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Gilbert V. Richards II   Date

Diverting the Shift: Creating a Sustainable Church through Transformational Leadership

By

Gilbert V. Richards II

Doctor of Ministry

Candler School of Theology

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Walter Earl Fluker

Project Consultant

_____

Jennifer Ayres

Director of DMin Program

Abstract

Diverting the Shift: Creating a Sustainable Church through Transformational Leadership

By Gilbert V. Richards II

In the 21st Century AME Church, the over-dependence on a transactional leadership culture has contributed to a trend of terminal decline. Transformational leadership under the context of a ethical leadership model, allows for cultural transformation and can lead to systemic restoration of the Church itself. This project explores the benefits of implementing a transformational/ethical leadership model from a pastoral context; and how this model will contribute to the sustainability of the AME Church.

Historical Context

> The African Methodist Episcopal Church, whose founders affirmed their humanity in the face of slavery and racism, stands in defense of disadvantaged and oppressed peoples in the 21st century. From the origins in the Free African Society through the involvement of the AME clergy and lay in the Civil War of the 1860s and the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s, the AMEC has preached salvation from sin and deliverance from bondage. The mission expanded to others within the African Diasporas in the Americas, Africa, the Caribbean, and Europe. Whether in schools, seminaries, hospitals, or social-service centers, the AME Church has lived the gospel outside its sanctuaries. This mandate still informs its ministry, vision, and mission in the Church's third century of existence.[1]

This historical preamble in the Bicentennial Edition of the *Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church* describes a liberative Christian institution grounded within Methodist doctrine and Black Liberationist ideals. This statement is indicative of the church's origins in 1787. The African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC) was founded out of necessity rather than theological or doctrinal differences. In 1787, at St. George Methodist Church in Philadelphia, trustees of the church pulled Black parishioners from the altar while praying. This incident triggered a movement for the formation of the AMEC.[2] This project focuses on how this global institution can both navigate the obstacles of relevant ministry in 2022 and still embrace its founding principles.

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[1] AME Sunday School Union, *The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, 2016*, Location 1427.

[2] In his memoirs, Richard Allen recounted how trustees who had worked side by side with the fellow Black parishioners to build the church, were now pulling these same members from the altar. This sparked the birth of the Free African Society in 1787, which was the precursor to the AMEC. It took twenty-nine more years for the Free African Society to gain independence from the Methodist Episcopal Church (MEC) and to elect and consecrate its first bishop in the person of Richard Allen in 1816. This was the stage at which the African Methodist Episcopal Church came into being.

The Problem

When the Canary in the Coal Mine Chirped

At the 2019 General Board meeting of the AMEC,[3] the Commission on Statistics and Finance requested that all churches across the Connectional AMEC[4] submit their most up to date statistical reports in order to aggregate an adequate census of the Church's membership. The general secretary then quoted the current statistical data available, which reflected a 25 percent decline in membership across the Church's connection. Its demographic trends mirror those of most denominations: a precipitous decline in youth and young adult membership, while the average age of membership and leadership continued to increase. This numbers reflected in The Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA) reports of a one-million-member decline between 1991 and 2009.[5]

I was in my second year of pastoral ministry when I heard these words from the general secretary and watched as several bishops in the room did not engage the issue at all. Instead, the issue of that day was determining proper bureaucratic procedure over proceeds gained from selling church assets[6].

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[3] This meeting was hosted by the 6th Episcopal District in Atlanta, Georgia June 2019. Bishop Reginald Jackson's investiture service took place at this meeting.

[4] "The Connectional AME Church" refers to the totality of all Episcopal Districts foreign and domestic, the General Conference which is the leading governing body, and all Annual Conferences, congregations, circuits, and missions that comprise the totality of the AME church

[5] "African Methodist Episcopal Church| Religious Groups | The Association of Religion Data Archives."

[6] This was a meeting of the Commission on Statistics and Finance, the commission that is solely responsible for all matters concerning finance and statistical data for the entire AMEC. The subsequent response of the General Board of the AMEC[6] in regard to all the matters addressed at that meeting led me to understand that there is a

For me, that moment of demographic disclosure and financial focus marked what one of our senior pastors in the California Conference[7] referred to as the canary in the coal mine, the issue to which no one was paying attention. In 2002, the late Lani Guinier wrote that racially marginalized people are like the miner's canary because their distress is typically the first sign of the danger that threatens the whole of the community.[8] Others will ignore the problems that racially marginalized members of their communities endure at their own risk, says Guinier.[9] The practices of the AME denomination had to be observed as well. The priorities and focus of the General Board, and its response to the issues facing the church that meeting, revealed a far deeper problem than intergenerational disconnect.

Thesis – The Crux of the Matter

Although there are several theories regarding the reasons for the decline of the church, **this project examines the virulent role of transactional leadership practices within the AME church that have become counter-productive to the survival and sustainability of the corporate church organization.** Transactional leadership practices, as used here, include the pivotal concepts of trauma and validation, which have historically emerged from the *habitus* of the AMEC.

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relationship between the statistical decline of the AMEC[6] and what is and what is not a priority to the Church's leadership culture—that is, to its leaders.

