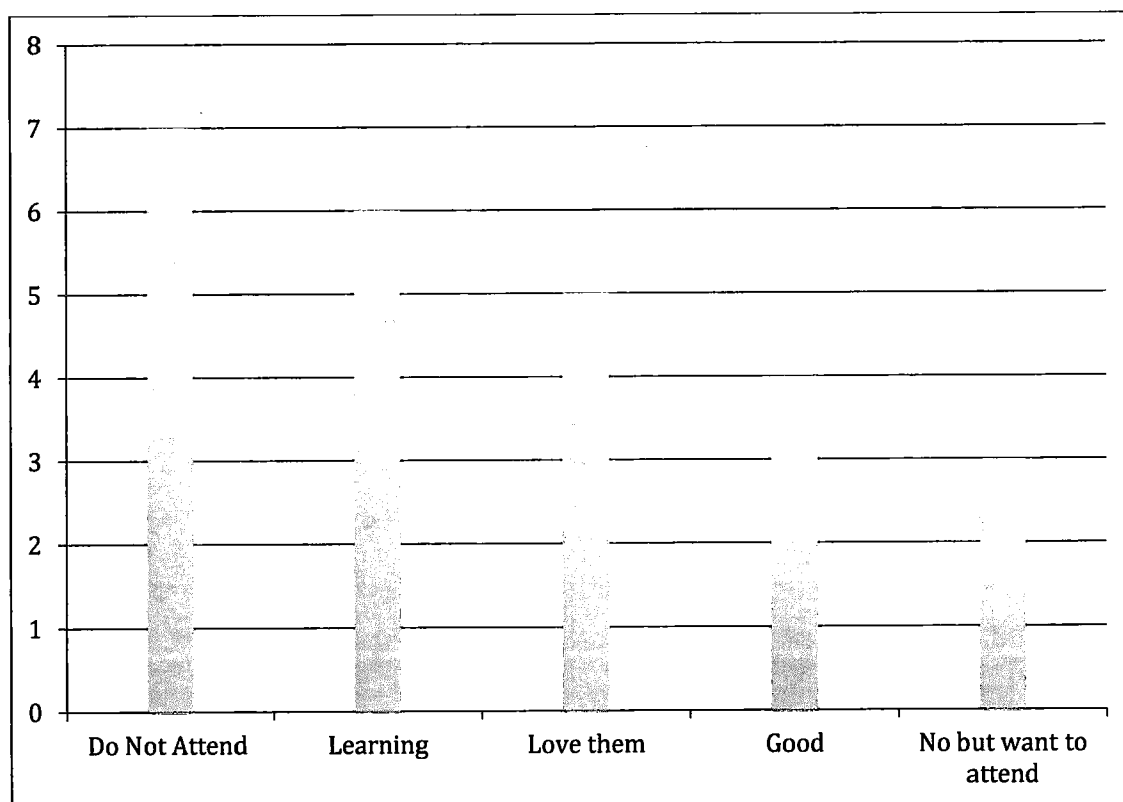
Analysis

The responses from the Sunday School attendance query were overwhelmingly negative, or “do not attend.” I did not push for clarity because at this juncture I did not want to push the interviewees, preferring to keep my focus on obtaining initial responses as opposed to “right responses.”

17. What are your impressions of Riverdale First United Methodist Church's Bible Study Classes?

Learning	6
Do Not Attend	7
Love them	5
Good	4
No but want to attend	3

Figure 2.17 Impression of Bible Study



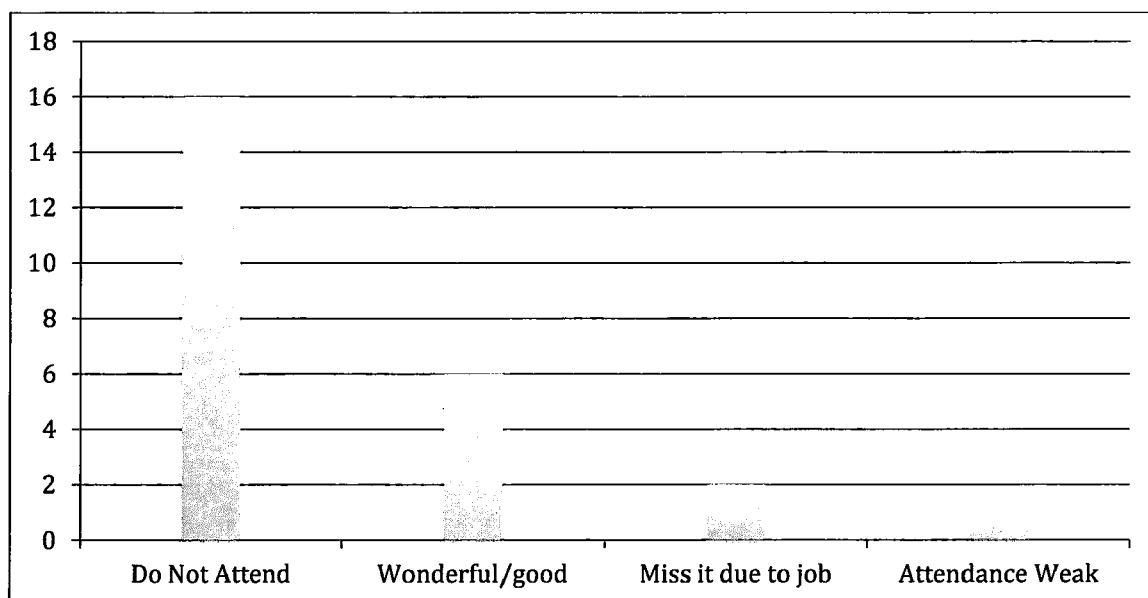
Analysis

About one third of the Bible Study responses were negative/neutral, “do not attend”; whereas the remaining two thirds of the responses were generally favorable. Favorable is good, but when assessed alongside responses to other questions, such responses reveal a disconnect, when respondents respond favorably yet do not attend these same Bible Studies. The negative responses indicate that new methods of communicating the Gospel of Jesus Christ need to be undertaken.

18. What are your impressions of Riverdale First United Methodist Intercessory Prayer?

Do Not Attend	16
Wonderful/good	6
Miss it due to job	2
Attendance Weak	1

Figure 2.18 Impression of Intercessory Prayer



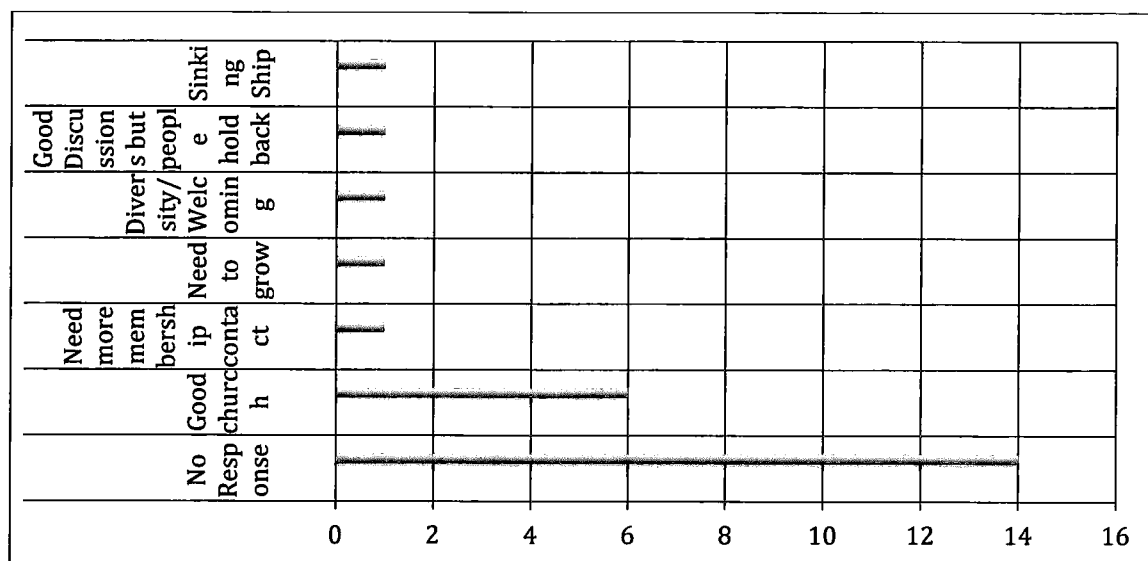
Analysis

The responses to the query on Intercessory Prayer paralleled those about other spiritual development classes, for over one-half of the respondents do not attend. Presumably the interviewees are finding something else to do. Along with not attending weekday spiritual development classes, the interviewees are either spending time with family, are at their jobs, or doing home repair, etc. The earlier response to outside organizations rules out that they are taking advantage of spiritual development opportunities elsewhere.

19. What are your impressions of Riverdale First United Methodist Church?

No Response	14
Good church	6
Need more membership contact	1
Need to grow	1
Diversity/Welcoming	1
Good discussions, but people hold back	1
Sinking Ship	1 (Everyone blames everyone else)

Figure 2.19 Impression of Riverdale First



Analysis

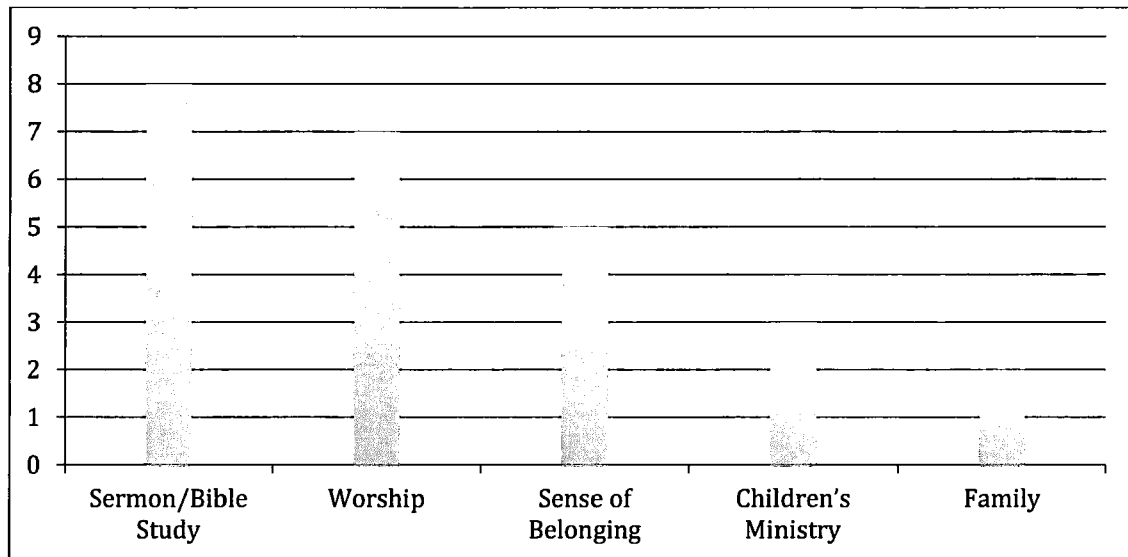
The majority of responses to impressions of Riverdale First fall into the same category as responses to the question about other spiritual development classes: “no response.” On the surface, this is surprising and alarming, but in context this response is perhaps because of the lack of recognition, authenticity, and relationship building that people are feeling and that needs to occur in this church. In other words, nurture needs to be an emphasis as much as evangelism. The remaining responses are varied.

