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The Freedom Church: Reviewing Our Practices for Ministry in the 21st Century

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Abstract

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In an effort to refocus on the mission of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the Board of Bishops presented the quadrennial theme *"The Freedom Church: Refocusing on Our Purpose, Reviewing Our Practices, Retooling Our People and Reaching Our Potential"* at the 2016 General Conference. This study will argue that the AME Zion Church needs a process to fulfill the second component of the theme, *Reviewing our Practices*. This process would help churches address the longstanding mission of liberation as the Freedom Church, and to carry out a new mission layered on top of it that challenges 21st-century postmodernism. Postmodernism poses a threat as it presents a new, complex and ever-changing definition of liberation and freedom that has the ability to undermine the spiritual engagement of the church as followers of Christ. This study explores how Robert Schnase's five fruitful practices of radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional faith development, risk-taking mission and service, and extravagant generosity were used to implement a process in seven churches in the New Jersey Annual Conference to evaluate their current ministry practices. The process can be used to provide feedback to the members, pastor, and other leaders to help with addressing the historic and contemporary challenges that black people and other people of color face in an attempt to obtain true freedom in today's society.

The Freedom Church: Reviewing Our Practices for Ministry in the 21st Century

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Introduction

The Board of Bishops (BOB) of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AME Zion Church) presented the quadrennial theme *"The Freedom Church: Refocusing on Our Purpose, Reviewing Our Practices, Retooling Our People and Reaching Our Potential"* at the 2016 General Conference.[1] This theme is a clarion call for the members, both lay and clergy, to refocus on our mission as the Freedom Church. The AME Zion Church garnered this name after its founding in 1796 in response to the aggressive and widespread effects of chattel slavery that had pervaded the Methodist Episcopal Church where many free and enslaved blacks were members.

In 1820, after voting to leave the Methodist Episcopal Church, the AME Zion Church founders published the first *Book of Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church* (*The Discipline*), which laid out the rules and regulations for the church to practice ministry.[2] The central focus of the mission statement included in the 1820 edition of *The Discipline* was Luke 4:18, which reads:

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18, NIV).[3]

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[1] Board of Bishops, *Quadrennial Episcopal Address to the Fiftieth Session of the General Conference of The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church* (Charlotte, NC: AME Zion Publishing House, 2016), 3.

[2] African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, *The Book of Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church* (Charlotte, NC: AME Zion Publishing House, 2016), i; William J. Walls, *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church: Reality of the Black Church* (Charlotte: AME Zion Publishing House, 1974)*,* 27 & 44.

[3] AME Zion Church, *The Discipline,* ii.

The mission of the church was to provide black people, slave and free, a radical new tradition of worshipping and understanding God that contrasted with that of whites, who preached strict obedience and subservience to them.[4] The ministry implicit in this Scripture and in the rules and regulations codified in *The Discipline* was that the church was to create and maintain practices that brought hope in God's provision of deliverance, spiritually and physically, from bondage, restoration of human dignity, and a sense of communal belonging.[5] The Freedom Church was to serve as an agent to speak a good and joy-inspiring word of liberation from sin and a pathway to freely worship God, while actively fighting for the abolishment of slavery and equal treatment of all people.

The BOB's address posed the question, "What does God call the AME Zion Church to be and do in this time and place?" Through its address, the BOB calls the church to refocus on its mission "to serve the present age" for God's people.[6] The mission of liberation laid out by the founders is still relevant today and should be central in the evaluation of AME Zion ministry practices. However, the 21st century has added a new and more complex layer of mission with the unpredictable, complicated and ever-changing paradigm shift to the postmodern world. This paradigm shift draws attention to the fact that many black churches have not thought about or focused on the exploration of freedom and liberation for today. This exploration must be able to address the injustices that may have changed in some degree since slavery was abolished, but are

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[4] Allen Dwight Callahan, *The Talking Book: African Americans and the Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 23 & 34; James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation: 40th Anniversary Edition*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010), 10; Peter J. Paris, "Black Folk in North America: Presidential Address to the American Theological Society, March 2012." *Theology Today* 69, no. 4 (January 2013): 386; Walls, *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion*, 44.

[5] AME Zion Church, *The Discipline*, ii; Walls, *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church,* 44.

[6] Bishops, *Quadrennial Episcopal Address,* 3.

just as repressive. In addition, it must confront the new issues that people in this postmodern

society face that redefine freedom and liberation in the 21st. As the BOB asked in their 2016

Episcopal Address:

> How does the message of the Freedom Church – the message that preaches "good news
> to the poor" sound today? What must we know or do to "bind up the brokenhearted" in
> our homes and communities? What is the message of "liberty" that those who are
> "captives" need and wait to hear in contemporary society?[7]

The BOB recommends the five tools Bishop Robert Schnase presents to assist

congregations in being more effective in carrying out ministry today in his book, *Five Practices

of Fruitful Congregations*.[8] This study explores how Schnase's five fruitful practices of radical

hospitality, passionate worship, intentional faith development, risk-taking mission and service,

and extravagant generosity can help churches deal with both the historic and current mission of

the church, which is to provide ministry practices that meet the needs of the community and

those who are oppressed and suffering.[9] The BOB recommends their incorporation in retooling

church members to be more effective in active church practices if the church is to reach its

potential in carrying out its mission.

The questions this study will seek to address are 1) What does God call the AME Zion

Church to be and do in this time and place? 2) What does freedom mean today? 3) What does the

review of practices at seven AME Zion Churches in New Jersey using the process introduced in

this study reveal about their current practices and their ability to carry out their mission in the

21st century? 4) Is the use of Schnase's five fruits to review practices of the AME Zion Church

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[7] Bishops, *Quadrennial Episcopal Address*, 8.

[8] Ibid*.,* 18.

[9] Robert Schnase, *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* 2nd ed. (Nashville: Abington
Press, 2018), ix.

relevant to carrying out the AME Zion Church's double mission of attacking institutional racism and dealing with postmodernism? To answer these questions the study will examine the historical function of the AME Zion Church as the Freedom Church, define freedom today and the AME Zion Church's status today, and present the process that seven AME Zion congregations in New Jersey used to evaluate their practices and present their findings to the pastor, district presiding elder or episcopal leader.

This study will argue that the AME Zion Church needs a process to review ministry practices. The process will provide feedback to the members, pastors, and other leaders to help them address the historic and contemporary challenges that people face. This process uses Schnase's work to categorize ministry practices in the participating churches, provide evidence of their active use by the churches, and to note practices that reflect or do not reflect their existence. The findings may be used to assist churches in implementing practices that address the longstanding issues that plague the black community and confront postmodern thought that undermines the spiritual engagement of the church.

The Mission of the AME Zion Church

When the first *Discipline* of the AME Zion Church was written in 1820, the state of the church was reacting to the culture of its time. The socio-economic conditions, technology, and political-philosophical climate shaped a clear understanding of what it literally and spiritually meant to be poor, captive and brokenhearted. Like many scholars, the founders compared the state of black people to that of the Israelites when Isaiah spoke his prophecy to them while they

were in captivity in Babylon.[10] Those words speak to the state of the people before Christ and without the manifestation of Jesus the Christ in their lives.

As members of the Methodist Episcopal Church (ME Church), many free and enslaved black people believed they would find religious freedom not available in the southern United States (US) or in society outside the church. Initially this was true; however, the disturbing effects of the system of chattel slavery and white supremacist thought impacted the ME Church.[11] Black members were treated unfairly as the church grew in influence and popularity while the racial harmony that once existed between blacks and whites collapsed. A few black men were granted licenses to preach but were limited in whom they could preach to, including other black members of the church. Black clergy were not allowed to join the Methodist Conference, the decision-making arm of the denomination, and black worshipers were segregated from white members during worship services, usually being forced to sit in the church gallery and not the main sanctuary. Both free blacks and slaves endured the oppressive conditions of everyday life and now were experiencing the ill effects of white supremacy and hatred full force in a church that had held a promising policy of fair treatment for blacks.[12] In response, the AME Zion Church was formed, first in conjunction with the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME Church) as a part of the abolitionist movement and with a spirit of reform and activism.[13] Its actions garnered it the nickname of the Freedom Church.[14]

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[10] Walls, *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church,* 43; Paris, "The Theologies of Black Folk," 386.

[11] Paris, "The Theologies of Black Folk," 386.

[12] Walls, *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church,* 43-44.

[13] Walls, *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church,* 45; Paris, "The Theologies of Black Folk," 386.

Most AME Zion Churches in New Jersey had a similar beginning as that of Varick

Memorial AME Zion Church in Hackensack, New Jersey. Varick Memorial was founded in

1864, just prior to the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation.[15] During the early development

of the city of Hackensack in 1664 as an agricultural and commerce based society, the boundaries

of segregating persons according to race and socioeconomic status began with the institution of

slavery. The English proprietors who owned New Jersey offered 60 acres of land, per slave, to

anyone who supported the import of slaves for the purpose of free labor essential for the build-up

of the colonial economy.[16] Bergen County is recorded as having the highest slave population in

Eastern New Jersey and went by the name New Barbados.[17]

After the abolition of slavery permanently in 1864 in America, blacks endured strict laws

limiting their citizenship, activities, education and political voice.[18] Many black families

migrated to Hackensack in an effort to establish themselves after fleeing injustice and inequality

they endured everywhere. Hackensack became known in the early 1900s as the center of

economic growth and industrialism because of its location along the Hackensack River and the

Northern Valley and New York Railroad systems, which provided it global access. This made

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[14] Walls, *The African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church,* 29.

[15] *Varick Memorial Church History,* ed. Rosalyn Holland (Hackensack, NJ: Varick Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, 2014), 1.

[16] Linda Steuerwald and Barbara Iozzia, *The City of Hackensack: Three Centuries of Prosperity* (Hackensack: The City of Hackensack, 1994), 39-40.

[17] Terry Lark, *Hackensack – Heritage to Horizons 1609-1976* (Hackensack, NJ: The Hackensack Bicentennial Committee, 1976), 6-7*;* Steuerwald and Iozzia, *The City of Hackensack*, 39.

[18] Steuerwald and Iozzia, *The City of Hackensack,* 40.

the city attractive to black migrants because of the job opportunities presented, especially after World War I began in Europe in 1914.[19]

Even though the railroad had aided in opening up the city in 1889 for business and industry to support a new population of middle-class commuters from New York City and wealthy white families who built huge homes on the hill, the black population was forced to rely on itself for all essential services.[20] The lasting effects of slavery left former slaves with little resources, networking skills or opportunities and religious oppression. Black churches like Varick Memorial provided the "spiritual, social and political enrichment" needed by blacks, for few whites would provide these things to help blacks acclimate to their new way of life.[21]

The Freedom Church was a part of a religious movement that offered liberation from the systems of racial oppression and spiritual bondage to sin.[22] The Black theology presented in the AME Zion and other black churches that emerged was a radical response aimed at encouraging Blacks to transform the way of seeing themselves, from living as subordinate and oppressed Negroes in the current society to Blacks as humans with divine restoration, deliverance and the inalienable rights bestowed on all citizens by the Constitution of these United States.[23]

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[19] Steuerwald and Iozzia, *The City of Hackensack,* 40.

[20] Ibid.