[7] The California Conference is the Annual Conference in which I pastor my local church. An Annual Conference is groups of churches within an Episcopal District's geographical space, which is presided over by the assigned Episcopate.

[8] Guinier and Torres, *The Miner's Canary: Enlisting Race, Resisting Power, Transforming Democracy*, Location 134.

[9] The AMEC now has its own marginalized "canary in the coal mine" community. The statistical data reported at that board meeting mirrored data reported in the earlier 2017 General Board Meeting,[9] when this same commission reported on intergenerational statistics that clearly showed that youth and young adult representation in the Church was decreasing. Statistical data referencing the absence of youth and young adults were not enough to explain the *terminal decline* facing the AMEC.

The idea of *habitus* used for this project is appropriated from the late sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1930–2002) who defined it as the "logic of practice: the ordinary invisible operations by which a society perpetuates itself."[10] It is the cognitive schema[11] that is internalized by agents (in this case, leaders) as a result of their adaptations to social constructs. Moreover, agents are informed by embedded history or the totality of the preceding generations before them.[12] For the purposes of this project, *habitus* will be connected to a specific formula that determines practices. We will utilize a socio-analytic formula to demonstrate the role of *habitus* in informing and sustaining *practices*. The formula is: (*habitus x* capital) +field (AME Leadership) = practices. Analytically, it illustrates how *habitus* interacts with *capital* as a social system that is already a realized end (an institution). . . that is, agents (leaders) as historical beings inherited a world of socially-determined goals, rules, procedures that lead to struggle over capital on a field; and it is the inherent struggle or competition for the rewards that capital represents that produce certain social, cultural and symbolic rewards within a specific field of endeavor, in this case the institution of the AME Church.   In addition, this project examines how the introduction of a defined ethical leadership framework can address the *terminal decline*[13] of the corporate church while navigating the *habitus* and practices that have created the current environment within the connectional AMEC.

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[10]"Pierre Bourdieu on Education."

[11] Embodied social tendency Scott and Marshall, *Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*, 148.

[12] "Pierre Bourdieu on Education." See also John Scott and Gordon Marshall, editors, Dictionary of Sociology (Oxford University Press 1998) who define in this manner: "Habitus can be defined as the individual's personality structure -- the composite of an individual's lifestyle, values, dispositions, and expectations associated with particular social groups that are acquired through the activities and experiences of everyday life. In other words, the habitus could be understood as a structure of the mind and emotions characterized by a set of acquired schemata, sensibilities, dispositions, and taste."

[13] The decline of an organization or institution that denotes an impending end date. This specifically applies to practices that are directly creating a detrimental trajectory of an organization's sustainability and survival.

This is particularly important for the context of the AMEC, which was founded during a period in which the African slave trade was the primary driver of the national economy of the United States. Richard Allen, the first elected and consecrated bishop of the AMEC, was in fact born into slavery.[14]

Significance of the Problem

Transactional Leadership

The problem is specifically related to an overdependence on transactional leadership practices. Before I examine exactly what that means in regard to the AMEC, I need to define transactional leadership. In the 1980s and 1990s Bernard M. Bass, Jane Howell, and Bruce Avolio conducted studies and subsequently defined the three elements of transactional leadership as *contingent reward, passive management,* and *active management.*[15] *Contingent reward* refers to the process of setting expectations and rewarding workers for meeting them. These rewards come in multiple forms, including but not limited to forms of recognition, pay increases, and promotions.[16] Conversely, those who do not meet these expectations are often penalized. Contingent rewards can be both a powerful tool as well as an enabling factor in institutional complacency.

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[14] The AMEC was founded at a time when white supremacy was an outright assumption in all seats of power and influence, both local and national. As I explore how the practices and *habitus* of the AMEC influences the patterns of organizational leadership, I will also examine how these practices affect the AMEC's direction and their contribution to the current state of *terminal* decline.

[15] "Ethical Leadership Lectures," 102.
[16] "Ethical Leadership Lectures," 102.

The *passive management* element of transactional leadership is defined by exception, meaning that management does not get involved unless expectations have not been met or a problem has surfaced. Therefore, problematic practices may be ignored or go unaddressed if those practices do not impede a specific set of expectations and organizational norms[17].

Active management is likewise *management* by exception. This dimension is a pro-active form of transactional management that keeps a level of surveillance to anticipate problems, track progress, and correct issues.[18] In the AMEC, this type of management occurs most notably within an annual conference or local congregation whose internal challenges interfere with the normal business practices of denomination and affect the payments of assessments. Several cases have been noted in which a presiding elder[19]has been sent as a supply pastor in order to determine if a church can be restored to its previous standing or if closure is necessary. The other most notable form of active management is assigning pastors often referred to as "fixers"[20] to revitalize a declining church. The designation of a fixer also leads to faster acquisition of contingent rewards.[21]

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[17] In our church context, we witness passive management when churches are closed without outside help from their annual conference or episcopal district—closed because of their inability to pay the standard assessments and to meet the ever-increasing financial requirements.

[18] "Ethical Leadership Lectures," 102.

[19] Presiding Elders are the leadership liaisons of the AME church and serve as middle management between the presiding bishop and pastors within an assigned presiding elders district.