Spiritual Fulfillment at Riverdale First United Methodist Church

20. How does Riverdale First United Methodist Church fulfill your spiritual needs?

Sermon/Bible Study	8
Worship	7
Sense of Belonging	5
Children's Ministry	3
Family	2

Figure 2.20 Spiritual Fulfillment



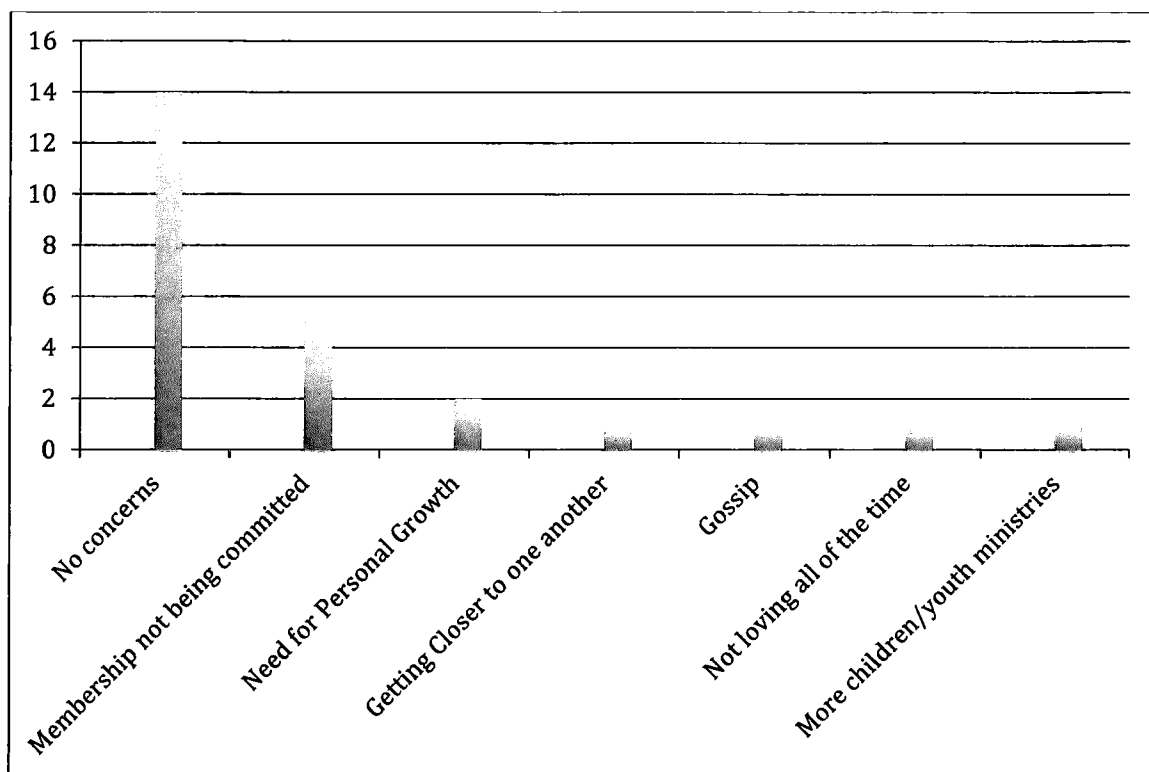
Analysis

Over half of the responses to the query about how Riverdale First fulfills interviewees' spiritual needs mention the same two sources: Worship/Sermon and Bible Study. This is somewhat typical of denominational churches, with the exception of Bible Study, which brings persons into contact with the church during the week. The remaining responses are varied.

21. In what ways does Riverdale First United Methodist Church not fulfill your spiritual needs?

No concerns	14
Membership not being committed	5
Need for Personal Growth	2
Getting Closer to one another	1
Gossip	1
Not loving all of the time	1
More children/youth ministries	1

Figure 2.21 Riverdale First Fulfilling Spiritual Needs



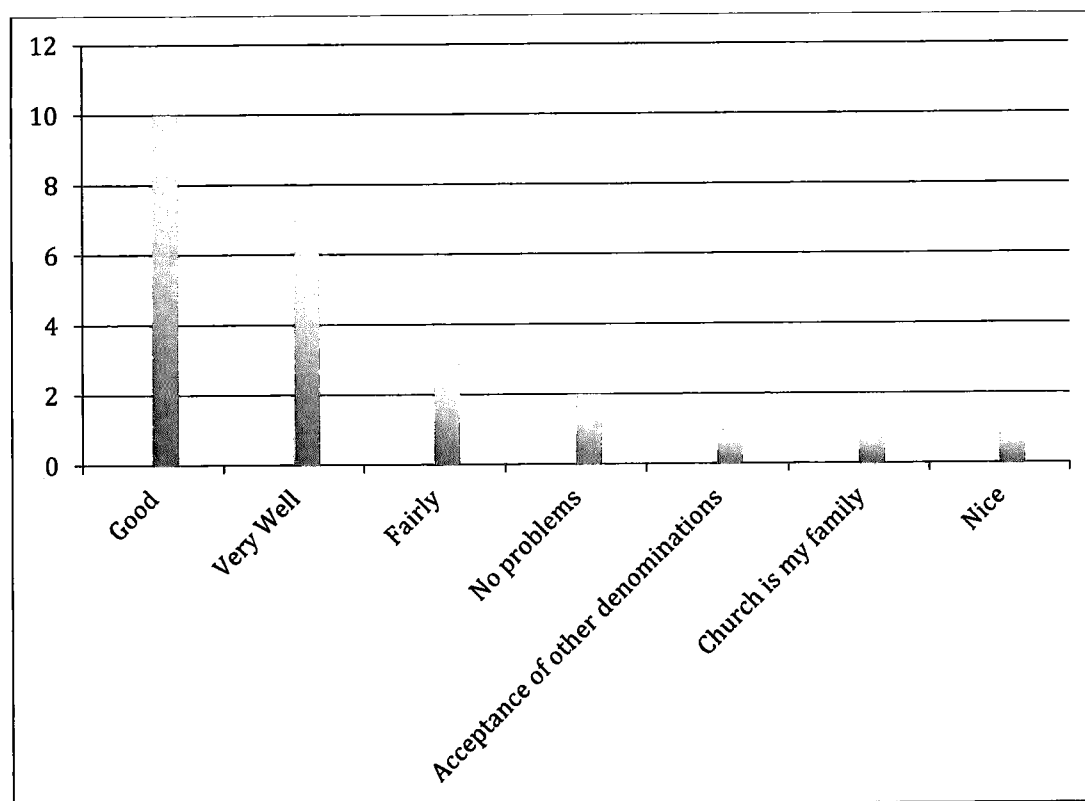
Analysis

These responses are very encouraging, with over half of the respondents having no concerns about Riverdale First meeting their spiritual needs. Even though the next item of “membership not being committed” is being expressed as a concern, this is positive in nature. Interviewees are expressing the fact that they are concerned about their church. The remaining responses are varied.

22. How have you been treated at Riverdale First United Methodist Church?

Good	10
Very Well	7
Fairly	3
No problems	2
Acceptance of other denominations	1
Church is my family	1
Nice	1

Figure 2.22 Treatment at Riverdale First



Analysis

The responses to this question are very favorable, ranging from very well to good in seventeen of the twenty-five responses. The remaining responses are also helpful. Even though the responses are favorable, no church is perfect, therefore, more investigation is warranted to explore authentic communication among the cultural and ethnic groups.

Analysis of Results from Ethnographic Interviews

Cultural Identity. From the eighty-one intended interviewees, I was able to secure twenty-five interviews. Of these, one half, thirteen, identified themselves as black Americans, eight African American, three Caribbean American and one white American. These numbers do not reflect the actual percentages of the composition of Riverdale First, but they do communicate the assumptions, values, needs, assessment and fulfillment of the church. Nothing seemed out of the norm based on what I have experienced in the eight years that I have served as Riverdale First's pastor, although there are some insights that I will share.

As it relates to tenure in the U.S., even though the ethnic interviewees have strong affinities to their cultural and native homelands, all of the interviewees have been in the U.S. for a significant number of years. Those who have been here all of their lives number fourteen. One Ghanaian, thirty-one years; Sierra Leonean, twenty years, Zimbabwean, sixty-one years, Nigerians range from ten to thirty-seven years, Aruban fifty-five years. You would think that to have lived in the U.S. this length of time, the attraction to their ethnic identity would have waned, but it remains strong.

Regarding previous religious experience, all except for one were Christian prior to arriving at Riverdale First; one identified himself as Muslim. The remainder came from various Christian backgrounds: one Roman Catholic, six Baptist, one nondenominational, one Pentecostal, one Brethren, one Dutch Reformed, five previously Methodist in the U.S., three previously Methodist in Africa, two Anglican, and one Church of God. With such a great variety, the need for dialogue, relationship building, and cultural education is essential.

Spiritual Assumptions. The expectations of the interviewees can be summarized into four main areas: members came to Riverdale First because of (the location of) their job, because they are United Methodist, for a place to belong/learn about faith, and because they relocated in order to receive a U.S. education and found this church nearby. Even though their intent when arriving in the U.S. is varied, they remained here for better opportunities. Prior to their arrival, their impression of the U.S. was that it was a "land of opportunity."

When they arrived in the U.S., if they had no prior experience of the UMC in Africa, then most had no expectation of the UMC. They were attracted to Riverdale First for various reasons. Five said that they came because Riverdale First is a neighborhood church with a visible location in the community. Five said that either a family or friend invited them to the church. Four said the pastor was influential. The remaining eleven said that the location of their job, or the ministries and hospitality of the church attracted them to the church. Most of those interviewed, twenty out of twenty-five, stated that Riverdale First is a welcoming church. Regarding hospitality, I believe those who did not believe the church to be hospitable are influenced by personal agendas or cultural differences and disputes.

The responses to the query regarding spiritual values were less than enthusiastic. I recall that when I asked this question, the unspoken response was one of puzzlement and confusion. When I pushed interviewees regarding possible childhood influences and family training and traditions, some degree of response was given. Those responses ranged from six "no responses," five "love of humanity," five "family values," four "worshipping God," and finally a variety ranging from service, respect, listening to priest,

and values from Islam which weren't described further. Nevertheless, I could surmise that love of humanity, family values, and worshipping God were primary values for many respondents.

Spiritual Needs. Fourteen of twenty-five stated that their spiritual need is to grow and become closer to God. This represents over half of those interviewed. The remaining sentiments communicated the following areas of importance: understanding the Word, finding a place to belong, counseling, and realignment of the use of their spiritual gifts.

Its interesting to see that over half of interviewees desired to grow spiritually and closer to God, but seventeen of twenty-five stated that they do not attend a Sunday School or Bible Study class (eighteen of twenty-five) do not take advantage of such spiritual enrichment opportunities elsewhere either). One of my research questions asked whether some ethnic groups were attending a class or belonged to a cultural group outside of the church, but surprisingly this was not the case. Though eighteen of twenty-five do not belong to any other cultural or ethnic organization, it was encouraging to see that ten of twenty-five interviewees stated that they felt outside groups would be welcome at Riverdale First.

Spiritual Assessment. Sixteen of twenty-five interviewees responded favorably to Riverdale First worship services. The Sunday School classes are not popular, with nineteen of twenty-five not attending. The Bible Study classes fared a little better than the Sunday School classes, but nothing to brag about. The Intercessory Prayer class elicited a similar response to the Sunday School class: sixteen of twenty-five do not attend. Regarding the overall impressions of Riverdale First, the general consensus was that the church members need more contact with one another and with the leadership.

Spiritual Fulfillment. The responses to the questions about Spiritual Fulfillment are as varied as persons' reasons for coming to church. As far as meeting the greatest need, the largest response was eight of twenty-five for the Sermon/Bible Study group. The next highest was seven of twenty-five for Worship. The remaining groups identified that they came to Riverdale First as a place to belong, for family, and for the children's ministry.

Of keen interest to me were the responses to ways Riverdale First does not fulfill respondents' spiritual needs. Six out of twenty-five respondents said that church members are not encouraging other church members in their lack of commitment to the church. Only five of twenty-five say that the church fulfills their spiritual needs; eight of twenty-five expressed no concerns; and the remaining responses are varied.

I was really looking forward to learning how church members treat one another. As pastor, I hear casual comments about some hurtful comment someone made, or how some particular ethnic group was mistreated. Ten of twenty-five respondents said they are well treated, seven of twenty-five that they are very well treated. The remaining responses were generally good, with notes of encouragement toward the church, respondents saying the church was nice, they were fairly well treated, and were not rejected.