[21] Ibid., 45.

[22] Paris, "The Theologies of Black Folks," 386.

[23] Vincent W. Lloyd, "Black Secularism and Black Theology," *Theology Today,* 68 no.1 (April 2011): 60.

The BOB defines freedom as "exemption from external control, interference, regulation, etc." and "the power to determine action without restraint."[24] As such, the AME Zion Church practices strove for spiritual and literal liberation.[25] The church became a place Blacks came to rely on for support when facing the challenges and changes brought upon them by the systematic oppression of slavery, post-slavery Jim Crow laws, and government-backed segregation as well as the personal stressors of a family to include parenting, broken relationships, and substance abuse.[26]

Avent and Cashwell contend that blacks that were actively involved in their churches were able to reconcile the human struggle between good and evil.[27] Active involvement in the church included attending worship services, Bible study, and personal faith development tasks such as having devotional time, listening to gospel music and to sermons.[28] Contrary to the white Christianity of the time, black churches gave their members an escape from oppression, even if only on Sunday morning, and brought a communal understanding of what it meant to be free people in Christ. The all-consuming identity of slaves as inferior beings that were scripturally mandated to obey their masters was slowly erased.[29] Avent and Cashwell describe it as

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[24] Bishops, *Quadrennial Episcopal Address,* 4.

[25] Paris, "The Theologies of Black Folk," 388.

[26] Janee' R. Avent and Craig S. Cashwell, "The Black Church: Theology and Implications for Counseling African Americans," *The Professional Counselor* 5 no. 1 (2015): 2.

[27] Ibid., 3.

[28] Avent and Cashwell, "The Black Church," 3.

[29] Ibid., 4.

"therapeutic relief and departure from the pressures and brutality experienced on the plantation".[30]

The AME Zion Church, like other black churches, helped the congregants to find hope in the word of God, which promised a future free of oppression. Eventually, during the Civil Rights Era, black churches offered blacks leadership opportunities, which granted them prestige, rank, and authority, which was denied to them outside the church by those in power, usually whites.[31] The AME Zion Church offered freedom for blacks to be themselves and to take on the accountability and responsibility for their communities, their families and their spiritual lives.

The Freedom Church in the 21st Century

Many black churches have not taken the time to consider how people see themselves in relation to the word of God today. What does freedom mean today as opposed to what it once meant to the Freedom Church when it was established?

The AME Zion Church, like many other black churches, finds itself in a similar position as it was at the beginning of the 20th century.[32] Why? Because despite the advances made from the enactment of civil rights laws and educational opportunities, technological advances and economic success by blacks, an economic and power divide continues to exist between blacks and whites. There are policies in place that continue to eliminate resources, jobs, decrease wages and increase costs for those already in poverty. The wealthy become wealthier while a great

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[30] Avent and Cashwell, "The Black Church," 3.

[31] Ibid., 7.

[32] James H. Evans, Jr., "The Prophetic Role of the African American Churches in the 21st Century," *Reflections* (Fall/Wint 2006): 36.

number of blacks and other people of color live at or below the poverty line. Evans contends that even those in the middle class who have achieved economic success experience powerlessness against oppression.[33] In this, Evans contends, there is a continued need to empower the people with the good news that no form of oppression is within God's will.[34]

According to the black theologian James Cone, the black church needs to maintain a consistent theology of liberation that calls people out in today's environment.[35] It needs to recognize that oppression still exists, even if it is not obvious.[36] When the black church continues to practice liberation theology, the community of the oppressed will recognize that their "liberation is not only consistent with the Gospel but is the Gospel of Jesus the Christ."[37] Evans states, "The black church must practice an ethic of empowerment, that faith is essentially empowerment and that any ministry or sociopolitical or economic structure that fosters dependence, degradation or despair is not the product of true faith."[38]

Implicit in liberation is the concept of redemption and reconciliation to God. God's people must be delivered from the shackles imposed by others as well as those from sin.[39] Intrinsic in this deliverance is the human desire by those in the black church to be concerned

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[33] Evans, "The Prophetic Role," 36.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Cone, *A Black Theology,* 11.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Cone, *A Black Theology,* 1; T. Vaughn Walker, "Black Church Strategies for the Twenty-First Century," *The Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 52.

[38] Evans, "The Prophetic Role," 36.

[39] Walker, "Black Church Strategies, 56.

about the social, economic, political and physical conditions of all people, especially people of

color who are overlooked by the current societal systems in place. Cone states that black

liberation and physical survival in a hostile environment go hand in hand and must be the focus

of the black theological understanding of liberation.[40] He maintains that blacks retain anxiety

over life and death because of their vulnerability in American society that is evidenced today in

the response to the killings of unarmed black people. They struggle to preserve their black

identity and consciousness while continuing a consistent rebellion against white supremacist

social and political power.[41] Because of these conditions, liberation must be accompanied by

godliness to succeed. Without godliness and intentional faith development, people will

eventually die.[42]

The mission of the AME Zion Church remains applicable today. Therefore, our

evaluation of practices and retooling of our people must be conducted with an intention to

operate as *The Freedom Church,* providing liberation today. The prevailing thought is that we

must focus on numbers. However, the mission of freedom is important for today's people

because institutional racism remains intact.[43] As a result, many people of color do not receive the

full privileges and responsibilities of citizenship in the United States, the strength of the black

community is diminished because the strength of the black family continues to be at risk, and

attempts to enact collective action to address any of these issues is undermined by the policies,

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[40] Cone, *A Black Theology*, 11.

[41] Ibid., 11-15.

[42] Walker, "Black Church Strategies," 57.

[43] Asafa Jalata, "Revisiting the Black Struggle: Lessons for the 21st Century," *Journal of Black Studies* 33 no. 1 (2002): 86-116.

procedures and actions of those in power aimed at keeping the black community divided, powerless, voiceless and in some cases without a vote to effect change.

On top of these historical challenges the black community faces, the 21st century has complicated the mission of the AME Zion Church by layering on a new mission focus. This focus entails navigating a new social and spiritual consciousness called postmodernism that is fueled by access to an overabundance of information and options.[44] The church must find a way to practice liberation in a society where the concepts of liberation and freedom take on new meaning. They must navigate a society that has shifted from production to consumerism and information accumulation, from national to international and local politics, multiculturalism, comingling of religious practices, minimal structure, limited boundaries, and questionable oversight.[45]

<p style="text-align:center">Institutional Racism</p>

Institutional racism in America blossomed during the 400-year history of chattel slavery and though slavery was abolished 154 years ago, its legacy continues to linger and resists extinction. Because racism continues to be passed down through generations and consistent global action is not taken to terminate it, it thrives. Blacks and other people of color continue to experience the effects of its oppressive, dehumanizing and violent nature, which is met by an everlasting cry for the freedom for those whose ancestors believed that liberation was already

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[44] Harland G. Bioland, "Postmodernism and Higher Education," *The Journal of Higher Education* 66 no. 5 (Sept-Oct 1995): 522; Jill M. Hudson, *When Better Isn't Enough: Evaluation Tools for the 21st-Century Church* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2004), 4.

[45] Bioland, "Postmodernism and Higher Education," 522; Hudson, *When Better Isn't Enough,* 4.

achieved. The widespread segregation that ensued after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed and still wet with ink was intentionally imposed by government action at federal, state and local levels. These entities took up where slavery left off in the oppression of blacks.[46] For example, the federal government used *De jure* segregation, as the courts call it, to enforce widespread housing discrimination to systematically perpetuate second-class citizenship upon blacks.[47] Such action not only violated the constitutional rights of blacks aimed at garnering equality for all as stipulated in the Fifth, Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments but also set in motion the creation of urban ghettos and other racially impoverished neighborhoods rendering blacks captive to new forms of oppression and degradation.[48] These ghettos and impoverished neighborhoods carry some of the highest crime, unemployment, and social service reliance rates, which affect what it means for the occupants to be spiritually, mentally, socially, economically and physically free.[49] Michelle Alexander in *The New Jim Crow* contends that the American penal system has taken up the mantle of the old Jim Crow and New Deal laws through the mass incarceration of black people and the creation of a new system of slavery.[50] She asserts that the

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[46] Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017), viii.

[47] Ibid., viii.

[48] Rothstein, *The Color of Law*, viii.

[49] Thomas N. Maloney, *African Americans in the Twentieth Century,* EH.Net Encyclopedia, edited by Robert Whaples. January 14, 2002, 1; Rothstein, *The Color of Law,* 17.

[50] Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2012), 11.

actions by federal, state and local law enforcement and judicial systems continue to perpetuate

subjugation and repression that is supported by law.[51]

According to Walker, the greatest challenge facing the church in the next century is

providing ministry to the black family.[52] The structure of the family continues to diversify and

become more complex due to parental divorce, separation, marriage, cohabitation, death, and

inclusion of extended family members.[53] The Pew Research Center documents that less than half

of black children live in a two-parent household, a stark contrast to white, Hispanic and Asian

children where the majority live in the same structure. These conditions are not new to the black

family in America as the breakdown of the black family was a tool utilized within the system of

slavery and racist actions that followed for a myriad of reasons to support it.[54] The black family

has had to maintain a higher sense of resilience in the face of separation of family members.

However, many are determined to maintain family bonds, reclaim a healthier family structure,

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[51] Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 11.

[52] Walker, "Black Church Strategies," 54.

[53] Kim Parker and Juliana M. Horowitz, "Social and Demographic Trends: Parenting in America," Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C. (2015).

[54] Edward Ball, "Retracing Slavery's Trail of Tears: America's forgotten migration – the journeys of a million African-Americans from the tobacco South to the cotton South," *Smithsonian Magazine* (November 2015); Mark Thorton, Mark A. Yanochik and Bradley T. Ewing, "Selling Slave Families Down River: Property Rights and the Public Auction," *The Independent Review* 14, no. 1 (Summer 2009), 72. Note: During slavery, black children were sold or separated from parents, husbands, and wives separated and sold to unknown plantations, black women were raped even when married to a black man, black mothers were taken to nurse white babies, and black male children were taken and sold for revenue. The government supported segregation excluded blacks from living in white communities where jobs were located and decent housing was available. Often families were split as husbands/fathers commuted or lived long distances away from the family to work or mothers as live in housekeepers.

work ethic, adaptability to changing family roles and a fervent focus on religion, all of which are indicative of liberated lifestyles.[55]

Walker maintains that the freedom and liberation of blacks are directly attributable to their willingness to be in community with other blacks, and that begins with the black family unit, as the family is the basis of all human units.[56] He states, "Any society that allows the family unit to collapse eventually will collapse itself."[57] Jalata contends that in order for freedom and liberation to be enacted there must be collective action that resonates with the individuals and the collective identity of blacks that makes any action meaningful.[58] The Freedom Church must help the community to see human freedom through the lens of the liberation of the mind and spirit that results in hope for survival in the future. It must be at the forefront of collective action efforts to help those struggling to collaborate with others in the community to become stronger in every aspect of their lives to bring about change.

Postmodernism

While black churches in the late 20th century were being formed to meet the social, economic, political and spiritual needs of blacks, many members of the black community were adopting a new perspective on their religious formation. The black church in many ways was blind-sided, though not totally unaware of the development of this new perspective that offered

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[55] Walker, "Black Church Strategies," 54.