[20] Pastors with a history of turning churches around in severe decline or at risk of closure

[21] The fact that the AMEC incorporates transactional leadership within its governance is not necessarily a sign of ineffective leadership. Transactional leadership works well in large-scale organizations. The AMEC is a historically well-organized denomination that has sustained a consistent leadership culture, career mobility, and ecclesial expectations despite the precarious historical circumstances that have contributed to its current state. The problem that is identified here is the opposite. For the problem is actually amplified and exacerbated by the efficacy of this leadership culture, which reinforces rather than alleviates or even considers the institutional challenges in the AMEC. This problem of efficiency, rewards, and penalties actually perpetuates the *habitus* and toxic practices[21] that contribute to the denomination's institutional decline.

Transactional Leadership Practices in the AMEC

The leadership practices of the AMEC are rooted in the *habitus* of the AMEC, whose long history of struggle against dominance has been affected by its own internal struggle over social, economic, and symbolic capital. It is a struggle birthed out of a theological context of enduring racism rather than a theological framework based on overcoming oppression within the lived experience. Peter J. Paris in *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches* states that, "the black Christian tradition has functioned both in priestly and prophetic functions—the former aiding and abetting the race in its capacity to endure racism,"[22] enabling communities of African descent to survive the atrocious reality of racism in what the rest of the world calls the land of the free and the home of the brave.[23] Nonetheless, the problem that this project investigates asks a different question that is antithetical to the view that Paris proposes. Are we "aiding and abetting the race" by engaging in obsessive forms of transactional leadership or exploiting its hard-won gains and diminishing its future?[24]

How does oppression and the experience of enduring racism contribute to the significance of the proposed problem? It is because it caused internal struggles concerning the identity and the purpose of the church. This internal conflict is demonstrated by its preached theology and ecclesial leadership culture which have subsequently created a church that only

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[22] Peter J. Paris, *The Social Teachings*; quoted in Fluker, Walter Earl, *Ethical Leadership*, Location 302..

[23] The AMEC origin story referenced at the beginning of this project is taught as a pivotal moment of history throughout the connectional church; whether you are in membership orientation or being trained as incoming clergy by the board of examiners,[23] the event that took place at St. George Methodist Church in 1787 remains a foundational marker of AME identity.

[24] This means that the *habitus* of the AMEC was influenced by a socially hostile climate towards Black Americans, whose vision was to achieve equitable participation in the American Dream. It means the leadership culture and the ethical models undergirding this culture were and are vulnerable to the consequences of racialized oppression that for centuries has defined the Black experience in America.

attracts those immersed in outdated traditions of reward-based transactions and theological

imperatives, that are disconnected from the consciousness of its targeted community and the

youth and young adult demographic that is critical to the church's survival. This has created a

cognitive dissonance at the highest levels of leadership because the leadership culture

reinforces the counterintuitive practices that are driving a wedge between the AMEC and the

global communities it serves. This transactional leadership model rests on an outdated

theological model that in turn rests on what Kelly Brown Douglas called *sanctified*

polarization,[25] which denotes an affiliation to the Christian faith as evidence of the inherent

goodness of the individual believer and Christian institution as a whole.[26]. For the AMEC

sanctified polarization creates an assumed argument that all actions by governing leadership

are inherently good and in no way bare malicious intent. This creates a level of vulnerability

within a transactional leadership paradigm, than can create a culture of systemically abusive

practices that no one calls into question[27].

Indicators of Transactional Leadership in the AMEC

The ecclesial leadership culture has created an embedded transactional leadership

paradigm that is established and maintained at all levels, from the local church to the

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[25] Douglas, *What's Faith Got to Do with It: Black Bodies/Christian Souls*, 13.

[26] Sanctified polarization undergirded the white Christian belief used to rationalize their lynching of Black Bodies; and the undergirding reason the AMEC was allowed to thrive using a transactional culture. This transactional culture was birthed out of racialized marginalization that was sustained intentionally by both systemic racism and intentional economic disenfranchisement of the Black community. The AME Church became a source of pride for its organization and the ability to operate within its transactional culture became a symbol of status and power. Transactional culture created opportunities to build self-esteem and confidence that was not available outside the confines of the church.

[27] This is due to the duty and protocol elements of The Rationalist and The Realist being vulnerable to not only the *habitus* of the AME Church but the naivety of believers that human beings regardless of position and faith; can intentionally abuse positions for personal gain. Sanctified polarization is often the culprit of AMEC malfeasance, from financial crimes to sexual misconduct.

Connectional Leadership. That culture has both destructive and positive consequences that

emerge from the problem of dilemma and doubleness that has historically challenged the best

of African American leadership practices.[28] Viscount Nelson made it clear how the dilemma of

the Black Middle class attempting to consolidate its gains and cautiously pursue a level of social

equity often clashed with those who believed in openly opposing systemic racism through

social action. The AMEC had a large representation of both sides, but the economic power base

rested with the middle class.

Transactional leadership among AMEC's was not created intentionally; indeed, the

church was actually founded upon transformational leadership ideals[29]. Transactional

leadership developed within the Church as part of the process of Black Christians creating

spaces for themselves in a hostile nation. Transactional leadership became attractive because

contingent rewards and understood expectations were an easy culture to teach a population

that was not afforded the educational or economic resources of their white counterparts[30].