Focus Group Interviews Results and Analysis

The original intent of the focus group interviews was to engage the following groups in conversation: Black Americans, White Americans, Caribbean Americans, Nigerians, Sierra Leoneans, Liberians, and Zimbabweans--which together comprise the largest cultural groups within RFUMC. Due to conflicting work schedules, family/school

schedules, sporadic worship attendance, and general skepticism or lack of knowledge about the doctoral process, I was able to acquire only two focus groups for discussion: Africa American and Nigerian (Igbo). Yet this researcher still feels that adequate information from other methods nonetheless validated or shed light upon the research questions for this dissertation. Nevertheless, the sample size is rather small, though useful information came from the discussion. I refer to comments such as “When I see people, I don’t see culture or ethnicity.”

Analysis of Results from Focus Groups

Black Americans, like many North Americans, subscribe to the idea that “we are accepting of everyone,” and that “when I see people, I don’t see race or culture, because we are the same underneath.” These comment needs to be unpacked further. For these are very common sentiments, sentiments that in this researcher’s opinion are contradictory.

The Nigerians have a proud appreciation for their native homeland. They often make comments ranging from “you would love the country” to mentioning its “rich culture.” Each participant had fond memories of attending church during their childhood. This researcher was surprised to find that the five Nigerians in the focus group were not involved in outside Bible study, or cultural associations.

Workshop on Spiritual Formation at RFUMC, A Multicultural Congregation

Results

A workshop on Spiritual Formation at Riverdale First United Methodist Church, a multicultural congregation, was created out of the results of the ethnographic critique. It was held on January 9, 2016. The event was advertised for two months, and announced at worship services. Its intent and purpose were explained on two occasions to the Church

Council of Riverdale First. That purpose (objective) was explained as being: "To engage Riverdale First in a process that leads to getting people to tell and listen to their stories, and how these stories set the stage for a larger story, which eventually helps the church to tell a new story."

As pastor, I gave a brief introduction to the seminar. I stated that in twenty years, this church and community had changed a great deal. With those changes, depth of relationships had been placed on the back burner. We have more people migrating to this area of Atlanta from other countries. Therefore, it is important to listen to one another, hear one another's stories, and get to know one another. And when we spend time with one another, it's easy to be in ministry with one another. I noted that one of the original Black American members of the church had made the statement a few months back, "We have twenty-three different ethnic/ cultural groups at the church and I do not know them." I then identified those twenty-three different cultural and ethnic groups.

PHASE 1 Story Telling

The initial phase of the workshop was listening to various ethnic groups' narratives or ethnic story telling. Four persons were chosen to share their stories: a Black American, White American, African American, and Caribbean American. Each participant was to share: when they became a member of Riverdale First; what was the race/culture of the church at that point; how have they seen Riverdale First develop over the years; what is the significance of the stories they heard about the church; what would best capture the essence or gist of the story of the church, whether it was a fictional story, Bible story, moving picture, or novel?

A Black American Personal Narrative - "Mr. G"

"I am a preacher's kid. I grew up in the Baptist church. I joined this church in 2004. I love this church and am one of the biggest cheerleaders of this church. I joined this church because it was a small congregation and I could establish a relationship with the pastor. I love people. The racial makeup when I joined was 60% Black, 10% white and 30% African. Rev. GL was the pastor at the time. The key change that I have seen is the outreach, the ability to go out into the community (voting, dances, pantry, school being here, dance team, 55-plus group). None of those things were here when I first joined. All of these changes have arrived since I first came. You have to want to change in order to survive. I've heard so many negative stories about this church, "we need a part time pastor" or "we need to shut the church down." Usually these stories develop when the finances are down in the summer. In spite of this, the church still keeps moving. This church is constantly receiving blessings from members, or former members. These things let me know that God has His hands on this church and it will survive. Whether you are here, or I'm here, this church will survive. This church lets everyone participate in some form or fashion. If you have any talent, you can put it on display. I love the fact that there are different people who read the scriptures each Sunday. This way, you get people active in the church. Newer members are introduced by reading the scriptures. I may not be able to sing a lick, but I know people who can and can corral others to sing. We have so much to offer, so much to give. If you have any type of talent, it really is a slight against God if you do not participate in this church. The more variety of people, the more the offering, the more people are active. If you are active, if you are approachable, whenever you have a crisis, this church approaches you to help you. This church is like a bank; you have to put something in it to get something out of it. The fact that we are small is not a negative, it is a positive. One of our church's kids came home from school and I said, "Man you have gotten real tall." He said, "Mr. T., I remember when your stomach was small too." This relationship is a positive. When I do not come, I really feel spiritually empty. We've taken people off the street, and they find comfort at the altar, and even feed them."

A White American Personal Narrative - "Mrs. K"

"When I came to this church in 1986, my name was different. I was freshly divorced. I had a child in college, one in high school, and one in middle school. I came to the church for a job, as the church pianist. The music director of the church came to school where I taught, and invited me to this church. It was slightly larger than what it is right now. LW was our pastor. We had two choirs, a youth department, and two worship services for the summer. We had TV service and a lot of activities going on. MP later became our pastor. We had a conference on whether to sell the church, move, or build onto this church. After several weeks, we decided to stay. At that time our congregation had a mixed raced couple, a couple from India (Methodist), and the community began to change. We saw increased numbers from Asia, Vietnam, Thailand, and Cambodia. The transition ethnically was constant. I've always found that true where I taught. Paul D. West School, East Point was a school always in an ethnically transitioning community. After MP, we had KB as our pastor. He began to see the change within the church, as we had more and more black members. He sought assistance from the Bishop to employ a Black assistant. That's when GL became the first black pastor, as KB was appointed

elsewhere. We had increasing numbers of black members join. Many whites left. Music was in transition. It was a time of change. Since I've been here, I've seen a lot of change. I have lost my father, a daughter, have remarried, and I agree with what Mr. G has said, the people have always been loving. I have been surrounded with that love.

But what I wanted to tell you is that I grew up in Louisville, KY, where the schools were already integrated. When the community was very diverse. First and second generations of refugees from WW II had a lot of Jewish folks in our community. The ecumenical movement was very evident (black and white pastors often swapped pulpits). I am very comfortable with various groups.

When I went to college in Virginia, I use to say they were "still fighting the Civil War." I was in a girl's college. I waited on tables. The cleanup staff were black men. I was told to not talk to them and consequently lost my job. I feel as though I have come full circle. I recommended a book called *The Faith Club*. It's about relationships between a Muslim, a Jew, and a Baptist/Christian woman. They really didn't know about one another's faith. Over the years, they became more aware of the other's faith. We are a faith club...different backgrounds, different cultures, joined together as a haven for God's people."

Zulu Ndebele Zimbabwean American Personal Narrative – "Mrs. Nde"

"I came to the US in April 2000. I joined Riverdale First UMC after a stint at Cascade UMC. In Zimbabwe, I was a member of the Brethren in Christ Church. I came to the U.S. because of my sister, who was a member of Cascade UMC. I came to Riverdale because of my other sister. When my sister from Cascade died, and upon my return to the U.S., Rev. GL came from Cascade to Riverdale First as pastor, I knew him already. I like Riverdale First because of its size. You really feel comfortable. I felt lost at the larger church; nobody knew me there. At Riverdale First, everybody knows my name. I like it better here. When I needed support in my life, I felt comfortable here because everyone knew it and helped me. I lost my mother and my sister, and everyone at Riverdale First knew about it. I really appreciate the love, care and support of this church."

Caribbean (St. Kitts and Nevis) American Personal Narrative – "Ms. Saint"

"I came to the U.S. in the latter part of 1967. I started working for Pan American Airways in 1968. When I was living in NY, I really didn't go to church. I really didn't want to know any church, other than the Methodist Church. The whole family were raised as Methodists, where I was raised back home in the islands. I left New York, and moved to New Jersey. I left New Jersey and found a Methodist Church through the Yellow Pages. I couldn't walk to church. I took a taxi to this church (Centenary United Methodist Church). It was a predominantly white church, and I really didn't care. The people were friendly, and the choir was out of this world. This couple said whenever I wanted to come to church, just call any member of the church and we'll come and pick you up. A couple overheard my singing and suggested that I join the choir. A choir member came and picked me up for choir rehearsal. My job transferred me to Georgia in the latter part of 1991. When I started working for Delta, I lived in College Park. I met a lady from back home, from St. Kitts and Nevis, who took me to another United Methodist Church, but it just didn't feel right. I took the Yellow Pages out again and

came to this church. The Sunday when I called Rev. MP, I asked a question. I asked him, "Do black people come to your church." He said "Oh yeah, we have black people who come to this church." (This is important, because while in College Park, I met someone from home who came to a church here, and the pastor asked him to leave, because he was black.) Rev. MP told me what time the church services and Sunday School started. When I arrived, I heard the choir and the voices were unbelievable. During service, the pastor came to me and asked "Are you the one who called this morning" and I said "Yes I did." He said "Well you don't have to be embarrassed in coming here." The first Sunday, he asked me to join the choir. Three things are important for me: 1. Becoming a member of a church. 2. Tithing. 3. Joining the choir. I see different changes. Some people didn't like things they were hearing: preacher not preaching, preacher not visiting. Rev. MP left. Rev. KB came and then I heard the same thing. Rev. GL came. It used to hurt me to see the transition and to see the church empty! As people were leaving, they would take hymnbooks with them! I don't think that was right! This church is my home! I'll always be here! The people at this church, they are very, very loving!"

As pastor and facilitator for this workshop, I then shared pastoral reflections upon the four narratives. I said, "When we share, we give of ourselves. I really appreciate these four distinct cultural groups. I know that several of you could talk more, especially Mr. G and Mrs. Saint, maybe an hour or two. But that just means that we have a story to tell. There is a hymn that we sing, 'I have a story to tell to the nations...' Each one of us has a story to tell..." I then gave instructions for the next section or phase of the workshop.

PHASE 2: Story Linking

Every table was requested to write a description about Riverdale First United Methodist Church. It could be based around a Bible Story, a description, a movie picture, even an animal. It simply had to be A description of where this church has been, is, or where it is heading.

(At this point of the workshop, a roving recorder/ reporter was utilized to capture individual table discussions.) Comments from tables: "This church has moved up"; "I

love this church;" "Some churches segregate ethnic groups into different sections of the campus." "We are different. We try to integrate everyone into everything." "The city of Riverdale is changing and we are a more ethnically diverse congregation." "We have family experiences, a lot of single parents, our attitudes are representative of God." "These buildings were built in the '60s." "I got tired of going to church 30 miles and my family decided to go to church closer."

Reports from tables on story telling:

Reporter "D": *"Riverdale First represents Noah's Arc. Rationale is Noah's Arc, it was God's plan to build this vessel to withstand the flood for all of these creatures, just like the church has all of these backgrounds. We are tested all of the time. He (the pastor) has been tested all of the time. Since he has been here 5 years, the church has been tested. Holes in the roof, tested. No it's not a problem. Pipe busted in the Educational Building. It's a test to see if we are going to honor God's Word with our actions. Since the world is coming to Riverdale, then we need to take care of the house that God gave us. Another symbol: the church is like a phoenix, a mythical creature. The church is constantly coming back. As long as we do what we need to do, then the church will take care of us."*

Reporter "S":

"When I came here in 2008, there were a lot of people. Things are not the way that it was. We were not going out to see sick people. We should come together to visit with people and sing to people. This is not going on. What can we do to improve the system of the church? When you love the church, you go out and visit. When many cultures come around, that's who we are."

Reporter "B":

"I've been here 8 years. Eight good fantastic years. Sometime I don't feel like coming, but Jesus says 'get up and go to church.' RM invited me to join this church. After they closed Immanuel down, church was no longer for me. I came on the last day that Rev. GL was here. Everyone welcomed me. MN said "united we stand, divided we fall." Jesus said, "bring all the little children to me." We are all little children of Jesus. We are always tested at this church. I would like to see us once a month have fellowship, have a little lunch. Everybody needs to become involved. Jesus and I fight every Sunday morning. Jesus said, yes you will! We've got to learn to be together, stay together. With this, we can become a united family. Don't just let one, two, three people do everything."