[56] Walker, "Black Church Strategies," 55.

[57] Ibid., 57.

[58] Jalata, "Revisiting the Black Struggle," 87.

options and methods to meet people's needs for spiritual fulfillment. This new perspective was just another component of postmodernism.

Postmodernism is a shift in social and cultural thought and action beginning in the early 1970s.[59] Hudson describes postmodernism as a paradigm shift where opposing views and beliefs are no longer adversarial, the thought that progress and knowledge are good is debated and the truth is defined by personal experience or the collaborative effort of those in a relationship.[60] It is unpredictable and holds a somewhat different understanding of reason and logic as opposed to the modern era, which was practical, functional and focused on the rationality of science.[61] It presents new freedom to a society that is ripe with choices and challenges the way we think about life and the world.

The new perspective developed seems to stem from the diversification of what it means to be spiritual as opposed to religious and the role that the church has in meeting spiritual and religious needs. Though there continues to exist no clear distinction between the spiritual and nonspiritual needs for the black community, postmodernism helps to develop a new sense of freedom not expressed in the church.[62] The postmodern era provides liberation from both historical and present systems of oppression while offering unconstrained freedom of choice and expression.[63] In this freedom of the postmodern world, the peer groups in which one belongs,

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[59] Hudson, *When Better Isn't Enough,* 4.

[60] Hudson, *When Better Isn't Enough*, 6.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Sandra Barnes, "The Black Church Revisited: Toward a New Millennium DuBosian Mode of Inquiry," *Sociology of Religion* 75, no. 4 (Wint 2014): 616.

[63] Barnes, "The Black Church Revisited," 616; Hudson, *When Better Isn't Enough*, 6.

whether they are gangs, fraternities, or churches, shape the individual's beliefs. Morals, ethics, and values are no longer passed down through the family, church or community but shaped and molded by one's personal experiences.

The postmodern world is also marked with examples of people's desire to stand out and not fit in. People sport blue hair, piercings, body tattoos, and conflicting styles of clothing such as shorts with combat boots or the exposure of undergarments. In this freedom, choices abound for the issue of faith, which is described as "consumer mentality" or a "Buyer's Market" in religious life.[64] Both descriptions relate to the attitude of shopping for churches as one would a car or other consumer good. Hudson quotes Alan Roxburgh, a Canadian author who says, "Too many church leaders today feel like vendors of religious goods and services offering their wares to an army of hungry religious consumers who take, adapt, borrow, use and discard the various aspects of Christian life as they pop in and out of our churches."[65] In this postmodern world, the black church has to maintain a consistent theology of liberation that keeps it at the forefront of the battle against sin and oppression. The AME Zion Church has the power to challenge the community in this postmodern world to attain godliness through commitment to Jesus Christ and His church while striving for freedom and liberation.[66]

The majority of churches in existence today have 70 or fewer members and these are dying off at a noticeable rate. At the same time, large churches are increasing in number and in size. These new churches appear to offer a liberating form of spiritual expression as they offer

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[64] Hudson, *When Better Isn't Enough, 7;* Christine D. Pohl, *Living into Community: Cultivating Practices That Sustain Us* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 78; Walker, "Black Church Strategies," 57.

[65] Hudson, *When Better Isn't Enough*, 10.

[66] Walker, "Black Church Strategies," 57.

more flexibility, change, information or what they believe are relevant ministry practices not found in the local church.[67] Jalata says this is more apparent in more socially marginalized populations, not out of lack of access to local churches, but because they claim formal institutions like the traditional church are spiritually and culturally restrictive and exclusionary.[68] Therefore, many have turned away from churches like the AME Zion Church for the liberation it seeks and needs.

Because of this, churches begin to emulate those churches, which appear to be attracting those who have left their church. Peluso-Verdend says these attractive congregations formulate obsession and anxiety over church growth and survival.[69] They develop a "compete, grow or die" attitude, which often limits the church's rationale and options to meet the needs of the people. The church is so busy trying to be what it is not; it forgets to focus on its mission. Nevertheless, the gospel message that the Freedom Church has committed to proclaiming is still relevant and the people of this postmodern era are those who need it.

Reviewing Our Practices at AME Zion Churches in New Jersey Annual Conference

Evaluating Christian Practices

If the AME Zion Church is going to be effective in carrying out this double mission of attacking oppression and confronting postmodernism in this 21st century, it has to remain faithful to God and take time to evaluate its ministry practices. Avent and Cashwell assert that the church

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[67] Alan Cooperman et al., "Religion and Public Life: America's Changing Religious Landscape," Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C., 2015.

[68] Jalata, "Revisiting the Black Struggle: Lessons for the 21st Century," 87.

[69] Peluso-Verdend, *Paying Attention,* 2.

must identify new criteria for effective practices, remain consistent in carrying them out and hold

the church, both leaders and lay members, accountable for them.[70] They maintain that the

effectiveness of today's practices cannot be measured by criteria that were important in earlier

periods of time in the world and the church.[71]

In evaluating effective ministry practices, Hudson maintains that the church has either to

embrace change or prepare itself for the impact that change will bring about.[72] Several scholars

believe that the era of postmodern is ushering in the second reformation and church leaders must

be prepared to lead God's people in and through a transformation of the Christian experience in

the 21st century.[73] Hudson contends that churches need to evaluate their attempts at navigating

this postmodern era of church life. In doing so, she stresses that the church needs to take a

realistic look at how it defines itself and how evangelism is enacted.[74] The review of practices

should not be limited to the ministries but should be extended to the church as a whole.[75]

Holmes discusses how historically any attempt at reviewing religious practices to

ascertain "doctrinal righteousness or wrongness" has failed.[76] The 21st-century shift from the

modern era to the postmodern era has caused many people and the church to be caught up in a

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[70] Avent and Cashwell, "The Black Church," 5.

[71] Avent and Cashwell, "The Black Church," 5.

[72] Hudson, *When Better Isn't Enough,* 13.

[73] Avent and Cashwell, "The Black Church," 5; Hudson, *When Better Isn't Enough,* 14; Walker, "Black Church Strategies," 57.

[74] Hudson, *When Better Isn't Enough*, 14.

[75] Ibid., 13.

[76] Barbara Holmes, *Joy Unspeakable: Contemplative Practices of the Black Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2004), 100.

whirlwind of change. The members and leaders of the church try to cling to the familiar, trying to maintain the status quo. By doing things the way they have always been done, they hope to ensure that the situation can be mitigated and everyone can get back to business as usual. Hudson states, "Church members in good faith believe their pastor and other staff can take them there by working harder at what has worked before" (e.g. fundraising, events – Women's Day, Men's Day, Family and Friends, Anniversary).[77] The reality is that you cannot keep doing the same thing and expect different results. Many opportunities abound to implement Christian practices that witness to people as they are looking for support for their issues such as divorce, drug and alcohol abuse, parenting and care of senior parents as well as hope for a better tomorrow.[78]

The Process

A 17-question survey was administered as the first step in the process to review Christian practices aimed at achieving the mission of the AME Zion Church. The second step was to provide feedback to the members, pastors, and other leaders. Schnase's five fruitful practices were used to categorize the practices at the participants' church with the intent to provide evidence of their active use by the churches and to note practices that reflect or do not reflect their existence. It is hoped that using Schnase's five fruitful practices will help the churches in addressing the historic and contemporary challenges that plague the black community and confronting postmodern thought that undermines the spiritual engagement of the church. An extended study would allow for completing succeeding steps to include the presentation of

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[77] Hudson, *When Better Isn't Enough*, 4.

[78] Walker, "Black Church Strategies," 57.

results to the congregation or leaders; identifying practices in the church that work, need to be revised or eliminated; implementing new practices based on set goals and measurements of success; and conducting a follow up evaluation.

Christian Practices

Christian practices are patterns of behavior by groups of people, which have the ability to shape the response over time to God through faith in Jesus the Christ.[79] A more succinct definition would be that Christian practices are putting into practice what one believes. There are several sources that identify what practices are most prevalent and/or necessary in Christian churches. Craig Dykstra and Dorothy C. Bass suggest twelve Christian practices: honoring the body, hospitality, household economics, saying yes and saying no, keeping Sabbath, testimony, discernment, shaping communities, forgiveness, healing, dying well, and singing our lives.[80] However, Schnase focuses on five distinct practices he believes are necessary to foster a fruitful congregation: radical hospitality, passionate worship, intentional faith development, risk-taking mission and service, and extravagant generosity.[81]

The writer Flannery O'Connor conducted a study in which she sought out churches that had "a habit of being congregations with a soul."[82] O'Connor established several criteria to

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[79] Dorothy C. Bass. "Introduction," in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 3.

[80] Craig Dykstra and Dorothy C. Bass, "Times of Yearning, Practices of Faith," in *Practicing Our Faith,* ed. Dorothy C. Bass (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997), 5.

[81] Schnase, *Five Practices*, ix.

[82] Hudson, *When Better Isn't Enough,* 18; Paul Wilkes, *Excellent Catholic Parishes: The Guide to Best Places and Practices* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2001); Paul Wilkes, *Excellent Protestant Congregations: The Guide to Best Places and Practices* (Louisville: Westminister John Knox Press, 2001).

identify churches that were growing and thriving that could easily fit in the categories Schnase outlines.[83] The criteria included the necessity of bonding, welcoming and accessing people in the community, consciousness of the needs of the people, deep relationship with God, authentic worship, collaborative decision-making, confrontation of issues that plague the community and not being content with successes.[84]

The BOB adopts the five church practices that Schnase contends shape a congregation that bears fruit necessary to carry out ministry today.[85] The BOB recommends their incorporation in retooling church members to be more effective in active church practices if the church is to reach its potential in carrying out the mission of the Freedom Church.

Radical Hospitality (RH)

Hospitality can be loosely defined as being inviting, welcoming, receptive and caring to people not part of one's immediate family, who could even be considered strangers. Schnase contends, however, that our hospitality should go above and beyond standard hospitality; it must be radical hospitality, which offers the stranger a community to belong, a place to share and the feeling of worth.[86] These strangers' lifestyle, socioeconomic status, nationality, etc. may differ greatly from our own.[87] The new relationship should be one that consists of mutual respect and service where the grace and love of God abound.

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[83] Hudson, *When Better Isn't Enough,* 18; Schnase, *Five Practices,* 137.

[84] Hudson, *When Better Isn't Enough,* 18.

[85] Bishops, *Quadrennial Episcopal Address,* 18.

[86] Pohl, *Living into Community,* 159.

[87] Schnase, *Five Practices*, ix. & 31.

Passionate Worship (PW)

Worship is the practice of reverence and adoration of God. It is often described as an authentic encounter with God after devoting oneself to seeking Him to establish a covenant relationship. Schnase suggests that the church must engage in PW in order to prevent the act of true worship from becoming complacent, mundane, predictable, stale and devoid of the Spirit.[88]

Intentional Faith Development (IFD)

Schnase contends that faith development or maturity occurs when followers of Christ learn together as a community of faith and a community of diverse personalities and experiences.[89] IFD, therefore, entails a "variety of high-quality learning experiences that help people understand scripture" and the application of scripture to their faith and life in an environment that fosters supportive and caring relationships.[90] The practices must be deliberate, focused, consistent and aimed at purposeful action to meet the mission. Examples of IFD include Bible study, church school, new members classes and the like.