Benefits of Transactional Leadership

While the AMEC suffers from its practices, there are aspects of transactional leadership

that also benefit the church. They are reflected in the implementation of principles and policies

evident in the standardized training program, which defines all standard requirements for

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[28] Nelson, H. Viscount "Berky," *The Rise and Fall of Modern Black Leadership*, 169.
[29] Transformational leadership is discussed below
[30] In addition, these traits of transactional leadership within the Church promote contingent reward systems that set expectations at all levels of governance. Another indicator of transactional leadership is the value and use of *quid pro quo* transactions based on economic, social, and symbolic capital that benefits those in positions of influence.

incoming[31] clergy of the AMEC. This the Church accomplishes through a five-year training program implemented by the local conference Board of Examiners and is required of all clergy. As clergy in training become eligible for ordination on the itinerant track, they are required to have either a bachelor's degree or an ordination from a recognized denomination. The AMEC has two types of ordinations, an MDiv, or equivalent master's degree from an accredited seminary. These requirements are implemented to maintain a certain level of quality within the clergy ranks. The purpose of this standardized method of training is to create a base or standard of clergy education to show that candidates have done both the spiritual and scholarly development to achieve the specific level of ministerial competence[32] required by the AMEC. This standardized process also includes undergoing a psychological assessment.[33]

Liabilities of Transactional Leadership in the AMEC

Yet, at this point in our history, transactional leadership contributes more to the decline in membership and the power of Christian prophetic witness than it does to its flourishing. The problem with transactional leadership practices starts with the practice that effective leadership models are best suited for environments where rewards for self-interests and compliance to the rules are the normative operation.[34] In order for the AMEC to be true to its

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[31] Each cohort of AME preachers are given the same required training and credentials for both the itinerant and local clergy tracks

[32] This may differ between Episcopal Districts as well as Annual Conference within a given Episcopal District

[33] The AMEC is a multinational business organization, and as such its efficacy benefits from and depends upon the organized structure of transactional leadership model. The corporate culture of the church remains consistent across the twenty episcopal districts that comprises its membership. This has made what many call "doing the business of the church," a standardized process for a large volume of members.

[34] This creates a dichotomy, for this Church often considers innovation and transformative thinking to be counterproductive to the operational modality of established leadership.

Black Liberation theological roots, there has to be a clear consciousness within the Church that can inspire liberation and action[35].

The roots of the economic model of the AMEC were birthed from an origin of historical social hostility to the formation of the denomination as a whole. The early writings of Richard Allen mentioned earlier detailed this environmental hostility. Another example of this opposition can be seen in Allen's address to slave masters,[36] as well to those still trapped within the bondage of slavery.[37] The communal response[38] required an economic component to create economic sustainability for a marginalized community within an active slave state. The liability of transactional leadership is that there was not an ideological provision to account for the effects of greed and compromised ethical foundations that I discuss in the following sections.[39]

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[35] If the leadership is bound by the expectations of the contingent rewards of economic, social, and symbolic capital, there is no incentive for leadership to engage a transformative way of thinking or leading.

[36] Allen, *The Life Experience and Gospel Labors of the RT. Rev. Richard Allen*, 69.

[37] Allen, 72.

[38] From the Black Community that comprised the AME Church

[39]Short-sighted goals within the AMEC's governance promote leadership ideologies that regard the expressed mission and theology of denomination as a secondary priority, because the fulfillment of transactional expectations is prioritized over the AME mission and vision. The trend of pastoral leadership in local congregations being more concerned with "the budget" levied upon local congregations by ecclesial leadership than with implementing transformative goals and innovations to create relevant and sustainable ministry has caused a shift in local congregations. That shift has adjusted the role of pastor from a theologically based position of an under-shepherd for Jesus Christ to a neo-liberal capitalist with the quantitative corporate metrics of their local congregation as the priority of their pastorate. This liability has become more pronounced as its integration into the historically grounded *habitus* creates a degenerative social connection between local congregations and the people they serve. The over-reliance on a transactional leadership culture combined with practices influenced by a *habitus* birthed from trauma and reinforced by a generational tradition of enduring racism is reflected in the AMEC's decreasing relevance at a time at which the communities it serves need to hear from God, and see God move through the Church's active witness. Reliance on these practices, and on this leadership structure, has made the Church vulnerable to neo-liberal capitalist ideology, which in turn has created a culture that is counterintuitive to its preached theology and professed mission and puts disproportionate weight on the local church.

Transformational Leadership

Origins of Transformational Leadership

James MacGregor Burns, a political scientist at Williams College, introduced the concept of transformational leadership in his 1978 book, *Leadership*.[40] Burns defined transformational leadership as a process by which "leaders and their followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation."[41] At the same time Burns characterized transactional leadership in itself as merely a version of managerialism that appeals to the economic self-interest of followers, while transformational leadership alters the experience of the followers.[42] The mission, vision, purpose, and objectives of the AMEC are all aligned with altering the lived experience of believers and converts, and not the economic self-interests of its leadership nor its membership[43].