Reporter "T":

"From our table, this church is a beacon of hope and caring. We have to be there in bad times, and in good times. My main concern is for the children. We ought to be there for the children. When I was young, my parents gave me rules. As I've grown, I've learned those rules helped me. So one thing I'm trying to do is impact upon my kids to come to church. And they love the church. Even if I am tired, I have to still get here for them to be here with their friends. Just as Jesus did with his disciples, we are trying to learn. Trying to follow Jesus' footsteps. As far as the pastor visiting people, it's not just the pastor's responsibility; it's all of our responsibility. All of us are able to care for each other."

Reporter "A":

"I used to belong to Fellowship of Faith, and I stopped going to church. My sister 'J' asked me to come to this church. I had problems with the Methodist Church because the music was boring! So I came, and saw SK and the choir moving while they were singing; and the pastor preaching like a Baptist preacher. You can't go to sleep at our church. I like what we do for the children. 'Do you want to go with your momma or go with B? Most of the children would rather go with B.'" As far as the teens, our plight is similar to what's happening all across the country, young people find it hard to go to church. The church lifts you up because everyone knows everyone. 'I'm trying to figure out if they are trying to pick my pocket!' I think that's the best thing about this church, is that it's not a mega church, but everyone knows everybody else. You can't beat the jokes of J."

Reporter "V":

"I have been in this church since 2000. I have seen many, many changes. Our church has transitioned to [being] an ethnically diverse congregation. The church reaches out to the community by way of the food pantry, Bible study groups, dance, Thanksgiving outreach, coffee house, prayer breakfasts, scouts, sharing of our buildings with schools, and community fish fries. Even though we have various ethnic groups in our church, if there is a crisis or need for support, we receive overwhelming support from the church. We are the people. We are the world."

As a summary of the Story Linking, I then asked the workshop participants to name one word themes from the table reports as given by the table reporters. They responded with: "transitions," "determination," "love," "caring," "united," "diversity," "evangelism," "purpose." These are the themes from the four presenters and table discussions.

PHASE 3: Access the History.

In accessing the history, several phases were utilized to gather information. The Foundational Phase was used to elicit the facts of the cultural makeup of the congregation; the vision of the church; and the church heritage of their childhood/adulthood that helped to form who they are at the present. In the Expansion Phase I gathered information about what attracted them to the church, as well where growth occurred in the church; what were the largest ministries; who were the key leaders and the dates involved. Then the Stabilization Phase was engaged to identify when there was a leveling off in Riverdale First's growth; who were the leaders of the church; what programs survived, and the dates involved. The Decline Phase was used as a learning tool to learn about the time period when the church faded; what factors led to the decline; what programs failed, and the dates involved. A Renewal Phase drew attention to describing church renewal and describing the factors that led to that renewal. It drew upon biblical and theological images that helped to inform the renewal. Finally, in the Present Phase, workshop participants were asked to identify their culture or ethnicity; their impressions of the culture/ethnicity of Riverdale First; and finally whether they felt as though all persons are welcomed here.

Foundation Phase:

Workshop participants then described the different phases of church membership growth. The membership of this church participated in different phases of the church's expansion, decline, and renewal. Growth came primarily first, from whites, then Asians, then Blacks, then Africans.

As pastor and facilitator, I then asked the workshop attendees to identify their own ethnic group. The complete listing of the ethnic makeup of the church is listed in Appendix D. Of the twenty-three identified as members, staff or visitors of Riverdale First, those attending the workshop came from seven ethnic groups: Black Americans (19), White Americans (2), Aruban (1), Ghanaian (3), Nigerian Ibo (3), St. Kitts and Nevis (1), Zimbabwean Ndbele Zulu (2).

When the church was predominantly white, there was discussion about whether or not to stay in the community. The church at that time saw the changing demographics and many wanted to sell the property and leave. The church voted to remain in the community.

Regarding biblical images that informed the church's vision, the primary image was of Christ commanding his disciples to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, and might, and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Regarding church heritage, most workshop attendees were previously in the Baptist church. Others were from the Brethren in Christ church, Anglican, Church of God, Presbyterian, Methodist, Roman Catholic, African Methodist Episcopal (AME) and Episcopal Churches.

Expansion Phase:

The feature main feature that attracted persons to Riverdale First was location, i.e., the fact that it was a neighborhood church. Other factors included: invitations from friends, the pastors, music, a job invitation to work at the church, and children who brought the parents to church.

Stabilization Phase:

The single main issue that contributed to the church membership leveling off was the changing racial demographics. This leveling off should not be misunderstood, for it was a leveling off to a mere speck of what the membership had been (from 300+ to 40+ members).

Decline Phase:

With those changing racial demographics, the membership declined abruptly and severely. Riverdale First had been an all white church until the 1970s when South East Asians began to join. Then in the 1980s Blacks and Africans began to join the church. Then the whites left because they no longer felt welcomed (60-80 left en masse). It was noted that when Blacks began to join, the advent of white flight began at the church, culminating in the appointment of a Black pastor. In the words of one of the few white members remaining at Riverdale First, the racial transition was not handled with delicacy nor efficiency, and the white members left in numbers that crippled the church. Most damaging was that the whites were actually told that they did not belong here or that they were not welcome.

When the church transitioned from white to black, it wanted change on its own terms. The then pastor of the transition attempted to prepare the white congregation for the increasing numbers of black members to come. Change was not received nor welcomed, even though the church already had a few black members. But when the numbers changed dramatically, fear set in and white people fled.

With the changing demographics, declining membership, failure to invest and keep the properties up to standard, this church fell into a stalemate. Needed repairs were

not given attention, and buildings were closed and locked. This did not attract new members to the church.

One of the workshop attendees made the following statement “Don’t leave the church because of one or two persons. You worship God! You have to be the person you want the church to be, in other words, you have to be the change you want to see occur.”

Renewal Phase:

Each new pastor was received with open arms. With our current pastor, who has been here for eight years, there has been steady growth. The congregation embraced this newness, and along with it has received others who are different. The church is in a renewal phase with the largest number of ethnic groups it has ever received.

Present Phase:

There is still a small amount of ambivalence due to the foreign (African/Caribbean) component. This is represented in the tension that arises when Africans/Caribbeans want to take leadership or makes suggestions. Many of their offers are either dismissed or negated.

However, this does not take away the opportunity afforded to us, i.e., embracing people who are different, which is the majority attitude. This is why the present *modus operandi* is affording the church opportunities to which we need to pay attention.

PHASE 4: Assessing Our Spiritual Formation. In assessing the factors that led to our spiritual formation, four areas of ministry were considered: Ministries, Worship, Membership, and Christian Education.

In considering the question "What ministries of the past are dead?" responses were varied. One response stated that the Sunday School was dead, which drew an immediate reaction to state that no ministry needs to be buried. It was further stated that we are of Christ and are about resurrection.

One workshop attendee stated that the reason some ministries are not successful is due to the fact that not everyone is working on the same page. She stated that we do not seem to be focused and that too many things done differently tends to lead to cliques that do not work together and only fragment the church.

We then considered how worship impacts our spiritual formation. There was only one question asked of the attendees, and it pertained to ranking priorities. The following were the results: 1. Doctrine/Theology/Beliefs (You have to know what you are talking/singing about); 2. Preaching/Pastor (You need someone who knows what they are talking about); 3. Music (You have to have music that is synonymous with right doctrine); 4. Ministries.

Membership was the next area for consideration. With regards to spiritual formation and multiculturalism, two questions were considered: Where do you observe equality and where do you observe oppression/marginalization among ethnic groups and cultures? The responses were as follows. Equality can be found among the Usher Boards, Children's Ministries, +55 (Older Adult Ministries), Bible Studies, United Methodist Women, and Holy Communion Stewards. In response to the question: Where do you observe oppression/ marginalization of the various groups?, people named two areas: the Church Council (leadership) and the United Methodist Men.

Then followed concluding remarks and impressions about the Multicultural Workshop. Question: When are we going to do this again? Answer from the Pastor: "We will present the information to the Church Council, and to the Charge Conference for them to determine when and where we go from here." Response from workshop attendees: "We do not have to wait till the fall and the Charge Conference! This type of workshop can be accomplished after worship on Sundays, once a quarter with a meal."

Analysis from the Narrative Workshop on Spiritual Formation at Riverdale First United Methodist Church

Phase 1. Story Telling. Hearing the four narratives from the four ethnic groups chosen was the most enlightening and enjoyable experience of the entire workshop. To give each person time and space to tell their story without pressure or compulsion was breathtaking. This process was different from typical testimonies; these stories were telling and meaningful to the workshop presenters and listeners in a different way. This format so put presenters at ease that it made listeners want to tell their story. (This was evident in the reporting of the next phase, where instead of reporters reporting on table discussions, they began to tell their own individual stories.)

Phase 2. Story Linking. This next phase was intended to offer the same tools and information as story telling, but to do it in such a way as to have a conversation in a table discussion. Sometimes persons are more comfortable talking to five or six people at a table, as opposed to talking before 40-45 persons. This phase facilitated that comfort and removed the uneasiness in talking before large groups.

Phase 3. Assessing History. Normally, history is boring for people, but because this multicultural church has had a storied past, the ebbs and flows were not only

informative, but also provocative. For example, racial transitions demanded further inquiry. Each church's history is unique, and so too is Riverdale First's. Not only the racial transitions but also the continuing racial dynamics in the church tell us much about whether we are being authentic and Christ-like rather than simply willing to assimilate.

Phase 4. Assessing Spiritual Formation. This would have been more helpful if all of the church officers had been present. I felt that some of the comments were made simply in order to say something, and that others were made because the person being criticized was not there to defend him- or herself.

Yet because this spiritual formation process has taken place, the church can now not only a) continue the listening process, but b.) begin to plan for the future mission and vision of Riverdale First. Until both of these processes occur, officer and member disagreements will continue to affect all of the members.

Summary

Using the five stages of critical ethnography, with the incorporation of a narrative model for spiritual formation as the centerpiece of this process, this research has led to the improvement of relations among the twenty-three ethnic groups at Riverdale First. The framework for the research together with the narrative model helped to strengthen relations between the twenty-three groups, which bodes well for future work. With human behavior, there is no such thing as perfect model, but this model has produced results.

As Edward Wimberly states, "getting people from different cultural backgrounds to tell and listen to stories, and how these stories set the stage for a larger story which

eventually helps the church to tell a new story.”¹⁰⁹ This project has facilitated the development of narratives of several ethnic groups of Riverdale First. The story-linking process has reminded us that each of us has a story, and that that story has both similarities and differences with others’ stories that need to be heard.

When that story is linked to other stories, as Wimberly states, then a greater story develops. What that end narrative or story of the church is, is yet to be determined, for that was not the scope of this dissertation project. This was the beginning. For the church’s narrative to be complete, as Wimberly suggests, Riverdale First would need to spend more time coming together around the development of the church’s mission and vision.

This model has improved the awareness between the various ethnic groups as well as the relations between those groups. There is now intentional use or inclusion of all leaders of the Church Council to ensure that all voices are heard, especially those underrepresented on the Church Council. A subsequent meeting, following the Workshop on January 9th, has emboldened the Church Council to include in its number representatives of more ethnic groups. (The Church Council has just elected a Ghanaian as the Vice Chair of the Church Council to add another voice to the church’s leadership team.)

In the introduction to this dissertation, I shared the comment from one of Riverdale First’s long-standing Black members that precipitated this study. She stated “We have twenty-three different ethnic groups at church, and yet I do not know these people!” This lack of authentic recognition is partly due to a lack of understanding of the

¹⁰⁹ Wimberly, *Recalling Our Own Stories*, 1.

other, and partly due to a sense of complacency or resignation within each cultural unit. As well, power struggles create tense relations between the numerically more dominant groups and lesser groups. In pursuing a place for themselves, each group “gives and takes,” in the midst of others who are doing the same.¹¹⁰ A critical analysis of the power dynamics between the groups has produced an increased awareness of them, and has helped to move the congregation toward a deeper understanding of itself and toward equal recognition and respect between the groups.