Risk-Taking Mission and Service (RTMS)

Schnase describes RTMS as "the projects, the efforts and work people do to make a positive difference in the lives of others for the purposes of Christ, whether or not they will ever be part of the community of faith."[91] These practices in actuality become risk-taking when they go beyond the ordinary service and everyday missions offered by the church. RTMS is

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[88] Schnase, *Five Practices*, 52.

[89] Ibid., 77.

[90] Ibid.

[91] Ibid., 109.

characterized as life-altering and extraordinary practices such as financial management classes, babysitting services to give single parents a night off and social justice action.[92]

Extravagant Generosity (EW)

Schnase defines generosity as "the Christian's unselfish willingness to give in order to make a positive difference for the purposes of Christ."[93] EG is a practice in giving beyond what is expected or imagined in the worship of God and service to others. This is exemplified not only in tithing but the sacrificial giving of time, resources and talent for the betterment of others.

Methodology

A process was implemented to review practices in AME Zion Churches located in the New Jersey Annual Conference using Schnase's five thematic areas (Refer to Appendix A: The Survey). This experimental mixed method study analyzed data from seven churches drawn from a survey administered between December 2018 and January 2019 at each of the churches. Secondary data were drawn from reports compiled by the AME Zion Church and conversations with members of participating churches.

Population

The primary population for this study was seven AME Zion churches in the New Jersey Annual Conference during the 2018-2019 conference year (refer to Table 1 for demographics). There were 80 participants, who were classified as clergy, lay members or those that attended regularly but were not members. Four of the churches are considered urban and have congregations of 30 to 200 members. Two churches are in suburban areas and have between 40

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[92] Schnase, *Five Practices*, 109

[93] Ibid., 137.

and 75 members. One congregation is rural and has less than 10 active members. The study focused on these seven churches because they responded and accepted the invitation to participate prior to the deadline specified in the invitation.

Table 1: Demographics of Participating Churches of New Jersey Annual Conference

Church	Non-members	Membership		# Participants	Membership Status*			Gender			Age Groups			
	Attend regularly	2017	2018		L	C	N	F	M	66 +	55-65	41-54	33-40	18-24
A	2	30	46	1**	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
B	6	153	151	27	21	2	4	20	7	14	9	2	0	2
C	3	63	59	10	7	3	0	6	4	5	3	2	0	0
D	3	189	196	25	24	1	0	12	13	0	13	6	6	0
E	1	1	2	1**	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
F	3	103	101	12	7	4	1	8	4	2	8	0	1	1
G	5	73	65	4	3	1	0	4	0	3	1	0	0	0
Totals	15	2598	2590	80	62	13	5	52	28	25	34	10	8	3

*L = Lay Member, C = Clergy and N = Nonmember
** The pastor was the only participant.

Research Design

An experimental mixed methods research design using random sampling of members of seven AME Zion Churches collected responses to examine whether members believed their church was engaged in effective practices to carry out the mission of the Church. The practices fell in the five categories presented by Schnase for fruitful congregations of Radical Hospitality, Passionate Worship, Intentional Faith Development and Extravagant Generosity. A Likert scale

was used to determine if the participants agreed with their churches' practices reflecting each of the five areas. The Likert scale was followed up with questions asking the participants to list practices in their church that did or did not reflect each of the five areas. The survey also collected data on changes made in local churches to improve practices, as well as recommendations that may help the church be more effective in carrying out its mission. Participants were polled at their churches and were given the option to complete the survey electronically using CrowdSignal.com or by completing a paper copy. Demographic information collected included: location of the church (city and state), gender, lay or clergy status, and age. This information may be used to discuss any significant differences or similarities across those areas. The analysis of the data helped to answer the following questions:

1. In which areas are the seven churches more effective in carrying out fruitful church practices?

2. In which areas are the seven churches least effective in carrying out fruitful church practices?

3. What practices in the churches do the participants believe are most effective in the five areas?

4. What practices in the churches do the participants believe are least effective in the five areas?

5. What changes have the seven churches made over the last three years to improve their effectiveness in carrying out ministry?

6. What recommendations did participants make to help the church be more effective in carrying out its mission?

Results

The results of the survey are divided up by Schnase's five fruitful practice categories, practices that improved over the last three years and recommendations made by the participants to help achieve the mission of the AME Zion Church (Refer to Appendix B: Survey Results). It is important to note that the findings for questions five through 10 reflect practices the participants believe existed in their churches while contradicting the findings for questions 11 through 15 which seemed to represent practices performed or not performed by the members. The contradictions will be presented in the results for each of the five practice areas and examples will be discussed in the Implications of the Results section below. Also, there were no participants from any of the churches between the ages of 25 and 32.

The term 'outreach' was a common response to all questions pertaining to the three categories of radical hospitality, risk-taking mission and service, and extravagant generosity. Similarly, attendance, attentiveness, and distractions were common responses to the practices of passionate worship, intentional faith development and extravagant generosity. This repetitiveness of practice categories reflects that the five categories are not mutually exclusive. They have the ability to blend together and can lead from one to another.

Radical Hospitality (RH)

Fifty-nine of 74 participants agreed or strongly agreed that their church practices reflected RH.[94] Thirty-five of the 62 responders said this was reflected when the church conducted outreach projects, which included feeding the hungry in the community, the distribution of school supplies to schools and children in the neighborhood, and holding community picnics; when visitors were greeted and made to feel comfortable inside and outside

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[94] Appendix B: table 6.

of the church; and when the ushers showed hospitality.[95] However, 39 of 62 responders stated

that their church's failure to act friendly or welcoming to strangers did not reflect RH.[96] Such

actions included failure to reach out to visitors and the community, to formulate relationships

with all people regardless of their differences, to share meals with strangers or not hold back the

food they like from them, to follow up with visitors, to engage in welcoming opportunities such

as singing the welcome song or making visitors feel comfortable, or to usher with hospitality.

The absence of evangelism and fellowship practices were also listed as actions that did not

reflect RH.

Passionate Worship (PW)

Seventy-one of 73 participants agreed or strongly agreed that their church practices

reflected PW.[97] Twenty-five of 71 responders said the practice of responding to sermon, music

and the worship service most reflected PW.[98] The engagement in the act of morning worship and

the expression of praising God and honoring Him to include praise dancing, singing by the choir,

members singing along, people sharing testimonies, the preaching and being attentive were

common actions the participants listed that reflect PW. The music ministry was the third highest

category of practices that reflected PW. However, low attendance, not attending functions

conducted by ministries the member is not involved, absence from worship and studies by

members, inattentiveness, tardiness, and inappropriate conduct including using cell phones,

passing notes, talking, sleeping, moving and sleeping were pointed out by 23 of the 61

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[95] Appendix B: table 16 and table 28.

[96] Ibid., table 21 and table 33.

[97] Ibid., table 7.

[98] Ibid., table 17 and table 29.

responders as not reflecting PW practices.[99] The practices of not responding to worship such as not abiding in the word of God, responding to the preaching or singing, or sharing the word of God with others were noted by 13 of the responders.

Intentional Faith Development (IFD)

Thirty-three of 72 participants were not sure whether their church practiced IFD while 33 participants agreed or strongly agreed that their church practices did reflect IFD.[100] Learning opportunities such as Bible study, Sunday school, School of the Prophet and occasionally the sermon were acknowledged as the number one practice that reflected IFD in their churches by 32 of 72 participants.[101] Thirteen of the participants said that the practice of evangelism including inviting everyone to attend worship and events as well as live streaming worship reflected IFD. Providing children and youth ministry was the third highest practice noted by eight participants that reflected IFD. Low attendance, attending only special events, absence from worship and studies by members, inattentiveness, tardiness, and inappropriate conduct including using cell phones, passing notes, talking, sleeping, moving and sleeping were noted by 32 of 59 responders as not reflecting practices of IFD.[102] Eight of the 59 responders listed not attending or engaging in educational opportunities including Bible study, church school or workshops as not reflecting IFD. Specific actions included absence, unlearning things once taught, struggling with education and inconsistent study of the Bible. Having no prayer focus or attendance on the prayer line tied

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[99] Appendix B, table 22 and table 34.

[100] Ibid., table 8.

[101] Ibid., table 18 and table 30.

[102] Ibid., table 23 and table 35.

with the absence of children and youth ministries as the third highest category that did not reflect IFD.

Risk-Taking Mission and Service (RTMS)

Forty-six of 73 participants agreed or strongly agreed that their church practices reflected RTMS.[103] Forty-five of 68 responders stated that outreach ministry outside the church reflected RTMS.[104] This included conducting community picnics and having the desire to do mission work. 10 of the 68 responders expressed that there were no practices in their church that reflected RTMS. Thirty-seven of 60 responders expressed that their church did not reflect RTMS because of the absence of outreach projects for the community around the church, unfriendly and unwelcoming attitudes by members of the church, participation and connection with the community, and church services outside the church including those that were nontraditional where the order of worship was modified and not the same old programs.[105]

Extravagant Generosity (EG)

Fifty-two of 72 participants agreed or strongly agreed that their church practices reflected EG.[106] Outreach was pointed out as the number one practice that reflected EG by 31 of 69 responders.[107] Willingness to assist those in need, providing scholarships to youth in the community, giving away food, household items and other gifts for the holidays, visiting the sick and homebound, and giving children money on their birthdays were common practices noted by

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[103] Appendix B, table 9.

[104] Ibid., table 19 and table 31.

[105] Ibid., table 24 and table 36.

[106] Ibid., table 10.

[107] Ibid., table 20 and table 32.

those participants. Twenty-six of the 73 responders believe giving, tithing, giving offerings and giving of all one has reflected EG. This included sacrificial giving, donations to smaller churches and other countries such as those in the Caribbean, the ministry of kindness (alms), being one of the few that give to maintain the church, consistently giving tithes and offerings, working in the church without being asked and when the pastor does not accept a salary. Six of the 73 responders said that EG does not exist in their church. Forty of 72 responders said that not giving, tithing, giving offerings and giving of all one has does not reflect EG.[108] The unwillingness to pay tithes, inconsistent giving, inconsistent tithing, refusal to give from the heart, not giving to others in need and no sacrificial giving did not reflect EG in the churches by its members. Ten of the 59 responders said the members of their churches do not practice EG.

Improved Practices over the Last Three Years

Twenty-one out of 67 participants from three of the seven churches said the practice of community outreach was the number one change made by their church over the last three years to better achieve the mission of saving souls.[109] Implementing nontraditional worship services and a new order of worship were common responses by 10 responders, which tied with evangelism as practices that changed over the last three years.

Recommendations to Help Carry Out Mission

Evangelism was the number one recommendation by 18 of the 71 participants that they believe would help the church to be more effective in carrying out the mission to save souls.[110] Outreach to the community, character development, recommitment to God and ministry,

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[108] Appendix B, table 25 and table 37.

[109] Ibid., table 26 and table 38.

[110] Ibid., table 27 and table 39.

discipleship training, self-reflection and cuts to financial obligations merited a similar number of responses of practices that needed to improve in the churches to reach the mission.