Transformational leadership is countercultural to transactional leadership in the sense that the end goal is not built upon the cyclical process of meeting expectations in anticipation of contingent rewards. When speaking to the senior members of my ministry site,[44] they described the previous church culture of preparing youth early so that they could take over. Leaders were developed early through the Young People's Department (YPD)and Lay

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[40] "Ethical Leadership Lectures," 103.
[41] "Ethical Leadership Lectures," 103.
[42] "Ethical Leadership Lectures," 103.
[43] Transactional leadership is most effective when both expectations and results are not a factor of creativity or vision. In short, if an organization's mission and vision, as stipulated by the AMEC, is to create transformative results, it cannot rely solely on a transactional culture. Today, this is a very real challenge in the AMEC, for it is facing a real threat of institutional insolvency within the coming decades, despite being an organization with a 235-year history undergirding it.
[44] Bethel AME Church Marysville (Bethel Marysville)

Organizations in which both organizations were focused on preparing members to be leaders for the future.

What was more illuminating, was when other members of the church described the shift in church culture within the last thirty years. This gave a picture of a church whose members refused to give up positions and titles well after their ability to serve. Within this shift, the morality of the leadership began to decline, and the youth and young adults began to depart from church participation. These trends further convinced me in my research that the terminal decline of the church was more associated with the removal of a transformational leadership component and the continuing embrace of a *habitus* that was birthed from the traumatic experience of surviving systemic racism[45].

Ethical Foundation of Transactional Leadership

Walter Earl Fluker defines five ways of doing ethics in Ethical *Leadership: The Quest for Character, Civility and* Community.[46] They are respectively, Rationalist, the Realist, the Retooler, the Relationist, and the Raconteur. I explore all five ways of doing ethics, but in this section, I will focus on the two ethical modalities that undergird the transactional leadership model. These two methods are the Rationalist and Realist ethical modalities. These two ways of doing

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[45] Burns' argument requires a symbiotic relationship between the leadership of an organization and its followers. This concept of higher morality and motivation denotes that there must be both a symbiosis of ideals and direction, in which both leader and follower can participate together. Which means the ethical modalities of transformational leadership and transactional leadership must have differential priorities. The approach I have chosen to address this concern lies first in examining the ethical foundations of transactional leadership through two ethical perspectives outlined below.

ethics work in concert with the transactional culture because their primary foci are systems of rules and measurable outcomes.

Transactional leadership, in line with rationalist and realist ethical methods, carries with it the same liability as its ethical foundation. Transactional leadership, rationalist, and realist ethical models have a relationship with compliance and adherence to an established system of rules and conduct.[47] Fluker states that the basic issue here is the assumption that the determination of rights precedes the determination of the good.[48]

Ways of Doing Ethics Part 1: Rationalist/Rule Based & Realist/End-Based

The Rationalist: Rules-Based Ethics

In this method of ethics, reason is the foundational element ordering, determining, and giving direction to what is a moral life. The question that drives a rationalist is, "What is my duty";[49] and consequently what are my rights and responsibilities? The rationalist often does not consider the wisdom of experience and traditions to inform decisions on moral and ethical matters.[50] This means that primarily a sense of duty and fidelity to the rules will govern leadership perspectives when experience and traditions are ignored as viable sources of morals

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[47] This section explores these ethical modalities to understand how a way of doing ethics affects organizational culture and practices. Fluker defines the foundational concern of the rationalist/rules-based ethical model as being with a focus on rules and duty. Fluker explains that while this ethical framework places premium on reason, duty and rights, it does not primarily consider what is *good* or not, but whether there has been a violation of the rules or code. Fluker, Walter Earl, *Ethical Leadership*, Location 678.

[48] Fluker, Walter Earl, Location 678. This makes the person who determines, implements, sustains, and enforces these established protocols the key determinant in how the context of morality is defined within the ethical model itself. By adding the realist ethics component, one is dealing with efficiencies and what is best for the greater good. For a globally positioned church, which makes logical sense— *if* the mission, vision, and objectives of the AMEC were based on quantitative metrics instead of liberative theological tenets.

[49] Fluker, Walter Earl, *Ethical Leadership*, Location 678.

[50] The very identity of the AME church rests in its history

and ethics. An example of this type of ethics at work in this context would be the legal system,

where often what is good or just are secondary relevancy to the "facts" of the matter at hand.

For example, dismissing DNA evidence that exonerates a defendant on trial for murder is

considered ethical when done in accordance with the rules of the court, without equal

attention to the details to the historical and social context that determines innocence.[51]

During one of the AMEC legislative sessions of the 2020 General Conference of the

AMEC, there was a vote dealing with the prohibition of clergy officiating at the marriages or

same-sex couples or those who identify as being on the LGBTQ spectrum. The bill was created

to allow pastors who are in communities who affirm and support the LGBTQ community to

make the choice of being an affirming church and marrying same-sex couples.[52] Currently the

church law says that any ordained clergy within the AME Church who presides over a same-sex

union can be stripped both of their pastoral assignment and their orders. The proposed

legislation not only removed the above-mentioned consequences, but it also allowed for the

church and its pastor to make the decision to be open and affirming to the LGBTQ community.