To develop greater understanding and fellowship between groups, the researcher used information from critical ethnography to develop a narrative model of spiritual formation in a multicultural congregation. This working model can help other congregations in their multicultural efforts. There are many congregations that consider themselves multicultural, and yet the various ethnic groups often worship and do ministry in separate physical spaces of the church campuses.

What was learned?

Initially, I treated the subject of multiculturalism and ethnic diversity as did many in the congregation as a participant observers, assuming that Riverdale First was a church of two primary groups: a majority of black persons plus a few whites. By the outset of this research process I had identified 19 ethnic and cultural groups in the church, instead of two. By the conclusion of this research, I had identified twenty-three distinct groups. It was not until I was able to analyze the spiritual, social, and communal life of Riverdale First that I became aware of other more profound ways of articulating both the differences and commonalities of the constituent parts of the congregation, and how

¹¹⁰ Taylor, *Multiculturalism*, 27.

useful empirical data can be in understanding the underlying demographic dynamics and differences.

As a pastor and as a researcher, I had been working under the assumption of respecting people as individuals, as sacred children of God. I didn't have a name for this; I just knew that I was supposed to love everyone. Now, after this dissertation project, I have a name for it: "everyone has a self." This self is the moral ideal that should be authentic. If I were a psychology or sociology major, then more study would be warranted in investigating are not authentic. But this dissertation project has at least given me the tools and terms of self, self-determining freedom, equal recognition, and authenticity with which to engage multiculturalism.

Taking from the work of Charles Taylor the emphasis on the "self," the lack of authenticity in recognizing these groups became quite evident. This critical ethnographic process has brought to the forefront the cultural and ethnic identities that were previously and summarily overlooked, both by the congregation and this researcher. This has afforded the church opportunities not only to better understand relations between groups, but also to improve opportunities for ministry.

The increased awareness of cultural and ethnic identities has caused Riverdale First to appreciate the rich narratives of people sitting right next to them on Sunday mornings. Riverdale First is a congregation of ever increasing and changing demographics. As is true of many growing churches, by focusing so much on growth we often relegate relationships to the back burner and never really deal with them. This critical ethnographic process has identified several things: 1) Similar cultural identities, whether racial, geographic, or ethnic/cultural; 2) A healthier respect for cultural identities

that are different from one's own; 3) Rather than stereotyping those cultural/ethnic identities, recognizing and authenticating those identities.

What might have been done differently?

Greater involvement in this research process from the entire leadership of the church, as opposed to just the few who have the same vision that I have, would have given the research greater depth. This is not to say that a substantive number of the leadership did not support this work; as a matter of fact, the majority of the leadership did support it. It just so happens that the entire leadership has subsequently come on board as the project has progressed. In order for the church to embrace this work, full participation is needed. But as always, some only join the process once they see the effectiveness of the work being done.

Additional times to delve into these complex congregational issues might have yielded richer outcomes. But Riverdale First includes many persons who work two and even three part-time jobs, and therefore cannot participate in such studies. Some members who live at a distance from the church could not participate because of that. Yet their participation in this process could have been beneficial.

I believe that greater involvement would have entailed more work to promote the need for the research to the entire leadership and congregation. Several authors of books consulted in this research process mentioned the advantages of making such studies a congregational process, with a committee of its own. That would have been the perfect combination to investigate this issue at greater depth; but due to work schedules, family time, and skepticism from a few about the worth of such a study, that committee process was never realized, even though I desired it.

Cohen¹¹¹ states that there is a significant tension between researcher and policy makers. Whenever the critical theorist is proposing something new or different, there is a natural inclination to for the researcher him- or herself to become involved. According to Cohen, this is true of all research, no matter how intentionally objective the researcher claims or hopes to be. This was true of several officers at Riverdale First. There will always be persons who will try and take advantage of a situation, especially a new situation to debate against, whatever issue is brought forth. Therefore, conflict management skills might have been helpful in this study not only to relate to some church officers, but also to articulate and manage differences in and among ethnic groups.

Finally, time being my enemy, I wished that I had had more time to delve into the causes of the lack of Bible Study and other spiritual formation groups. Since this is a project dealing with spiritual formation, Bible Study and other means of spiritual formation are crucial to growth. The surveys only touched the surface in reporting the number of persons interviewed who do not attend these classes; and when not asked, no further information was volunteered. Twenty-five of the original eighty-one respondents solicited is a small enough sample size to give justice to all voices, although that does not invalidate the responses given.

The number of "no responses" concerns me. Perhaps it indicates the lack of trust and relationships among the ethnic groups. Perhaps it indicates the interviewees' reluctance to recognize that they contribute to the problem. In any case, the information gleaned from the interviewees both affirmed and invited new inquiry.

¹¹¹ Cohen, *Research Methods in Education*, 53.

Future Implications of the Study for Riverdale First United Methodist Church

Among the officers and members of Riverdale First, there is now a greater fascination and interest in those members that the church previously took for granted or who were underutilized. Because of this curiosity and exploration, the officers are in the planning stages of persons of other cultures in the leadership of the Church Council. As well, the focus of our annual Spring Dance has been changed to an African Spring Dance. One of the Nigerians even said, "Pastor, thank you for your efforts in recognizing the gifts of Africans. I can see a difference in the way we are treated."

The Workshop on Spiritual Formation at Riverdale First, which was held on January 9, 2016, has resulted in requests from several individuals to hold the event several times later this year. The interest is so great that leaders who are eager for greater participation suggest we hold the event immediately after morning worship with potluck dinners to involve more congregants.

Conclusion

Initially, I set out to increase recognition of the individual selves in our multiethnic congregation, concerned about who was visible and who was invisible among the twenty-three ethnic groups. It was through the process of critical ethnography that an analytical and critical process was developed to investigate the dynamics and assumptions of the ethnic groups. This critical ethnographic process proved to be an excellent means to increase recognition among the groups. Also, I set out to develop a narrative model of spiritual formation in a multicultural setting to accomplish three things: First, this model was to give an opportunity for persons to tell their life story, and to link their story with others' stories; Second, to further develop a model of spiritual

formation, by critiquing what had been, assessing what is, and suggesting what can be in the future for the church; Third, to engage multiculturalism, which I believe makes the church attractive to all who come, and which holds the church together even now.

The result of this dissertation process has been the creation of a new way of doing things in the local church. Riverdale First is a changed church. What began as an overview of black, white, African, and Caribbean cultures has evolved into the recognition of twenty-three distinct ethnic groups. Initially, I, like the congregation, lumped together people along racial lines and languages. Charles Taylor calls this practice “a smoothing over” of identities; not recognizing the true self of the other individual. Nevertheless, the church has evolved.

Riverdale First is a stronger church. The recognition of persons “as they are” places the church in a stronger situation to utilize the gifts from the various groups. Since the outset of this research project, for example, various ethnic groups have been utilized during the Advent season to share stories or “narratives” of how Christmas is celebrated in their homelands. Riverdale First was intrigued by the Christmas stories of Nigeria, Liberia, and the Caribbean. They listened with anticipation for more details. Because of this recognition and curiosity, the church is better equipped to embrace the community and its future. This is due in large part to the increased awareness of its member’s experiences and past history. Awareness leads to recognition of the authenticity of each ethnic group, and this opens up possibilities for newcomers too.

Riverdale First is a better church, in that it now expresses the values of fellowship and friendship to people of all cultures. For example, the leadership of the church, the Church Council, had originally imagined a “Spring Dance” to foster fellowship among its

members. That process has evolved, and now the event is referred to proudly as “Riverdale First United Methodist Church African Spring Dance.” Of course, a few Caribbean members felt left out, but that failure gives the church another opportunity to think about how to be even more inclusive.

All of this new activity wasn’t there before this research and dissertation project began. The desire of ethnic groups to be included was quiescent but now it is expressed in their desire for inclusion. A few African members have expressed to me that they can see a change in the way people are treating them, and particularly that the church leadership is soliciting and valuing their opinions.

As is true with any work that engages multiculturalism, what is critical for dialogue is education, training, and offering opportunities. With the pressures of life, as well as our own deficiencies, it is easy to qualify ourselves as better than the next person. If we are to be true to how God has created us, if we choose to “*love thy neighbor as thyself*,” then we have to expend energy in getting to know, understand, and relate to one another. Multicultural work is not easy, but it can become easier if we work at it. This is where the church has to be clear in creating an ethic of mutual regard and authenticity.

The “Narrative Model of Spiritual Formation at Riverdale First United Methodist Church, A Multicultural Church” has not only opened doors for improved relations among groups of the church, but it is offering to the church and the world a model for listening, for appreciating, for recognizing, and for valuing one another.

In listening to other’s narratives, we learn about them, but we also are enhanced by their gifts, and their insights. Comments from the workshop include: “I love to hear different voices in the pulpit reading scripture, from other lands;” “I didn’t know we had

a Nigerian in our midst who was an accountant;" we even hear the passion from some from foreign lands that resonate with our passion. For example, during the workshop, a Ghanaian expressed with vigor her love for children. Well, who doesn't love children! Any pastor knows the value of children in a church. To hear this Ghanaian express herself in these terms engaged the hearers to want to join in her pursuit to build up the children of the church.

All of us can recall childhood stories of teachers, classmates, and relatives who did things to cause a fragmentation in fellowship. All the while, what we wanted was to be included, recognized, and authenticated. Even if we were different, we wanted that difference to be "ours." All human beings want to be recognized. This research process began because groups were not recognized, an ethic of inauthenticity. What has evolved in this work is a model for recognition.

As Cornel West said in his conversation about race in the U.S., "I envision neither a social utopia nor a political paradise,"¹¹² so is it true of this dissertation research project, and its narrative model of spiritual formation. I am not under the delusion that the work of multiculturalism is always clear-cut and easy. When dealing with people and their core concerns, differences can often lead to conflict. What I am offering is a model that works at Riverdale First United Methodist Church. Does it always work smoothly? No. Do all get along, even though we have a framework and good intentions? No. But through this model, conditions have improved for further dialogue, awareness among various ethnic groups has increased, and we have a framework to continue the work of critical ethnography.

¹¹² Cornel West, *Race Matters* (New York, NY: Vantage Books, 1994), 158.

CHAPTER VI

The Creation of a New Strategic Workshop Model

“A Narrative Model for Spiritual Formation in a Multicultural United Methodist Church”

This model is a new and strategic model for several reasons. It is a narrative model because of the story telling and story linking aspects. It is a model of spiritual formation because it offers a tool for the assessment and the development of spiritual practices. It is a narrative model for spiritual formation in a multicultural United Methodist Church. Even though it is designed for Riverdale First United Methodist Church, it can be utilized in any denomination or faith group.

Learning Needs Assessment Tool (LNRA)

Why hold a workshop on spiritual formation in a multicultural setting? This workshop is designed for churches and other organizations that find themselves in ever changing and diverse communities. The work of multiculturalism doesn't just happen. Because of ever changing demographics, multiculturalism requires work. This workshop is a tool to facilitate listening, to assimilate narratives from a variety of groups in a multicultural setting, and to use those ideas to forge into dominant themes in any organization. Of course the “who?” will impact any workshop design. In the Riverdale First case, twenty-three ethnic groups formed the congregation. “Why” is directly related to desired outcome. Again, in the Riverdale First situation, there was an expressed desire

among officers and members to get to know the various groups in the church. “When and where?” are easily secured tasks but necessary in the asking. “What, what for, and how?”, is probably the most important series of questions to be asked in the design of any workshop. If answered properly, they will facilitate the design; if not the outcome of the workshop is left to chance.