<div align="center">Implications of the Survey Results</div>

As a result of analyzing the data collected from the seven AME Zion Churches in the New Jersey Annual Conference, the following observations were made to address each of the questions posed for this study.

What does God call the AME Zion Church to be and do in this time and place?

Schnase's response to the question, "Why do people need our church?" is that "People need to know that God loves them, that they are of value."[111] The Freedom Church must exemplify that response in its practices, especially to the black community and those of color in this postmodern era. The churches must be consistent in conducting fruitful ministry practices of outreach, hospitality, authentic worship and giving of oneself. Most of the participants agreed that their church reflected the five fruitful practices in their ministry, but listed practices that contradicted this finding. For example, the participants agreed that hospitality was reflected in their churches but listed hospitality actions such as unfriendliness, not forming relationships with strangers, reaching out and connecting with visitors, making others feel comfortable, and presence and fellowship in the community as actions that did not reflect radical hospitality.

One pastor in a discussion on hospitality in the church describes it as having moved from the front porch to the backyard.[112] He said, at one point in time people sat on their front porches and greeted everyone, including the stranger. People who were passing by would take time to

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[111] Schnase, *Five Practices,* 27.

[112] Conversation with a participating pastor, March 9, 2019. (All conversations were confidential.)

stop and chat, thereby getting to know their neighbor. Now, he says, people have moved off the front porch to the backyard. He described the backyard as inviting but exclusive and unwelcoming. Though there is a party going on in the backyard, all are not greeted in the same manner, especially when a stranger. All are not welcome unless they meet the criteria set by the host.

Though there were no participants in the study between the ages of 25 and 32, discussions with persons in that age group revealed some potential reasons for their absence in the traditional church. This included the absence of accommodations for nursing mothers that afforded privacy and the opportunity to remain in worship, baby-changing tables that reflected that young families were welcome and letting go of tradition and acting out of hospitality. For example, one young mother discussed how she watched an usher prevent a gentleman, who looked homeless, from entering the sanctuary during a closed-door moment. She thought that the usher should have explained why the gentleman could not enter, which would have lessened the ensuing confrontation that distracted those worshipping in the sanctuary.[113]

There are many claims to the moral significance of the five practice areas of being and doing good and a reflection of Christian service by God's grace and mercy.[114] When considering the needs of the black community as presented earlier, consistency in carrying out all five is the most common denominator for establishing relationships, meeting the needs of people in the community, and making people comfortable. These efforts of the church would offer relief and response to racial injustice and overcome some of the challenges of division caused by postmodernism. Providing ministry in all five areas to those in the community shows those who

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[113] Conversation with a nonparticipating young adult, April 3, 2019.

[114] Pohl, *Living Into Community,* 159; Schnase, *Five Practices,* 28.

are marginalized that they do have value and that their gifts have the potential to add value to their communities as well. For example, a participating lay member commented on the hospitality she received from a nonparticipating church in her neighborhood. She said, "The hospitality of the members was so warm. So many of them greeted me, and they did not just hug me. They gave me an extended embrace that made me feel so welcome and that they were glad I was there. That was radical hospitality."[115] Based on the findings, the participants suggest that actively going out into the community and conducting outreach projects was a practice that fulfilled all five practice areas. Examples included community picnics, visiting people and providing supplies to schools.

All five practice areas are, therefore, selfless service that reflects a willingness by the church to open itself up to strangers and their insights, needs, and contributions.[116] In order for liberation theology to be sustained over time, it must be tempered with the ability of the stranger to find the church dependable and trustworthy, as well as grateful to God for His love and mercy. Short-lived practices implemented to address the issues confronting the black community have no lasting value or impact on people's ability to be free and liberated from those things that bind them. A lack of consistency in attending worship, Bible study, Sunday school, and other events, reflects a lack of dedication to personal spiritual growth as well as the spiritual growth of others. Such detrimental action is germane to the postmodern world and has no power to speak against the other options people choose to engage for spiritual formation.

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[115] Conversation with a participating lay member, February 14, 2019.

[116] Pohl, *Living Into Community*, 159; Schnase, *Five Practices,* 4.

The findings suggest a desire for the churches to be more inclusive in their actions. To maintain all five practices to avoid exclusionary practices.[117] The church must avoid at all costs the appearance of being like the outside world, which uses expulsion, assimilation, subjugation, patterns of disconnection and abandonment of the poor to maintain the self-interests of the advantaged.[118] The church must employ practices that reflect practical solidarity with the disadvantaged, in which wholeness and healing of our communities, our families and our world are achieved through the recognition of our own humanity and genuine need of one another.[119]

What does freedom mean today?

The review of the literature for this study helped define what freedom means today. Though its original meaning is still valid, postmodernism has added to the challenges of liberation that people experience, which makes obtaining it more complex and frustrating to navigate. Liberation is a two-pronged effort today. It is not just freedom from social oppression and violence, but it is also dealing with postmodern thought and practices that give a false appearance of freedom. The plethora of competing activities on Sunday alone provides the perception of freedom from restraint and liberation from the doctrine of religion imposed by religious institutions like the AME Zion Church. However ephemeral and temporary such "liberation" may actually be, the AME Zion Church and other such denominations need to take seriously their attraction for contemporary society, and to engage in mission and ministry that respond to a variety of different challenges.

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[117] Sheryl A. Kujawa-Holbrook and Karen B. Montagno, *Injustice and the Care of Souls: Taking Oppression Seriously in Pastoral* Care (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 33.

[118] Ibid.

[119] Ibid., 34.

Rothstein maintains that to make changes based on the knowledge learned is not just the responsibility of white people but of all people.[120] The participants in the study pointed out that though their churches were involved in community outreach; much more was needed in the form of practices that reflected risk-taking mission and service as well as extravagant generosity. In order to combat the new understanding of freedom, consistent intentional faith development practices like Bible study and church school need to be available to the community, to include children and youth ministry.

What does the review of practices at seven AME Zion Churches in New Jersey using the process introduced in this study reveal about their current practices and their ability to carry out the mission in the 21st century?

The process gave some useful data to help pastors and members to review their practices. Overall, the findings indicated a need for the churches to be more consistent in all of their efforts, but more importantly, to be more intentional in focusing on those outside the church and more willing to reach out to others. It appears from the findings that the churches may have practices in place that embody the five areas, but do not actively or regularly practice them. Schnase contends that ministry today requires a different attitude towards the communities that are not just outward focused, but reflect Christ's love to all without the emphasis or hope that they come to the church.[121] The church must be willing to step into the lives of other people just like Jesus the Christ did.[122] One pastor expressed that small changes by the church inside the

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[120] Rothstein, *The Color of Law,* ix.

[121] Schnase, *Five Practices,* 4 & 39.

[122] Ibid., 8.

church could make a difference in the lives of strangers to the church.[123] For example, installing a baby changing table would tell young families they are welcome because actions have been taken to address their needs while attending church.

The findings also indicate that practices must not only be consistent but must be passionate expressions of devotion to God. The participants noted inattentiveness, unwillingness, absence, and nonparticipation as ways their congregations did not reflect the five practices of fruitful congregations. The desire to truly love and honor God while loving our neighbor should be the driving force behind all of our ministry practices.[124] This entails the regular attendance to worship, study and other means of grace while actively nurturing Christian spiritual growth. In order to combat the issues confronting the black community, the church must be engulfed in the word of God for the truth to come to light and liberate God's people today. The congregation must be willing to be used by God to impact the lives of those shackled by the systems of oppression that exist now.[125] This includes giving of themselves, time, talent and resources to assist others.

The other challenge would be how to measure any change as a result of implementing practices to improve ministry to meet the mission. After speaking with four of the pastors whose churches participated, increase in membership, improved attendance at worship services, Bible study and Sunday school, and commitment to giving by tithing and offerings were not necessarily the only acceptable forms of measuring change. One pastor believed that further surveys and focus groups might give an indication of a change in cultural attitudes and

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[123] Conversation with a participating pastor, January 12, 2019.

[124] Schnase, *Five Practices*, 53.

[125] Cone, *A Black Theology,* 11; Schnase, *Five Practices,* 70.

behaviors. Another pastor believed that those measurements would be momentary glances and not sufficient to indicate a lasting change. However, all four did indicate that consistency was definitely a determination of change after new practices were implemented as a result of the process.

Schnase discusses the effectiveness of congregations that employ fruitful practices as measured in the congregation's ability to "Be fruitful and multiply" in accordance with Genesis chapter one.[126] Though many scholars argue against the use of numbers to quantify the effectiveness of ministry and as a distraction to carrying out effective ministry,[127] others like Schnase assert that numbers are important.[128] Schnase contends that numbers are important because they reflect that accounting for the people that come or are helped by the church shows that they are important to the church.[129] The numbers also reflect growth, which is important and an obvious measurement of effective change in church practices.

As the survey did not lift up issues that confront the communities where the churches are located, one recommendation would be to include items that addressed practices aimed at racial and social justice, the black family, and collective action. Follow up surveys in each of those areas might serve to provide insight into the church's effectiveness in those areas as well. Surveying guests, focus groups, and polls of the neighborhood would be helpful in getting the communities' impressions of the churches' practices. A longitudinal study of the participating

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[126] Schnase, *Five Practices,* 163.

[127] Jalata, "Revisiting the Black Struggle," 107; Peluso-Verdend, *Paying Attention,* 2; Schnase, *Five Practices,* 165.

[128] Schnase, *Five Practices*, 165.

[129] Ibid., 165.

churches would be beneficial in determining whether the process employed was effective in providing useful information to improve each church's ministry practices.

Is the use of Schnase's five fruits to review practices of the AME Zion Church relevant to carrying out the mission?

Schnase states: "People are searching for a church shaped and sustained by these [five] qualities."[130] Schnase's five fruitful practices served as a measuring rod to review practices of the seven churches that participated in the study. The practices were practical even though they did not directly address the challenges in the black community, but they did maintain the importance of connecting with people outside the church in order to meet their needs. Practices necessary to confront the challenges of social justice, empowerment, strengthening the black family and collective action to stand united require the presence of all five fruits. The people need to feel cared for and welcome, they need to be led to the cross in a way that lightens their way from darkness, they need intentional faith development to challenge the unstructured spiritual direction the world provides, they need a church that will advocate and provide needs that reflects selfless action for the benefit of all of God's people and they need the generosity of people giving of themselves to impact the negligence of societal systems that render them captive to what society is willing to provide.

Conclusion

What does God call the AME Zion Church to be and do in this time and place? The Freedom church has to continue to provide a theology of liberation that calls people out in the environment of the day to recognize that oppression still exists and that their liberation is

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[130] Schnase, *Five Practices*, ix.

consistent with the word of God. In addition, the church must confront the challenges inherent in postmodern lifestyles, which reflect a new definition of what it means to be free. The AME Zion Church must take on this dual mission to deal with oppression and postmodernism by first evaluating its ministry practices and then implementing Christian practices that are consistent and emanate from all five of Schnase's fruitful practices or those proposed by scholars such as Bass and O'Conner. These practices must proclaim good news to those who are poor in spirit, release from captivity for those who are oppressed, while providing a community to belong, a place to share and the feeling of worth for those who are brokenhearted.[131]   It must consistently practice an ethic of empowerment by faith with the intent to dismantle any system that fosters dependence, degradation or despair. It must act as an agent of change by implementing intentional faith development and risk-taking service and mission initiatives that strengthen spiritual development in the face of racist action, and provide resources to help educate people of color, and alleviate the challenges facing them.