When this was proposed, there was a point of order granted to Dr. William Watley, pastor of St.

Philip AMEC, Atlanta, GA. The point of order proposed, was those issues concerning LGBTQ

affirmation and acceptance were a matter of church doctrine, not legality. Church doctrine was

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[51] In the context of the AME Church, this ethical model takes out of consideration the cultural and theological foundation of the organization when establishing a moral center grounded in the rule of law. All business in the AMEC is conducted under Robert's Rules of Order, and there are several instances when the rationalist modality became confining and restrictive when dealing with matters of doctrine and theology. One of these instances occurred at the 2020 General Conference of the AMEC, held in July 2021. The General Conference primarily deals with the election of Connectional Leadership, with passing legislation, and with the assignments of Episcopal leadership for the next quadrennium.

[52] This was all observed during my assignment as a registered observer for the 5th Episcopal District, which resulted in an active bishop's daughter who was a delegate and pastor to leave the AME Church.

not a matter of legislative discussion and could not be changed through policy alone.[53] In this instance, the rule of law ignored the social and historical context of liberation the AMEC was founded on in order to enforce a theological position that disenfranchised vested members and clergy within the AME connection.

The Way of the Realist

Realists are primarily concerned with the end goals, the measurable outcomes, and how to create these outcomes efficiently.[54] This is the ethical method that asks the question: "What allows the greatest good for the greatest number?"[55] The realist is the utilitarian form of doing ethics but there is a broad range regarding what is defined as good, and a range of human activity upon which utilitarians focus, but all are approached from an empirical and moral commitment to reducing undesirable outcomes as much as possible. Like Rationalists, realists do have an aversion to technical reasoning, which can create problematic scenarios in ethical decision making. Fluker points out this ethical method can cause leaders to fail to see individuals as having equal dignity and worth.[56] This becomes problematic, especially when dealing with those in the minority or when military leaders choose options based on the least number of civilians dying.[57]

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[53] Because of this specific point of order, the General Conference removed the bill from voting consideration and did not allow further discussion despite multiple delegations protesting the lack of discussion and arguing that Robert's Rules of Order were insufficiently observed when the matter of doctrine versus legislation was being argued by Dr. Watley. This action created a substantial amount of tension between delegations, because of the number of LGBTQ delegates and observers in attendance who felt disenfranchised by the AMEC.

[54] Fluker, Walter Earl, *Ethical Leadership*, Location 703.

[55] IBID

[56] Fluker, Walter Earl, *Ethical Leadership*, Location 728.

[57] Fluker, Walter Earl, Location 728.

The realist lacks adequate principles of substantive justice, and so, similar to the rationalist, the realist depends on rules and procedures. Michael Sandel argues that in order for a society to be a community in this keen sense, community must be constitutive of the shared self-understandings of the participants and embodied in their institutional arrangements, not simply an attribute of certain of the participants' plans for life.[58] Neither the rationalist nor the realist gives weight to the self-understandings of the community as a whole. Fluker points out that organizational and government policies that are based on rule-based ethics are constantly creating new rules and penalties that are ineffective in reducing corruption and impropriety.[59][60]

Ethical Foundation of Transformational Leadership

Before going into the ethical modalities that compose the foundation of the transformational leadership, I reiterate the definition of transformational leadership as a values-based, innovative, and creative approach that honors long term sustainability and builds capable leaders within an organization.

Furthermore, I drew on Burns' concept of transformational leadership in his book, *Leadership*[61] as a process in which "leaders and their followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation."[62] I chose this particular contextual definition of

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[58] Fluker, Walter Earl, Location 805.

[59] Fluker, Walter Earl, Location 728.

[60] In the AMEC, this ethical modality is evident in its neo-liberal capitalist ideology, meaning that as long as the organization as a whole meets its corporate assessments, reports positive statistical data, and maintains the economic status quo as a whole, all is good. This ethical modality also compounds the challenge caused by statistical presupposition, which often causes episcopal leaders to dismiss economic challenges as the result of a lack of pastoral acumen. Because of statistical presupposition, churches that are suffering are often undergirded by stronger congregations in order to mask the real trials facing that ministry. The realist ethical foundation is what puts the budget to the top of mind of the majority of pastors, far above and beyond concerns about discipleship and ministry development within the AMEC.

[61] "Ethical Leadership Lectures," 103.

[62] IBID

transformational leadership because of its alignment with the vision, mission, and objectives of the AMEC and its founding historical context.

The Ways of Doing Ethics Part 2 -

In order us to contextualize our solution in conjunction with the proposed leadership methodology I want to be clear that I am using an ethical leadership model, namely Walter Earl Flukers' definition which he states as follows, "ethical leadership is the critical appropriation and embodiment of moral traditions that have shaped the character and shared meanings of a people.[63] Ethical leadership does not emerge from a historical vacuum but from the lifeworlds of particular traditions. It speaks authoritatively and acts responsibly with the aim of serving the collective good. Ethical leaders, therefore, are those whose characters have been shaped by the wisdom, habits, and practices of (a) particular tradition(s), yet they tend to be identified with a specific cultural ethos and narrative".[64] For the purpose of context, I also use Fluker's extended definition for ethical leaders as those whose characters have been shaped by the wisdom, habits, and practices of (a) particular tradition(s), yet they tend to be identified with a specific cultural ethos and narrative.[65] This will be the constructive foundation for my pastoral model. In order to give clarity to the context of the remedy, I will also need to identify in which way(s) I we will do ethics in this pastoral leadership model. There are multiple ways of *doing* ethics, according to Fluker[66].