Achievement-Based Objectives have long been used in education and the business sectors. As framers of spiritual formation workshops, this tool is helpful in setting outcomes of a project. The objective of this workshop is to engage the church in a process that leads to getting people to tell and listen to their stories, and how these stories set the stage for a larger story, which eventually helps the church to tell a new story.

Literature Implications

Taylor’s valuation of the “self” in his works cited earlier, along with Kegan’s use of “curricula” as a narrative, offers the basis for this new narrative model of spiritual formation in a multicultural congregation. Stewart’s request for innovative and prophetic education demands that the church take a look at the model for usage.

Freire and Vella’s push for dialogical education, in this model, involves listening to workshop participants/learners at every level. Moschella and Edward Wimberly would echo the importance of the researcher listening as an ethnographic and pastoral practice.

Cohen, et al.,’s emphasis on ethnographic critique provides the less obvious framework for this model. Even though Cohen et al., outlined their ethnographic critique in detail, elements of their outline are vivid throughout the model (in monological data gathered and shared at appropriate times in dialogue; reconstructive analysis by listening and offering feedback; discovering system relations as markers of influence upon

workshop participants; and finally using system relations, in light of social theories, to explain further influences and power plays by participants.)

Pedagogy

Dialogue and listening are paramount to this workshop. Dialogical education must connect the facilitator and workshop attendees. No hierarchy exists, for all must learn together. Listening by all in attendance is a must. Great care in listening on the part of the facilitator is essential to allow the narrative to progress and not allow the facilitator to become an impediment to that progress.

This workshop is not an end all, but rather a beginning. By becoming exposed to one another's story, a comfort level of story-linking and sharing can begin. This process will allow further workshops for listening. In a multicultural setting, listening to one another's narrative is crucial in individual relations, ethnic relations, identity, and increased awareness of others. As well, listening improves congregational harmony, unity, vision, and community building.

Curricula

As Edward Wimberly states, the church will live out a dominant story and several other secondary stories, and these stories will be identified and assessed. These stories assist the church in eventually formulating a future with mission and vision statements that not only reflect who the members of the church are, but also who their neighbors are.

The following curriculum is designed to facilitate storytelling, assimilation of those stories, assessing one's history, and spiritual formation practices. There are learning tasks associated with each facet of the curriculum, to assist as evaluation indicators.

Phase 1: Story Telling - 15 minutes each for 1 hour.

Learning Task: Share and listen to 4 distinct narratives/life stories.

Learning-Workshop participants will listen to one another's cultural story.

Transfer-Workshop participants will relate information from the personal to the community.

Impact-Workshop participants will gain greater understanding of those who are different.

At least 4 persons are chosen to tell the story of the local church as each storyteller remembers it. The telling of the story should cover, but is not limited to the following: When did you become a member of the church? Who were the pastor and the key leaders, as well, their race/culture? What was the racial composition of the church? How have you seen the church develop over the years? What is the significance of the stories you heard as it pertains to the future of the church? What would best capture the essence or gist of the story of the organization, if you had to select a fictional story, Bible story, movie, or novel to represent it?

Phase 2: Story Linking.

Learning Task: Assimilating similar themes from everyone's stories.

Learning- Gathering similar themes from the stories.

Transfer-Relating those themes to the church's story.

Impact-Including and summarizing all persons' stories.

After the four stories are told, the participants are asked to break up into small groups and discuss what best summarizes the four stories. Each small group is asked to come up with a fictional story, Bible story, novel, movie, or something else that helps to name the organization's dominant and sub stories.

After 30 minutes, invite the groups to assemble and make their report. The report should include the summary statement and pictures. This phase should take 30-45 minutes.

Phase 3: Assessing the History. 30 minutes.

Learning Task: Identifying the history of the church.

Learning- Telling the history of the church, as you perceive it to be.

Transfer- Checking one's history of the church with everyone else.

Impact- Having a renewed/enlarged history and development of the church.

This will attempt to identify the phase in which the church is, as well as the various ethnic groups. The phases are as follows:

1. Foundation phase

- What was the ethnic/cultural makeup of the church, when you joined?
- What was their vision?
- What Biblical or theological ideas or images informed the vision?
- What personal characteristics did they exhibit?

- What is your church heritage? (From your childhood/adulthood).
- What were some of your prior church beliefs?

2. Expansion Phase

- What attracted you to the church?
- How fast did the church grow?
- What ministries have been implemented since you came?
- What were the largest ministries?
- Who were the key leaders?
- What were the dates involved?

3. Stabilization Phase

- When did the growth of the church level off?
- Who were the leaders?
- What programs survived
- What were the dates?

4. Decline

- When did or has the original church faded?
- What other factors led to the church's decline?
- What programs failed?
- What were the dates?

5. Renewal Phase

- What factors led to the renewal of the church?
- What Biblical/theological ideas or images informed the renewal?

6. Present Phase

- What is your culture/ethnicity?
- What is your impression of the culture/ethnicity of the church?
- Are all people welcomed here?

Phase 4: Assessing Spiritual Formation. 30 minutes.

Learning Tasks: Give an assessment of the spiritual formation of the church

Learning- What spiritual formation practices exist?

Transfer-Have you participated in new areas of spiritual development?

Impact-Implementing or incorporating new areas of spiritual development to which workshop attendants have been exposed.

MINISTRIES:

1. What ministries of the past are dead?
2. What ministries need to die and be buried?
3. What ministries need to be resurrected?
4. What ministries are alive and well?
5. What ministries are newly developing?

6. What new ministries can you see emerging in the future?
7. What ministries need to be resurrected or transformed?
8. What ministries are newly developing?
9. What new ministries can you see emerging in the future?

WORSHIP:

11. What's important to you in ranking order: 1. Preaching/Pastor 2. Music 3. Ministries
4. Doctrine/Theology/Beliefs

MEMBERSHIP

12. Where do you observe equality Bible study class, Sunday School class, prayer group or other spiritual nurture class?
15. If not, why not?
16. If not, do you attend these classes at home, or at another church or other facility?

Ministry Plan to Support the Church

This narrative approach elicits listening to one another's hurts, hopes, and experiences. This sharing will strengthen relationships, not only among ethnic groups, but in any heterogeneous group that exists in any church. As churches grow, this model helps to ensure that healthy relations advance the church's missionary and evangelist zeal.

In the local church setting, once information from this workshop is critiqued and analyzed, it can be shared with the leadership in whatever format the denomination of that church allows. In the United Methodist polity, of which I am a part, information would be shared with the Church Council and the Church/Charge Conference. It is from there that talk can begin of designing a local church's vision and mission in a multicultural setting, not before!

This new strategic model is significant because it has been vetted at Riverdale First, where it has resulted in a revitalized congregation that desires to hold further dialogue and strengthen relationships. It can also be utilized in other congregations who wish to foster dialogue in their multicultural settings. This new model gives authenticity

to those quiescent and underrepresented voices in congregational settings, thereby utilizing all of the gifts of the congregation.

The church universal can employ this model to assist congregations who desire to strengthen the relations of their ethnic population, or the underrepresented voices in the congregation. This is a model of inclusion and not exclusion. It promotes recognition and authenticity in the congregation. Dominant voices oftentimes squash those voices, excluding them from the conversation. With this model, every voice is heard and recognized. The collective dialogues foster togetherness in the congregational context, which advances the church's mission and vision.

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APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Rev. Moses Woodruff, Jr. is implementing this project as a requirement for the Doctor of Ministry degree. This project is designed to engage the various cultural groups at Riverdale First United Methodist Church through a process called critical ethnographic analysis. (i.e., investigating the assumptions brought to Riverdale First UMC, exploring how the various groups work together, and looking at ways we can improve in cultural relations within the church.)

Requirements for participation in this project are as follows:

1. Attend at least one individual session with the interviewer/pastor.
2. Attend at least one group session within your cultural group, or with other cultural groups of the congregation.

All research information will be kept anonymous and confidential.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information presented concerning this research project and conditions/requirements for participation, and that you voluntarily agree to participate in this research project.

Interviewee: _____

Researcher: _____

APPENDIX B
RIVERDALE, CLAYTON COUNTY AND GEORGIA POPULATION
 (Quick Facts from the US Census Bureau/www.census.gov
 and www.city-data.com/city/Riverdale-Georgia.htm)

	2010	2015 (estimates)
City of Riverdale Population	15,134	15,669
White	6.1%	8%
Black	80.7%	80%
Hispanic Origin	6.0%	n/a
Asian	6.8%	6.8%
*Other	.4%	5.2%
 Foreign Born Persons	 14%	 n/a

	2010	2015 (estimates)
Clayton County Population	259,467	267,542
White	14.1%	13.5%
Black	66.1%	68.9%
Hispanic Origin	13.7%	13.1%
Asian	5.0%	5.3%
*Other	1.1%	1.2%
 Foreign Born Persons	 15.2%	 n/a

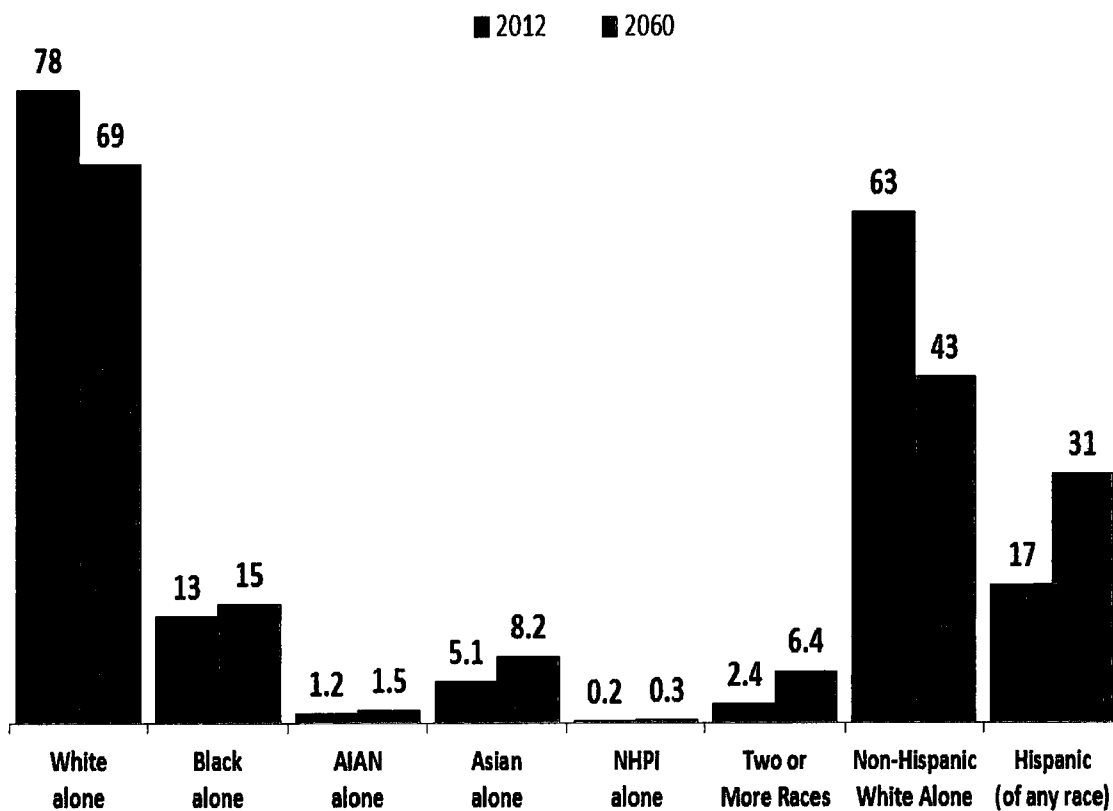
	2010	2015(estimates)
State of Georgia Population	9,994,759	10, 214,860
White	55.9%	54.3%
Black	31.5%	30.0%
Hispanic Origin	8.8%	9.3%
Asian	3.2%	3.0%
*Other	.6%	3.6%
 Foreign Born Persons	 9.7%	 n/a

*"Other" represents: American Indian, Pacific Islander, Mixed Race, etc.