The Freedom Church must recognize that in order to meet its mission, the church in this postmodern 21st century of historical challenges for blacks has to remain faithful and take time to evaluate how the church may more effectively bring the good news of Jesus Christ to people who are still struggling to be free from oppression and racism while dealing with personal issues. The process presented may provide enough data to assist the AME Zion Churches that participated to implement changes to their practices. Nonetheless, the AME Zion Church must identify new criteria for effective practices, communicate findings, implement change, remain faithful to them and hold the church accountable for them. The leaders and the lay members must prepare themselves for change and the impact it will have on the church, the community and the world.

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[131] Pohl, *Living into Community,* 159.

Appendix A
The Freedom Church: Reviewing our Practices Survey

Dear Pastor,

I am conducting research for my final project in the Doctor of Ministry Program at Candler School of Theology. The purpose of the research is to develop a process by which local congregations might evaluate their practices and present their findings to the pastor, district presiding elder or episcopal leader. This process is aimed at using the findings to help churches to retool members in an effort to employ practices aimed at reaching our potential in achieving our mission of saving souls. I am seeking the participation of 10 African Methodist Episcopal Zion Churches in the New Jersey Annual Conference of the North Eastern Episcopal District.

The clergy, lay members, or regular attendees of your church are in an ideal position to give me valuable first-hand information from their own perspective.

The survey will be administered in a 30-minute session at your local church and is very informal. (Refreshments will be provided.) It is designed to simply try to capture your thoughts and perspectives on your local churches' practices in five thematic areas to achieve the mission of saving souls. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Each survey will be assigned a number code to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings.

There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to our research and findings could lead to a greater public understanding of reviewing practices and the process necessary to effect change.

If you are willing to allow your church to participate and can complete the session on a Sunday after church in the month of December or 1st Sunday in January, please reply to this email as soon as possible and send the date you will administer the survey.

The survey is available electronically at https://miller4bishop2020.survey.fm/bridging-gap-between-charge-mission-process-1 or by scanning the QR Code below. The hard copy is attached. You may opt to administer the survey or a representative will assist with administering the survey and arranging refreshments.

A copy of this invitation and the consent forms for the hard copy version of the survey are attached as well. For the electronic version, consent is given once the participant starts the survey.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration in this matter! God bless!

Rev. Dr. Melanie Miller

Consent for Research Survey

Investigator: Rev. Dr. Melanie Miller
Sponsoring School Name: Candler School of Theology, Emory University, Atlanta, GA
Contact Information: email: melaniemiller2012@gmail.com, cell phone: (757) 593-4507
Mailing address: 120 Atlantic Street, Hackensack, NJ 07601

I am conducting research for my final project in the Doctor of Ministry Program at Candler School of
Theology. The purpose of the research is to develop a process by which local congregations might evaluate their practices and present their findings to the pastor, district presiding elder or episcopal leader. This process is aimed at using the findings to help churches to retool members in an effort to employ practices aimed at reaching our potential in achieving our mission of saving souls. I am surveying the members of 10 African Methodist Episcopal Zion Churches in the New Jersey Annual Conference of the North Eastern Episcopal District. You are being asked to participate in a 30-minute session, in which the survey will be administered.

Risks: You will not be identifiable in my written descriptions of this project.
There are no other foreseeable risks associated with participation in this research project.

Benefits: While you may receive no tangible benefit resulting from participation in this research, the research will help people who want to more deeply understand the process necessary to implement the transformation of A.M.E. Zion local church practices to better achieve the mission.
By participating in the research, you may develop new and/or deeper insight regarding your work with these issues.

Confidentiality: All records and consent forms will be kept in locked files (in the case of hard-copies) and password - protected files (in the case of data files).

Anonymity and Identifying Information: When I write or talk about this research, you will not be named. You will not be identifiable by role or personal story. You will remain anonymous in the reporting from this study.

Your Participation: Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Your refusal to participate or withdrawal will not involve a penalty or loss of benefit to which you otherwise are entitled.

If You Have Questions or Concerns About this Research and Your Rights as a Participant:
Please contact me, Rev. Dr. Melanie Miller at (757) 593-4507.

If you have further questions or concerns, please contact Rev. Dr. Jennifer Ayres, director of the Doctor of Ministry Program, at 404.727.6329.

Signatures:

_____

Subject: **Bridging the Gap Between Charge, Mission and Process**
Date
Investigator: Rev. Dr. Melanie Miller
Date

_____

Guardian Consent (if subject is a minor)
Date

City and State *

[   ]

Gender *

○ Female

○ Male

Member Status *

○ Clergy

○ Lay Member

○ Attend regularly but not a member

Age Group *

○ 1-12 years

○ 13-17

○ 18-24

○ 25-32

○ 33-40

○ 41-54

○ 55-65

○ 66+

My church is effective in practices that reflect the following characteristics using the scale provide.

1. Radical Hospitality is the ability to form relationships with strangers and other people outside our circles of family and friends regardless of lifestyle, socioeconomic status, nationality, etc. that differs greatly from our own.

2. Passionate Worship is the practice of reverence and adoration of God that is not complacent, mundane, predictable, stale and devoid of the Spirit.

3. Intentional faith development is a variety of high-quality learning experiences that help people understand scripture and the application of scripture to their faith and life.

4. Risk-Taking Mission and Service are life-altering and extraordinary practices that make a positive difference in the lives of others.

5. Extravagant Generosity is the practice of giving beyond what is expected or imagined in the worship of God and service to others.

	1. Radical Hospitality	2. Passionate Worship	3. Intentional Faith Development	4. Risk-Taking Mission and Service	5. Extravagant Generosity
Strongly Disagree	○	○	○	○	○
Disagree	○	○	○	○	○
Neutral	○	○	○	○	○
Agree	○	○	○	○	○
Strongly Agree	○	○	○	○	○

Name a practice in your church that reflects Radical Hospitality.   Q.6

Name a practice in your church that reflects Passionate Worship.   Q.7

Name a practice in your church that reflects Intentional Faith Development.   Q.8

Name a practice in your church that reflects Risk-taking Mission and Service.   Q.9

Name a practice in your church that reflects Extravagant Generosity.

Q.10

Name a practice in your church that does not reflect Radical Hospitality.

Q.11

Name a practice in your church that does not reflect Passionate Worship.

Q.12

Name a practice in your church that does not reflect Intentional Faith Development.

Q.13

Name a practice in your church that does not reflect Risk-Taking Mission and Service.

Q.14

Name a practice in your church that does not reflect Extravagant Generosity.

Q.15

What change has your church made over the last three years to better achieve the mission of saving souls?

Q.16

_____

17.What recommendation would you make to the church that   Q.17
you believe will help the church be more effective in carrying out the
mission of saving souls?

_____

Appendix B
Survey Results

Table 2: Frequencies for Participating Churches

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Church A	1	1.3	1.3	1.3
	Church B	27	33.8	33.8	35.0
	Church C	10	12.5	12.5	47.5
	Church D	25	31.3	31.3	78.8
	Church E	1	1.3	1.3	80.0
	Church F	12	15.0	15.0	95.0
	Church G	4	5.0	5.0	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Table 3: Gender Frequencies

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	28	35.0	35.0	35.0
	Female	52	65.0	65.0	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Membership Status Frequencies

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Lay Member	61	76.3	76.3	76.3
	Clergy	13	16.3	16.3	92.5
	Non-Member	6	7.5	7.5	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Table 5: Age Group Frequencies

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	66+	25	31.3	31.3	31.3
	55-65	34	42.5	42.5	73.8
	41-54	10	12.5	12.5	86.3
	33-40	8	10.0	10.0	96.3
	18-24	3	3.8	3.8	100.0
	Total	80	100.0	100.0	

Table 6: Church Practices Reflect Radical Hospitality

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	1.3	1.4	1.4
	Disagree	6	7.5	8.1	9.5
	Neutral	8	10.0	10.8	20.3
	Agree	47	58.8	63.5	83.8
	Strongly Agree	12	15.0	16.2	100.0
	Total	74	92.5	100.0	
Missing	System	6	7.5		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 7: Church Practices Reflect Passionate Worship

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	1.3	1.4	1.4
	Disagree	2	2.5	2.7	4.1
	Neutral	9	11.3	12.3	16.4
	Agree	27	33.8	37.0	53.4
	Strongly Agree	34	42.5	46.6	100.0
	Total	73	91.3	100.0	
Missing	System	7	8.8		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 8: Church Practices Reflect Intentional Faith Development

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	6	7.5	8.3	8.3
	Neutral	33	41.3	45.8	54.2
	Agree	23	28.7	31.9	86.1
	Strongly Agree	10	12.5	13.9	100.0
	Total	72	90.0	100.0	
Missing	System	8	10.0		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 9: Church Practices Reflect Risk-Taking Mission & Service

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Disagree	1	1.3	1.4	1.4
	Disagree	8	10.0	11.0	12.3
	Neutral	18	22.5	24.7	37.0
	Agree	41	51.2	56.2	93.2
	Strongly Agree	5	6.3	6.8	100.0
	Total	73	91.3	100.0	
Missing	System	7	8.8		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 10: Church Practices Reflect Extravagant Generosity

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Disagree	5	6.3	6.9	6.9
	Neutral	15	18.8	20.8	27.8
	Agree	15	18.8	20.8	48.6
	Strongly Agree	37	46.3	51.4	100.0
	Total	72	90.0	100.0	
Missing	System	8	10.0		
Total		80	100.0		

Table 11: Participating Churches: Church Practices Reflect Radical Hospitality

Count

		Radical Hospitality					
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
City	Church A	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Church B	1	0	5	9	6	21
	Church C	0	2	1	3	4	10
	Church D	0	0	0	25	0	25
	Church E	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Church F	0	4	1	7	0	12
	Church G	0	0	0	3	1	4
Total		1	6	8	47	12	74

Table 12: Participating Churches: Church Practices Reflect Passionate Worship

Count

		Passionate Worship					
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
City	Church A	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Church B	1	0	6	6	7	20
	Church C	0	1	2	5	2	10
	Church D	0	0	0	0	25	25
	Church E	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Church F	0	0	0	12	0	12
	Church G	0	0	1	3	0	4
Total		1	2	9	27	34	73

Table 13: Participating Churches: Church Practices Reflect Intentional Faith Development

Count

		Intentional Faith Development				
		Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
City	Church A	1	0	0	0	1
	Church B	0	4	10	5	19
	Church C	3	2	3	2	10
	Church D	0	25	0	0	25
	Church E	0	0	0	1	1
	Church F	2	1	8	1	12
	Church G	0	1	2	1	4
Total		6	33	23	10	72

Table 14: Participating Churches: Church Practices Reflect Risk-Taking Mission & Service

Count

		Risk-Taking Mission & Service					
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
City	Church A	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Church B	0	0	8	9	3	20
	Church C	1	2	1	4	2	10
	Church D	0	0	0	25	0	25
	Church E	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Church F	0	6	5	1	0	12
	Church G	0	0	3	1	0	4
Total		1	8	18	41	5	73