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[63] Fluker, Walter Earl, *Ethical Leadership*, Location 576.

[64] Fluker, Walter Earl, Location 576.

[65] Fluker, Walter Earl, Location 576.

[66] I chose from the five ways of *doing* ethics that Fluker illustrates in *Ethical Leadership*, which will henceforth be called "methods of doing ethics," two of which I discussed as the ethical modalities that serve as the foundation of transactional leadership. The three remaining are the ethical modalities undergirding the proposed model of transformational leadership: the retooler, the relationist and the raconteur.

The Way of the Retooler

The Retooler is a pragmatic leader who is engaged in the construction of a new moral ecology,[67] regarding the issue that needs to be addressed. The Retooler asks: What tools and assets do we possess to create the desired outcome?[68] Retoolers ask, "What are the limits of our moral language?" They look at the reconstruction of moral ecology as a continuing project created to foster new understandings of morality that adapts to the needs of community. Fluker describes Retoolers as those who approach the truth as an ongoing project of human reconstruction.[69] This means their ethical framework has room for adaptation and evolution. Retoolers are part of the adaptive leadership practice, which allows for organizational adaption and change. Warren Bennis and Robert Thomas define the adaptive capacity displayed by a Retooler as applied creativity.[70] [71]

The Way of the Relationist: Relations-Based Ethics

This Relationist view of ethics is built on the principle that all life and experience are interrelated. To understand oneself is to understand how we in community are all fundamentally connected. This ethical method marries what we know to our beliefs, values, and visions of good. The pursuit of what is defined as the good in life is grounded in what Fluker

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[67] Fluker, Walter Earl, *Ethical Leadership*, Location 755.
[68] Fluker, Walter Earl, Location 755.
[69] Fluker, Walter Earl, Location 756.
[70] The way of the Retooler was essential due to the context of Burns' transformational leadership definition, due to its ability to develop new understanding. If both leaders and followers within the AMEC are going to raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality, there must be a pragmatic adaptive element within the leadership framework Fluker, Walter Earl, Location 756.
[71] More important, transformational leadership allows for remembering, retelling, and reliving the personal life stories of those within the community of the AMEC, and it allows leaders to do what John Dewey referred to as "form, reveal, and test" themselves, which Fluker includes as part of the ongoing work of developing character. Fluker, Walter Earl, Location 766.

calls a community of discourse and practice.[72] Martin Luther King, Jr., called this pursuit "the

beloved community." Howard Thurman called it, "The search for common ground."[73] In this

ethical method, people are related in mutuality and interdependency, as is all existence.[74] This

model posits that the moral self is relational and that actions are based on covenants, in

contrast to the rationalist and the realist whose actions are based on contracts. The relationist

method can often push for an unattainable utopian ideal.

The Way of the Raconteur: Narrative-Based Ethics

This Raconteur method of ethics gives weight to experience and tradition as the primary

influencers for what is ethical living and practice. It values the experience and narrative of that

lived experience as a way to aspire to ascertain the truth. Experience and tradition become

markers for what is seen as good. Narrative-based ethics provides a social context that other

methods such as utilitarian and rationalist ethics do not. I would compare this to how the

American[75] history of retelling the stories of the oppression of Black bodies relies on the

narratives and testimonies of those who survived from the evils of the transatlantic slave trade,

Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and the continued disenfranchisement from social equity

experienced across borders and boundaries, from the United States through Brazil and Chile.[76]

Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, showed how a fictional piece of

narrative could in fact create a moral crisis within an empire which thrived from that very

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[72] Fluker, Walter Earl, Location 755.
[73] Fluker, Walter Earl, Location 755.
[74] Fluker, Walter Earl, Location 755.IBID
[75] Both North, Central & South American oppression of Black bodies
[76] It is the stories that create the awareness of the morality of those events and our need constantly to remember, retell, and relive our stories as preparation for mission in the present.

practice of oppression. The compelling part about this narrative is that the subject of the story

was beaten because he refused to say anything about slaves who ran away. The fact that the

remembrance of this trauma impacted Great Britain enough to prompt it to reflect on its active

participation in the slave trade, and to fuel greater debate on the abolition of slavery suggests

how important narrative can be[77] [78].

This is the challenge for the AMEC in the present. The AMEC and its members were

recipients of Jim Crow. Forced land sells and in some cases appropriation. Members of the

AMEC were lynched and massacred before the country heard of the Emmanuel 9[79]. The AMEC

was built in a climate that reflected systemic oppression from its inception creating grey areas

within its own theology. People became wealthy through their position and status, and that

lifestyle became more definitive than their actual ministry[80]. It has resulted in situations such as

the recent articles concerning the AMEC pension fund.