APPENDIX C US POPULATION TRENDS BY RACE, 2012-2060

Population by Race and Hispanic Origin: 2012 and 2060

(Percent of total population)

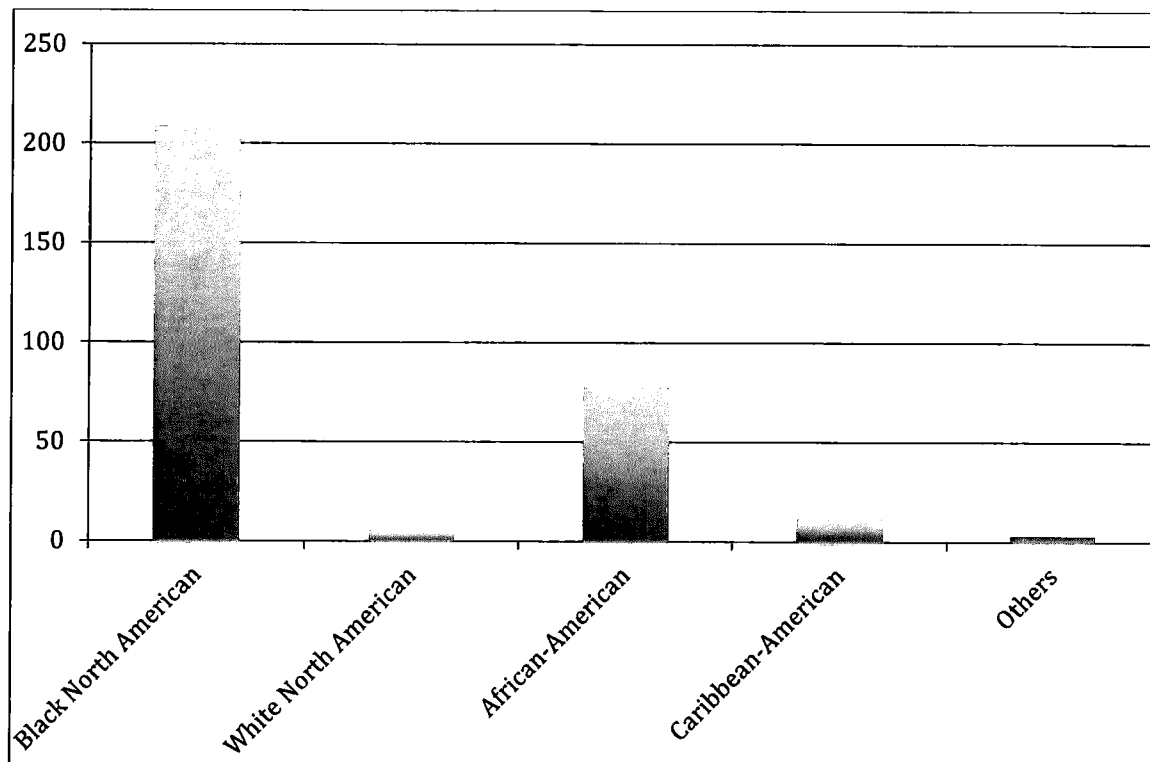


AIAN=American Indian and Alaska Native; NHPI=Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander

United States
Census
Bureau

U.S. Department of Commerce
Economics and Statistics Administration
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU

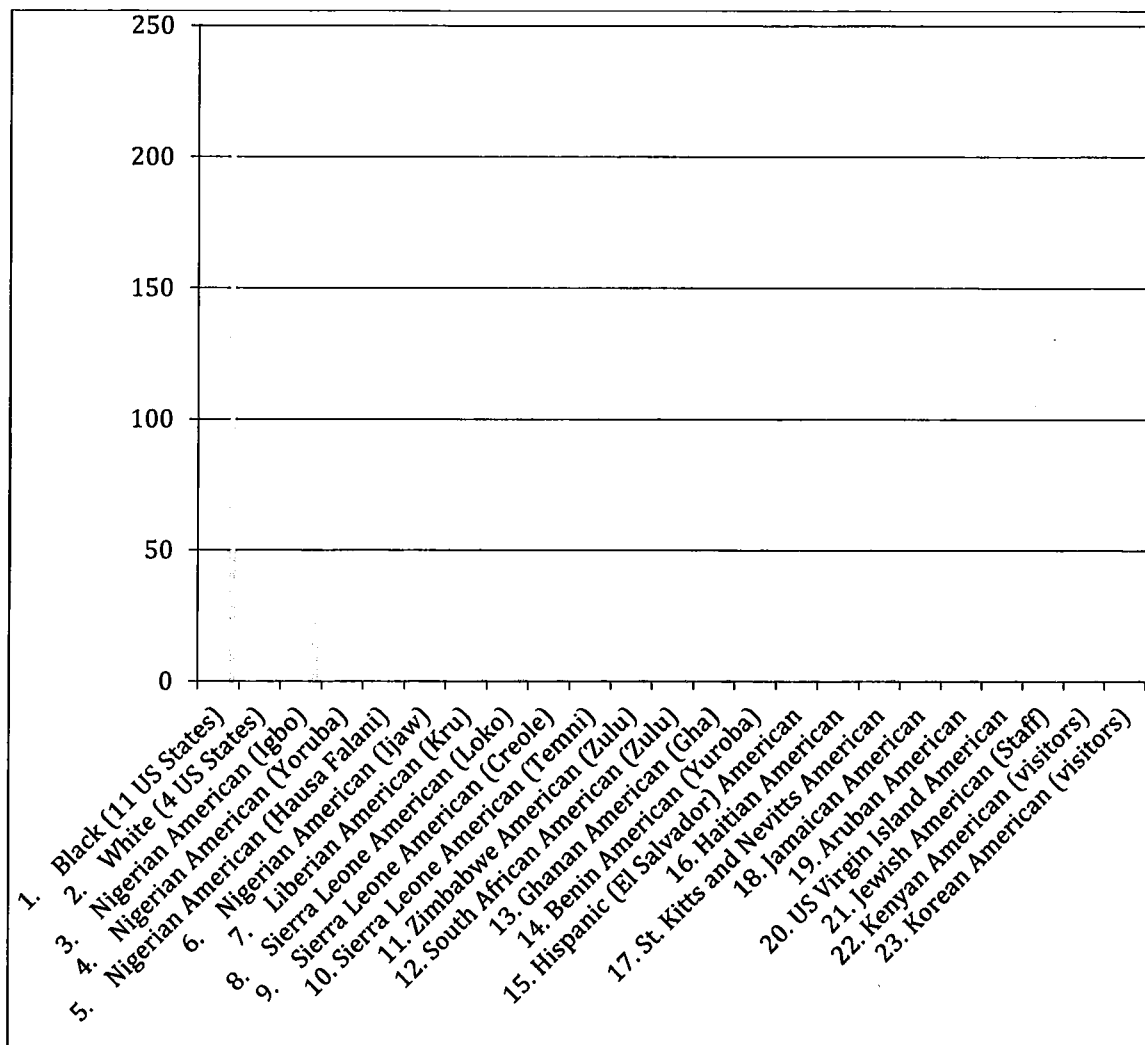
APPENDIX D
Cultural Population of Riverdale First United Methodist Church



209	Black North Americans
7	White North Americans
81	African-Americans
10	Caribbean-Americans
5	Others (Hispanic, Jewish, Korean)

APPENDIX E
Ethnic Groups of Riverdale First United Methodist Church

1. Black (11 US States)	209	2. White (4 US States)	7
3. Nigerian American (Igbo)	36	4. Nigerian American (Yoruba)	1
4. Nigerian American (Hausa Falani)	1	6. Nigerian American (Ijaw)	2
7. Liberian American (Kru)	5	8. Sierra Leonean American (Loko)	11
9. Sierra Leonean American (Creole)	6	10. Sierra Leonean American (Temni)	1
10. Zimbabwe American (Zulu)	6	12. South African American (Zulu)	2
13. Ghanaian American (Gha)	8	14. Benin American (Yuroba)	1
15. Hispanic (El Salvador) American	3	16. Haitian American	6
17. St. Kitts and Nevis American	1	18. Jamaican American	1
18. Aruban American	5	20. US Virgin Island American	1
21. Jewish American (Staff)	1	22. Kenyan American (visitors)	2
23. Korean American (visitors)	2		



APPENDIX F
ETHNOGRAPHIC/CULTURAL INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Cultural and Ethnic Identity

- A. What is your cultural and/or ethnic identity?
- B. If you have first generation identity, how long have you been in the U.S.?
- C. Were you a Christian in your prior context?
- D. Were you a United Methodist in your previous context?

Spiritual Assumptions

- A. What was your impression of the U.S., prior to coming to the U.S.?
- B. What was your expectation coming to the U.S.?
- C. What was your impression of The UMC, prior to RFUMC?

Spiritual Values

- A. What values from your culture/family/church do you bring to RFUMC?
 - A.1. What were you taught?
 - A.2. What's important to you?
- B. Prior to RFUMC, what denomination were you?

Spiritual Needs

- A. What attracted you to the U.S.?
- B. What attracted you to Riverdale First United Methodist Church?
- C. Do you feel as though Riverdale First United Methodist Church is a welcoming or hospitable church?
- D. What are your spiritual needs?
- E. Do you attend a Sunday School class or Bible Study Class at Riverdale First United Methodist Church? (If not, state where, or why not?)

- F. In addition to Riverdale First United Methodist Church, do you attend worship, Bible study, or other spiritual nurture classes anywhere else?
- G. In which cultural or ethnic organizations do you participate (if any)?
- H. Do you feel as though these groups would be welcomed at Riverdale First United Methodist Church?

Spiritual Assessment of RFUMC

- A. What are your impressions of RFUMC Worship Services?
- B. What are your impressions of RFUMC Sunday School Classes?
- C. What are your impressions of/suggestions for RFUMC Bible Study Classes?
- D. What are your impressions of/suggestions for RFUMC Intercessory Prayer?
- E. What are your impressions of RFUMC?

Spiritual Fulfillment at Riverdale First UMC

- A. How does Riverdale First United Methodist Church fulfill your spiritual needs?
- B. In what ways does Riverdale First United Methodist Church not fulfill your spiritual needs?
- C. How have you been treated at Riverdale First United Methodist Church? (Describe in detail.)

APPENDIX G
FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS

1. Tell me about your homeland--
 - The People
 - The Food
 - The Music
 - The Culture
 - The Government/Politics
2. Tell me about your religious/church affiliations in your homeland,
 - Were you Christian? If not, what where you?
 - What were the religious/church influences of your homeland?
 - Who were the religious/church leaders that influenced you?
3. What drew you to Riverdale First United Methodist Church? E.g.
 - Someone invited you
 - Prior relationship with The United Methodist Church
 - Theology or doctrine of The United Methodist Church
4. What made you join Riverdale First United Methodist Church?
 - Music
 - Pastor/preaching
 - Hospitality/people
 - Race/ethnicity of the people
 - Christian nurture/Sunday School or Bible Study
 - Ministry/Event/Program
5. Are you involved in any type of Christian nurture groups? E.g.
 - Sunday School
 - Bible Study
 - Intercessory Prayer
6. Are you involved in any type of nurture group outside of Riverdale First United Methodist Church?
 - Outside Bible Study
 - Outside Cultural Associations
7. What type of cultural identity/recognition would you like to see at Riverdale First United Methodist Church?
 - Cultural Recognition Sunday/Month
 - Cultural Events
 - Cultural Speakers

APPENDIX H PARTICIPANT/OBSERVER SHEET

LEVEL OF INVOLVEMENT:

Please use the following scale to rate how you participated in the following areas.

1. Low Involvement (Congregant)	2. Some Involvement (Liturgist)	3. Moderate Involvement (Worship Leader)	3. High Involvement (Preached)
---------------------------------------	---------------------------------------	--	--------------------------------------

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES (BIAS):

Please use the following scale to rate how feel about multiculturalism.