Table 15: Participating Churches: Church Practices Reflect Extravagant Generosity

Count

		Extravagant Generosity				
		Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Church	Church A	0	0	1	0	1
	Church B	2	4	7	7	20
	Church C	2	4	1	2	9
	Church D	0	0	0	25	25
	Church E	0	0	0	1	1
	Church F	1	6	5	0	12
	Church G	0	1	1	2	4
Total		5	15	15	37	72

Table 16: Categories of Practices that Reflect Radical Hospitality

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Friendly & Welcoming	26	28.9	35.1	35.1
	Outreach	35	38.9	47.3	82.4
	Teaching	1	1.1	1.4	83.8
	Special Events	2	2.2	2.7	86.5
	Fellowship	2	2.2	2.7	89.2
	Character Commitment Disciple	1	1.1	1.4	90.5
	Worship & Praise	1	1.1	1.4	91.9
	None exists	6	6.7	8.1	100.0
	Total	74	82.2	100.0	
Missing	System	16	17.8		
Total		90	100.0		

Table 17: Categories of Practices that Reflect Passionate Worship

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Friendly & Welcoming	2	2.2	2.8	2.8
	Outreach	1	1.1	1.4	4.2
	Teaching	5	5.6	7.0	11.3
	Special Events	1	1.1	1.4	12.7
	Fellowship	1	1.1	1.4	14.1
	Character Commitment Disciple	3	3.3	4.2	18.3
	Prayer	4	4.4	5.6	23.9
	Music Ministry	7	7.8	9.9	33.8
	Worship and Praise	15	16.7	21.1	54.9
	Sermon Preaching	5	5.6	7.0	62.0
	Participation in Worship Ministry Etc	1	1.1	1.4	63.4
	Respond to Sermon Worship Music	25	27.8	35.2	98.6
	Order of Worship or Nontraditional Worship	1	1.1	1.4	100.0
	Total	71	78.9	100.0	
Missing	System	19	21.1		
Total		90	100.0		

Table 18: Categories of Practices that Reflect Intentional Faith Development

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Outreach	3	3.3	4.2	4.2
	Teaching	32	35.6	44.4	48.6
	Special Events	1	1.1	1.4	50.0
	Character Commitment Disciple	1	1.1	1.4	51.4
	Music Ministry	1	1.1	1.4	52.8
	Worship & Praise	2	2.2	2.8	55.6
	Sermon Preaching	1	1.1	1.4	56.9
	Participation in Worship Ministry Etc	2	2.2	2.8	59.7
	Respond to Sermon Worship Music	1	1.1	1.4	61.1
	Attendance Attentive Ontime	3	3.3	4.2	65.3
	Evangelism	13	14.4	18.1	83.3
	Children & Youth Ministry	8	8.9	11.1	94.4
	Community & Connectional Fellowship	2	2.2	2.8	97.2
	None exists	2	2.2	2.8	100.0
	Total	72	80.0	100.0	
Missing	System	18	20.0		
Total		90	100.0		

Table 19: Categories of Practices that Reflect Risk-Taking Mission and Service

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Friendly & Welcoming	1	1.1	1.5	1.5
	Outreach	45	50.0	66.2	67.6
	Teaching	1	1.1	1.5	69.1
	Special Events	2	2.2	2.9	72.1
	Fellowship	1	1.1	1.5	73.5
	Character Commitment Disciple	1	1.1	1.5	75.0
	Worship & Praise	1	1.1	1.5	76.5
	Sermon Preaching	1	1.1	1.5	77.9
	Participation in Worship Ministry Etc	1	1.1	1.5	79.4
	Evangelism	2	2.2	2.9	82.4
	Community & Connectional Fellowship	1	1.1	1.5	83.8
	Giving Tithing Offering of all	1	1.1	1.5	85.3
	None exists	10	11.1	14.7	100.0
	Total	68	75.6	100.0	
Missing	System	22	24.4		
Total		90	100.0		

Table 20: Categories of Practices that Reflect Extravagent Generosity

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Friendly & Welcoming	1	1.1	1.4	1.4
	Outreach	31	34.4	44.9	46.4
	Character Commitment Disciple	2	2.2	2.9	49.3
	Prayer	1	1.1	1.4	50.7
	Giving Tithing Offering of all	26	28.9	37.7	88.4
	Fundraising	2	2.2	2.9	91.3
	None exists	6	6.7	8.7	100.0
	Total	69	76.7	100.0	
Missing	System	21	23.3		
Total		90	100.0		

Table 21: Categories of Practices that DO NOT Reflect Radical Hospitality

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Unfriendly or Not welcoming	39	43.3	62.9	62.9
	No Outreach to Community	1	1.1	1.6	64.5
	No Fellowship with others outside of the church	5	5.6	8.1	72.6
	No Participation in Worship Ministry Etc	1	1.1	1.6	74.2
	Low Attendance, Inattentive, Late	1	1.1	1.6	75.8
	No Evangelism	6	6.7	9.7	85.5
	No Children or Youth Ministry	1	1.1	1.6	87.1
	No Community or Connectional Fellowship	1	1.1	1.6	88.7
	NonGiving, No Tithing, grudging Offerings	2	2.2	3.2	91.9
	Traditional or Boring Order of Worship	1	1.1	1.6	93.5
	None exists	4	4.4	6.5	100.0
	Total	62	68.9	100.0	
Missing	System	28	31.1		
Total		90	100.0		

Table 22: Categories of Practices that DO NOT Reflect Passionate Worship

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Friendly or Welcoming	3	3.3	4.9	4.9
	Lack of Transportation	1	1.1	1.6	6.6
	No or irrelevant Teaching	1	1.1	1.6	8.2
	No Fellowship with others outside of the church	1	1.1	1.6	9.8
	No Character of Worship, lack Commitment, A follower and not a Disciple	3	3.3	4.9	14.8
	No Music Ministry	1	1.1	1.6	16.4
	Irrelevant or nonexistent Sermon Preaching	1	1.1	1.6	18.0
	No Participation in Worship Ministry Etc	4	4.4	6.6	24.6
	Do not Respond to Sermon Worship Music	13	14.4	21.3	45.9
	Low Attendance, inattentive, Tardy	23	25.6	37.7	83.6
	No Evangelism	1	1.1	1.6	85.2
	No Children or Youth Ministry	1	1.1	1.6	86.9
	Fundraising instead of giving tithes and offerings	1	1.1	1.6	88.5
	Traditional or Boring Order of Worship	3	3.3	4.9	93.4
	None exists	4	4.4	6.6	100.0
	Total	61	67.8	100.0	
Missing	System	29	32.2		
Total		90	100.0		

Table 23: Categories of Practices that DO NOT Reflect Intentional Faith Development

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No Teaching	8	8.9	13.6	13.6
	No Special Worship Events	1	1.1	1.7	15.3
	No Prayer Ministry or Practice	4	4.4	6.8	22.0
	Lack of Worship or Praise	2	2.2	3.4	25.4
	No Participation in Worship Ministry Etc	2	2.2	3.4	28.8
	Low Attendance, inattentive, Tardy	32	35.6	54.2	83.1
	No Children or Youth Ministry	4	4.4	6.8	89.8
	No Community or Connectional Fellowship	1	1.1	1.7	91.5
	No Giving, Tithing or Offerings	2	2.2	3.4	94.9
	None exists	3	3.3	5.1	100.0
	Total	59	65.6	100.0	
Missing	System	31	34.4		
Total		90	100.0		

Table 24: Categories of Practices that DO NOT Reflect Risk-Taking Mission and Service

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Not Friendly or Welcoming	4	4.4	6.7	6.7
	No Outreach to the Community	37	41.1	61.7	68.3
	No Visitation to other churches or community events	1	1.1	1.7	70.0
	No Music Ministry	2	2.2	3.3	73.3
	Irrelevant or Nonexistent Sermon Preaching	1	1.1	1.7	75.0
	No Participation in Worship Ministry Etc	3	3.3	5.0	80.0
	Low Attendance, inattentive, tardy	1	1.1	1.7	81.7
	No Children or Youth Ministry	1	1.1	1.7	83.3
	No Community or Connectional Fellowship	1	1.1	1.7	85.0
	Fundraising instead of tithes and offerings	1	1.1	1.7	86.7
	Traditional or Boring Order of Worship	3	3.3	5.0	91.7
	None exists	5	5.6	8.3	100.0
	Total	60	66.7	100.0	
Missing	System	30	33.3		
Total		90	100.0		

Table 25: Categories of Practices that DO NOT Reflect Extravagant Generosity

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Unfriendly or not welcoming	2	2.2	3.4	3.4
	No Outreach to the community	4	4.4	6.8	10.2
	No Character of worship, lack of Commitment, Follower and not a Disciple	2	2.2	3.4	13.6
	No Evangelism	1	1.1	1.7	15.3
	No Giving, No Tithing and grudging Offerings	40	44.4	67.8	83.1
	None exists	10	11.1	16.9	100.0
	Total	59	65.6	100.0	
Missing	System	31	34.4		
Total		90	100.0		

Table 26: Categories of Practices that have Improved over the last 3 Years

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Outreach	21	23.3	31.3	31.3
	Transportation	1	1.1	1.5	32.8
	Teaching	3	3.3	4.5	37.3
	Special Events	1	1.1	1.5	38.8
	Fellowship	1	1.1	1.5	40.3
	Character Commitment Disciple	2	2.2	3.0	43.3
	Prayer	2	2.2	3.0	46.3
	Participation in Worship Ministry Etc	1	1.1	1.5	47.8
	Attendance Attentive Ontime	1	1.1	1.5	49.3
	Evangelism	10	11.1	14.9	64.2
	Order of Worship or Nontraditional Worship	20	22.2	29.9	94.0
	None exists	3	3.3	4.5	98.5
	Capital Improvements	1	1.1	1.5	100.0
	Total	67	74.4	100.0	
Missing	System	23	25.6		
Total		90	100.0		

Table 27: Recommendations to Improve Church Practices

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Friendly & Welcoming	3	3.3	4.2	4.2
	Outreach	8	8.9	11.3	15.5
	Teaching	3	3.3	4.2	19.7
	Special Events	1	1.1	1.4	21.1
	Character Commitment Disciple	8	8.9	11.3	32.4
	Prayer	5	5.6	7.0	39.4
	Music Ministry	1	1.1	1.4	40.8
	Participation in Worship Ministry Etc	3	3.3	4.2	45.1
	Respond to Sermon Worship Music	1	1.1	1.4	46.5
	Attendance Attentive Ontime	5	5.6	7.0	53.5
	Evangelism	18	20.0	25.4	78.9
	Children & Youth Ministry	4	4.4	5.6	84.5
	Community & Connectional Fellowship	4	4.4	5.6	90.1
	Giving Tithing Offering of all	1	1.1	1.4	91.5
	Fundraising	1	1.1	1.4	93.0
	Order of Worship or Nontraditional Worship	2	2.2	2.8	95.8
	Cut Assessments	3	3.3	4.2	100.0
	Total	71	78.9	100.0	
Missing	System	19	21.1		
Total		90	100.0		

Table 28: Participating Churches: Practices that Reflect Radical Hospitality

Count

					Radical Hospitality				
		Friendly & Welcoming	Outreach	Teaching	Special Events	Fellowship	Character Commitment Disciple	Worship & Praise	None exists	Total
Church	Church A	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Church B	12	3	0	2	0	0	0	4	21
	Church C	6	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	10
	Church D	0	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	25
	Church E	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Church F	5	4	1	0	1	0	0	1	12
	Church G	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Total		26	35	1	2	2	1	1	6	74

Table 29: Participating Churches: Practices that Reflect Passionate Worship

Count

		Passionate Worship							
		Friendly & Welcoming	Outreach	Teaching	Special Events	Fellowship	Character Commitment Disciple	Prayer	Music Ministry
Church	Church A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Church B	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	1
	Church C	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	3
	Church D	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Church E	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
	Church F	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	3
	Church G	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0
Total		2	1	5	1	1	3	4	7

Table 29: Participating Churches: Practices that Reflect Passionate Worship

Count

		Passionate Worship					
		Worship & Praise	Sermon Preaching	Participation in Worship Ministry Etc	Respond to Sermon Worship Music	Order of Worship or Nontraditional Worship	Total
Church	Church A	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Church B	6	2	0	0	0	19
	Church C	4	0	0	0	0	10
	Church D	1	0	0	24	0	25
	Church E	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Church F	3	3	0	1	1	12
	Church G	0	0	1	0	0	3
Total		15	5	1	25	1	71

Table 30: Participating Churches: Practices that Reflect Intentional Faith Development

Count

		Intentional Faith Development							
		Outreach	Teaching	Special Events	Character Commitment Disciple	Music Ministry	Worship & Praise	Sermon Preaching	Participation in Worship Ministry Etc
Church	Church A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Church B	2	8	1	1	0	1	1	2
	Church C	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Church D	0	7	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Church E	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Church F	0	10	0	0	1	1	0	0
	Church G	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		3	32	1	1	1	2	1	2

Table 30: Participating Churches: Practices that Reflect Intentional Faith Development

Count

		Intentional Faith Development						
		Respond to Sermon Worship Music	Attendance Attentive Ontime	Evangelism	Children and Youth Ministry	Community & Connectional Fellowship	None exists	Total
Church	Church A	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Church B	1	0	1	1	0	1	20
	Church C	0	0	0	1	2	1	9
	Church D	0	0	12	6	0	0	25
	Church E	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Church F	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
	Church G	0	1	0	0	0	0	4
Total		1	3	13	8	2	2	72

Table 31: Participating Churches: Practices that Reflect Risk-Taking Mission and Service

Count

		Risk-Taking Mission and Service					
		Participation in Worship Ministry Etc	Evangelism	Community & Connectional Fellowship	Giving Tithing Offering of all	None exists	Total
Church	Church A	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Church B	1	1	0	0	1	17
	Church C	0	1	0	1	0	10
	Church D	0	0	0	0	0	25
	Church E	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Church F	0	0	1	0	8	12
	Church G	0	0	0	0	1	2
Total		1	2	1	1	10	68

Table 32: Participating Churches: Practices that Reflect Extravagent Generosity

Count

		Extravagent Generosity							
		Friendly & Welcoming	Outreach	Character Commitment Disciple	Prayer	Giving Tithing Offering of all	Fundraising	None exists	Total
Church	Church A	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Church B	1	6	1	0	8	2	0	18
	Church C	0	2	1	1	4	0	0	8
	Church D	0	19	0	0	6	0	0	25
	Church E	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	Church F	0	1	0	0	5	0	6	12
	Church G	0	3	0	0	1	0	0	4
Total		1	31	2	1	26	2	6	69

Table 33: Participating Churches: Practices that DO NOT Reflect Radical Hospitality

Count

		Not Radical Hospitality						
		People are Unfriendly & Not Welcoming	No Outreach	No Fellowship	No Participation in Worship Ministry Etc	Low Attendance, Inattentive, Tardy	No Evangelism	No Children or Youth Ministry
Church	Church A	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
	Church B	5	1	0	1	0	5	0
	Church C	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Church D	25	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Church E	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Church F	6	0	5	0	0	0	1
	Church G	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Total		39	1	5	1	1	6	1

Table 33: Participating Churches: Practices that DO NOT Reflect Radical Hospitality

Count

		Not Radical Hospitality				
		No Community or Connectional Fellowship	No Giving, No Tithing or Grudging Offerings	Traditional or Boring Order of Worship	None exists	Total
Church	Church A	0	0	0	0	1
	Church B	0	0	1	3	16
	Church C	1	1	0	1	6
	Church D	0	0	0	0	25
	Church E	0	1	0	0	1
	Church F	0	0	0	0	12
	Church G	0	0	0	0	1
Total		1	2	1	4	62

Table 34: Participating Churches: Practices that DO NOT Reflect Passionate Worship

Count

		Not Passionate Worship						
		People are not Friendly or Welcoming	No Transportation	No Teaching	No Fellowship	No Character of Worship, Commitment to God, A Follower and not a Disciple	No Music Ministry	Inrelevant or Absent Sermon Preaching
Church	Church A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Church B	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
	Church C	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
	Church D	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Church E	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
	Church F	1	0	0	0	2	0	0
	Church G	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total		3	1	1	1	3	1	1

Table 34: Participating Churches: Practices that DO NOT Reflect Passionate Worship

Count

		Not Passionate Worship						
		No Participation in Worship Ministry Etc	No Response to Sermon Worship Music	Low Attendance, Inattentive or Tardy	No Evangelism	No Children & Youth Ministry	Fundraising instead of Tithing and Offerings	Traditional or Boring Order of Worship
Church	Church A	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Church B	2	1	2	1	0	0	1
	Church C	1	0	1	0	0	1	1
	Church D	0	12	13	0	0	0	0
	Church E	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Church F	0	0	7	0	1	0	0
	Church G	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total		4	13	23	1	1	1	3

Table 34: Participating Churches: Practices that DO NOT Reflect Passionate Worship

Count

		Not …	
		None exists	Total
Church	Church A	0	1
	Church B	2	13
	Church C	1	8
	Church D	0	25
	Church E	0	1
	Church F	1	12
	Church G	0	1
Total		4	61

Table 35: Participating Churches: Practices that DO NOT Reflect Intentional Faith Development

Count

		Not Intentional Faith Development						
		No Teaching or Learning	No Special Worship Events	No Prayer Opportunities	No Worship or Praise	No Participation in Worship Ministry Etc	Low Attendance, inattentive or Tardy	No Children or Youth Ministry
Church	Church A	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
	Church B	2	1	1	1	1	4	0
	Church C	2	0	0	0	1	0	0
	Church D	0	0	0	0	0	24	0
	Church E	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Church F	3	0	3	0	0	3	3
	Church G	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Total		8	1	4	2	2	32	4

Table 35: Participating Churches: Practices that DO NOT Reflect Intentional Faith Development

Count

		Not Intentional Faith Development			
		No Community or Connectional Fellowship	No Giving, No Tithing, or Grudging Offerings	None exists	Total
Church	Church A	0	0	0	1
	Church B	0	0	3	13
	Church C	0	2	0	5
	Church D	1	0	0	25
	Church E	0	0	0	1
	Church F	0	0	0	12
	Church G	0	0	0	2
Total		1	2	3	59

Table 36: Participating Churches: Practices that DO NOT Reflect Risk-Taking Mission and Service

Count

		Not Risk-Taking Mission and Service					
		No Children or Youth Ministry	No Community and Connectional Fellowship	Fundraising instead of Tithes and Offerings	Traditional or Boring Order of Worship	None exists	Total
Church	Church A	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Church B	0	0	1	1	3	14
	Church C	0	1	0	0	0	6
	Church D	0	0	0	0	0	25
	Church E	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Church F	1	0	0	1	2	12
	Church G	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total		1	1	1	3	5	60

Table 36: Participating Churches: Practices that DO NOT Reflect Risk-Taking Mission and Service

Count

		Not Risk-Taking Mission and Service						
		People are not Friendly or Welcoming	No Outreach	No Visitation	No Music Ministry	Irrelevant or Absent Sermon Preaching	No Participation in Worship Ministry Etc	Low Attendance, inattentive, or Tardy
Church	Church A	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Church B	3	3	0	1	1	1	0
	Church C	0	2	1	1	0	0	1
	Church D	0	24	0	0	0	1	0
	Church E	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Church F	0	7	0	0	0	1	0
	Church G	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
Total		4	37	1	2	1	3	1

Table 37: Participating Churches: Practices that DO NOT Reflect Extravagant Generosity

Count

		Not Extravagant Generosity						Total
		People are not Friendly or Welcoming	No Outreach	No Character of Worship, Commitment to God, a Follower and not a Disciple	No Evangelism	No Giving, No Tithing, or Grudging Offering	None exists	
Church	Church B	0	2	2	1	5	4	14
	Church C	2	2	0	0	1	1	6
	Church D	0	0	0	0	25	0	25
	Church E	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Church F	0	0	0	0	7	5	12
	Church G	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total		2	4	2	1	40	10	59

Table 38: Participating Churches: Practices that were Improved over the last 3 Years

Count

		Change last 3 Years							
		Outreach	Transportation	Teaching	Special Events	Fellowship	Character Commitment Disciple	Prayer	Participation in Worship Ministry Etc
Church	Church A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Church B	7	0	2	1	1	0	0	0
	Church C	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
	Church D	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Church E	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Church F	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0
	Church G	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Total		21	1	3	1	1	2	2	1

Table 38: Participating Churches: Practices that were Improved over the last 3 Years

Count

		Change last 3 Years					
		Attendance Attentive Ontime	Evangelism	Order of Worship or Nontraditional Worship	None exists	Capital Improvements	Total
Church	Church A	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Church B	0	3	1	2	0	17
	Church C	1	5	0	1	0	9
	Church D	0	0	12	0	0	25
	Church E	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Church F	0	1	7	0	0	11
	Church G	0	1	0	0	1	3
Total		1	10	20	3	1	67

Table 39: Participating Churches: Recommendations to Improve Church Practices

Count

		Recommendations							
		Friendly & Welcoming	Outreach	Teaching	Special Events	Character Commitment Disciple	Prayer	Music Ministry	Participation in Worship Ministry Etc
Church	Church A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Church B	1	2	1	1	0	0	1	3
	Church C	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
	Church D	0	0	0	0	7	0	0	0
	Church E	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
	Church F	0	5	1	0	0	3	0	0
	Church G	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Total		3	8	3	1	8	5	1	3

Table 39: Participating Churches: Recommendations to Improve Church Practices

Count

		Recommendations						Recommendations		
		Respond to Sermon Worship Music	Attendance Attentive Ontime	Evangelism	Children and Youth Ministry	Community and Connectional Fellowship	Giving Tithing Offering of all	Fundraisin	Order of Worship or Nontraditional Worship	Cut Assessments	Total
Church	Church A	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Church B	0	0	4	0	4	0	1	1	0	19
	Church C	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	3	9
	Church D	0	5	13	0	0	0	0	0	0	25
	Church E	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	Church F	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	12
	Church G	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	4
Total		1	5	18	4	4	1	1	2	3	71

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