1. Of no importance	2. Of Little Importance	3. Undecided	4. Somewhat important	5. Very important
------------------------	----------------------------	--------------	--------------------------	----------------------

DESCRIPTIONS OF SITE: Please use the following scale to rate how you participated in the following areas.

What is your overall impression of Riverdale First United Methodist Church?
(such as the spirit of RFUMC.)

Great	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Unsatisfactory
-------	------	--------------	------	----------------

Is there anything that stands out?

Positively?

Negatively?

What are your observations of the various cultural/ethnic groups present?

What is your perception of inclusion?

Worship

Great: Leadership	Good Involved	Average Present	Do no know
----------------------	------------------	--------------------	------------

Ministries

Great:	Good	Average	Do no know
--------	------	---------	------------

Leadership	Involved	Present	
------------	----------	---------	--

Do you see any evidence of inclusion, exclusion, or mistreatment?

Inclusion

Great:	Good	Average	Unsatisfactory
Yes Several cultures utilized	At least one person of another culture was utilized	Other cultures visible but not in leadership	One culture identified or utilized

Exclusion

Yes	Some	Average	Unsatisfactory
One culture dominant	At least one person of another culture was utilized	Other cultures visible but not in leadership	One culture identified or utilized

Mistreatment

Yes	Some	No	Not observable
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APPENDIX I

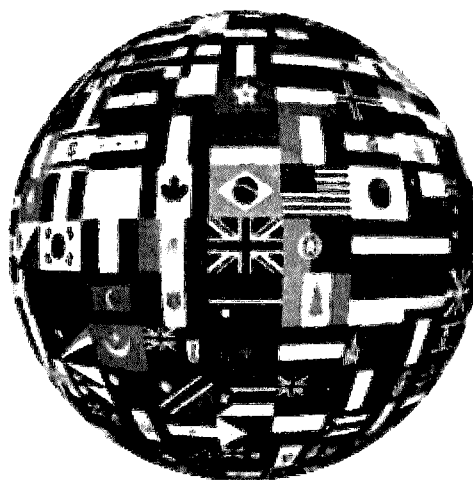
(Advertising Flyer for Workshop: A Narrative Model of Spiritual Formation at Riverdale First United Methodist Church, a Multicultural Congregation)

RIVERDALE FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

6590 Church Street, Riverdale, GA 30224 770-909-7891

THE WORLD COMES TO RIVERDALE FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH: Getting to Know Your Neighbor (A Multicultural Workshop)

This workshop will be the first in a number of workshops to enable Riverdale First in a process that leads to getting people to tell and listen to their stories, and how these stories set the stage for a larger story, which eventually helps the church to tell a new story.



- 4 persons are chosen to tell the story of Riverdale First UMC as each storyteller remembers it.
- After the four stories are told, the participants are asked to break up into smaller groups and discuss what best summarizes the four stories.
- Assessing our History
- Assessing our Spiritual Formation
- Planning the Future

■ January 9, 2016

■ 10:00 am—1:00 pm

Take I-285 South to Riverdale Road. Proceed South on Riverdale Road. The church is located 5 miles south of I-285. The name of the street changes to Church Street immediately in front of the church.

ETHNIC GROUPS OF RIVERDALE FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Black Americans
White Americans
Igbo Nigerian Americans
Yoruba Nigerian Americans
Hausa Nigerian Americans
Igbo Nigerian Americans
Kro-Liberian Americans
Gha-Ghanan Americans
Zulu-Zimbabwe Americans
Zulu-South African Americans
Creole-Sierra Leonean Americans
Loko-Sierra Leonean Americans
Tema-Sierra Leonean Americans
Yoruba-Benin Americans
Hispanic Americans
Haitian Americans
St. Kitts and Nevis Americans
Jamaican Americans
Aruban Americans
US Virgin Island Americans
Jewish Americans (Staff)
Korean Americans (Visitors)
Korean Americans (Visitors)

APPENDIX J

**THE WORLD COMES TO
RIVERDALE FIRST
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH:
Getting to Know Your Neighbor**

Saturday, January 9, 2016
10:00 am – 1:00 pm

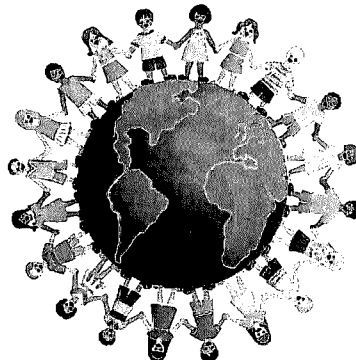


*A Multicultural Workshop: "A Narrative Model of Spiritual Formation at
Riverdale First United Methodist Church, A Multicultural Congregation"*

6390 Church Street,
Riverdale, GA 30274

Rev. Moses Woodruff, Jr., Pastor
and Workshop Facilitator

***“A Narrative Model of Spiritual Formation
at Riverdale First United Methodist Church, A Multicultural Congregation”***



AGENDA

9:45 am	-	10:00 am	Gathering
10:00 am	-	10:15 am	Introductions and Purpose
10:15 am	-	11:15 am	Ethnic Story Telling: Black American White American Zimbabwean Ndebele African American Caribbean American
11:15 am	-	11:45 am	Small Group Story Linking (Summary Statements)
11:45 am	-	12:15 pm	Lunch (Working Lunch)
11:45 am	-	12:15 pm	Accessing Our History
12:15 pm	-	12:45 pm	Assessing Our Spiritual Formation

***“A Narrative Model of Spiritual Formation
at Riverdale First United Methodist Church, a Multicultural Congregation”***

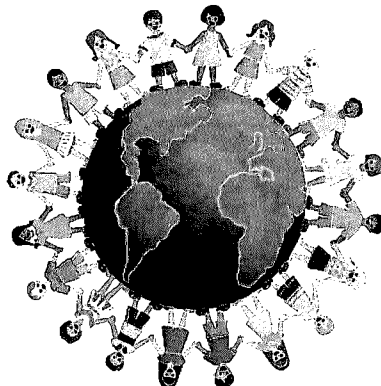


Objective of this Workshop

The objective of this workshop is to engage Riverdale First in a process that leads to getting people to tell and listen to their stories, and how these stories set the stage for a larger story, which eventually helps the church to tell a new story.

This workshop is not an end-all, but rather a beginning. By becoming exposed to one another's story, a comfort level of story linking and sharing can begin. This process will allow further workshops of listening. In a multicultural setting, listening to one another is crucial to congregational harmony, unity, and vision, as well as community building.

***"A Narrative Model of Spiritual Formation
at Riverdale First United Methodist Church, a Multicultural Congregation"***



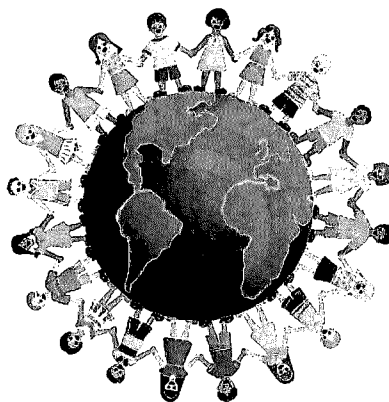
Assumption of this Workshop

Riverdale First United Methodist Church (RFUMC) will live out a dominant story and several other secondary stories, and these stories will be identified and assessed. These stories assist the church in eventually formulating a mission and vision statement that not only reflect the members of the church, but help us to get to know our neighbors' stories as well.

As the demographics of Clayton County and surrounding counties change, the stories will change. It is important for the church to be attuned to the narratives of those moving into our vicinity, visiting our church, and joining our church.

The information shared today will be given to the RFUMC Church Council and the Church Conference for inclusion and approval into the Church's Vision!

***“A Narrative Model of Spiritual Formation
at Riverdale First United Methodist Church, a Multicultural Congregation”***



Format and Design for this Workshop

A workshop that involves storytelling, assessment of stories and programs, and designing and planning strategies for the future.

Phase 1: Story Telling - 15 minutes each for 1 hour.

At least 4 persons are chosen to tell the story of Riverdale First UMC as each storyteller remembers it. The telling of the story should cover, but is not limited to the following: When did you become a member of Riverdale First? Who were the pastor and the key leaders, as well, their race/culture? What was the racial composition of the church? How have you seen Riverdale First develop over the years? What is the significance of the stories you heard as it pertains to the future of Riverdale First? What would best capture the essence or gist of the story of the organization, if you had to select a fictional story, Bible story, movie, or novel?

Phase 2: Developing Themes from Story Linking. After the four stories are told, the participants are asked to break up into small groups and discuss what best summarizes the four stories. Each small group is asked to come up with a fictional story, Bible story, novel, movie, or something else that helps to name the organization's dominant and sub stories.

After 30 minutes, have the groups assemble and make their report. The report should include the summary statement and pictures. This phase should take 30-45 minutes.

Phase 3: Accessing the History. 30 minutes.

This will attempt to identify the phase in which Riverdale First is, as well as the various ethnic groups. The phases are as follows:

1. Foundation phase

- What was the ethnic/cultural makeup of Riverdale First, when you joined?
- What was their vision?
- What Biblical or theological ideas/images informed the vision?
- What personal characteristics did they exhibit?
- What is your church heritage? (From your childhood/adulthood).
- What were some of your prior church beliefs?

2. Expansion Phase

- What attracted you to Riverdale First?
- How fast did Riverdale First grow?
- What ministries have been implemented since you came?
- What were the largest ministries?
- Who were the key leaders?
- What were the dates involved?

3. Stabilization Phase

- When did the growth of Riverdale First level off?
- Who were the leaders?
- What programs survived
- What were the dates?

4. Decline

- When did or has the original church faded?
- What other factors led to the church's decline?
- What programs failed?
- What were the dates?

5. Renewal Phase

- What factors led to the renewal of Riverdale First?
- What Biblical/theological ideas/images informed the renewal?

6. Present Phase

- What is your culture/ethnicity?
- What is your impression of the culture/ethnicity of Riverdale First?
- Are all people welcomed here?

Phase 4: Assessing Spiritual Formation. 30 minutes.

MINISTRIES:

1. What ministries of the past are dead?
2. What ministries need to die and be buried?
3. What ministries need to be resurrected?
4. What ministries are alive and well?

5. What ministries are newly developing?
6. What new ministries can you see emerging in the future?
7. What ministries need to be resurrected or transformed?
8. What ministries are newly developing?
9. What new ministries can you see emerging in the future?

WORSHIP:

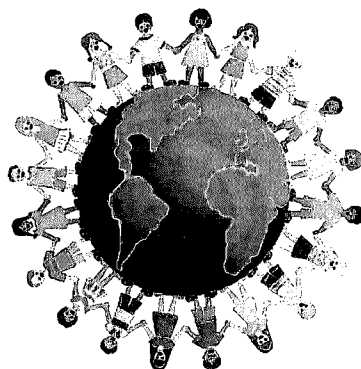
11. What's important to you, in ranking order: 1. Preaching/Pastor 2. Music 3. Ministries
4. Doctrine/Theology/Beliefs

MEMBERSHIP

12. Where do you observe equality among ethnic groups/cultures?
13. Where do you observe oppression/marginalization among ethnic groups/cultures?

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

14. Do you attend a Bible study class, Sunday School class, prayer group, or other spiritual nurture classes?
15. If not, why not?
16. If not, do you attend these classes at home, or at another church or other facility?



**Ethnic Groups
Of Riverdale First United Methodist Church**

Black American
 White American
 Igbo - Nigerian American
 Yuroba - Nigerian American
 Housa - Nigerian American
 Ijaw - Nigerian American
 Kru - Liberian American
 Gha - Ghanaian American
 Zulu/Ndebele - Zimbabwean American
 Zulu - South African American
 Creole - Sierra Leonean American
 Loko - Sierra Leonean American
 Temni - Sierra Leonean American
 Yuroba - Benin American
 Hispanic American
 Haitian American
 St. Kitts and Nevis American
 Aruban American
 US Virgin Islander American
 Jewish American (Staff)
 Jamaican American (Visitors)
 Kenyan American (Visitors)
 Korean American (Visitors)

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