The Remedy

The proposed remedy is based on an evaluation of how practices created success and

institutional decline within the AMEC, focusing specifically on the ethical modalities that

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[77] Great Britain's sympathy for the Southern cause for slavery diminished due to the impact of Uncle Tom's Cabin. It is also believed that it heavily influenced Great Britain's abolition of slavery in its colonies and known territories
[78] Also, it sheds light on the fact that the AMEC was ministering to the very people experiencing this level of despair and oppression. The AME Church did not wait until the abolition of slavery before establishing churches within the south and active northern slave states. The story of Denmark Vesey's planned revolt alone, shows there was an empathetic spirit and painful reality that active clergy and members experienced seeing their brothers and sisters devoured by the institution of chattel slavery. Often it was amplified in the church due to the expectation of council and confidentiality of the minister.
[79] Nine members of Emmanuel AME Church, who were murdered by Dylan Roof
[80] The practices created from a habitus undergirded by trauma set the stage for this possibility. Just like this concept of the Volk, set the stage for Hitler to take lead in Germany. Though the AMEC is making all attempts to rectify the issue, the cognitive disconnect from its own theological tenets and foundations created this problem.

undergirded transactional leadership, and how the vulnerabilities of transactional leadership created the current state of terminal decline in the AMEC today. I propose a remedy that addresses the leadership model and its ethical underpinnings. The proposed solution and subsequent innovation applied in my ministry site[81] will be the evidence I present to prove my argument. The purpose of this remedy is to cause a "System 2"[82] shift within the consciousness of the AME culture that allows an evolution within the *habitus* of the church, which in turn will evolve the practices of AME leadership moving forward.

The Proposed Solution

The proposed solution for this challenge **is to create an ethical pastoral leadership model that combines a transformational leadership framework within the transactional structure of the AME Church to address the underlying challenges of twenty-first-century ministry while addressing the transactional elements of organizational sustainability**[83]**.**

The proposed solution will address these issues by developing a pastoral leadership model that can operate within an ethical leadership framework, using transformational leadership as a means of execution and its undergirding ethical modalities to mitigate the risks of decline in the future. This approach is necessary because transformational leadership is a value-based model that is established by the ethical method of the organization. This model has

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[81] Bethel AME Church, Marysville (Bethel Marysville)

[82] System two thinking was referenced in the earlier section. This is the critical thinking, slow process that is counter to the instant/automatic thought process of System 1. The argument is that *habitus* is part of System 1 thinking and will take a System 2 process to evolve

[83] Transactional leadership remains necessary for institutional business activities; and a transformational leadership structure will be implemented in tandem with it in order to restore AME culture to 1) an ethical and theological equilibrium that directs the church back to its mission, vision, purpose, and objectives of the AMEC, and 2) to the creation of sustainable ministry.

the capacity to help divert the AMEC from a state of terminal decline and to create innovation

and sustainable ministry that can reverse the acrimonious tension entrenched in the successive

generations of congregational leaders needed to continue the church.

The Transformation Trinity

Building upon the five methods provided by Fluker, there needs to be a hybrid ethical

leadership modality that integrates all five methods together and balances out the inherent

challenges that can arise when focusing on one method over another, especially specific

challenges being faced within the everyday worlds of AMEC congregations. Transactional

leadership is well grounded in two ethical modalities that have created both success and failure

for the AME church[84].

Thus, a hybrid approach that combines the Retooler, the Raconteur, and Relationist-

Based ethics seems most commensurate with transformational leadership that can be

incorporated in conjunction with transactional practices, and this is for two reasons: The first

reason is that the AMEC needs to construct a new moral ecology to address the terminal

decline it is currently facing. The church is deeply entrenched in a Rationalist/Realist ethical

modality, as is evident in all activities pertaining to the business of the church. This has been

effective in sustaining the transactional leadership culture, but it is also responsible for an

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[84] As a researcher, I evaluated my own evolution in ethical modalities. When I was younger, my own ethical framework was deeply steeped in a rationalist-utilitarian framework. Due to my inexperience with the contextual nuances that appear in the leadership, and the grey areas that appear in all facets of life, I believed that honoring protocol, rules, and a code created an equitable social paradigm which all participants could honor. Consequences served as retribution for the few unwilling members in community. Rules and regulations were supposed to protect and provide a level of communal equity. Hence the focus on rules and duty of the Rationalist made sense to me—until I saw that adherence to rules and consequences were directly correlated with power and the accumulation of capital (for some, more than others). Reflection upon this ethical leadership approach allows us to critique this narrow and often binding fixation on rules-based ethical decision-making. The challenge to AME traditions and practices that fall under this perspective is what we seek to address.

accelerated decline that is threatening AMEC's sustainability. The Retooler method will allow

the Church to focus on what kind of moral ecology we need to create a ministry that honors the

mission, vision, purpose, and objectives of the Church; more important, it will allow us to

evolve that moral ecology through its creation by remembering, retelling, and reliving our

story(ies) and proceeding with a transformative model which draws upon the Raconteur,

Retooler, and Relationist modes as starting points for the processes and which incorporates the

Rationalist and Realist elements as (transactional) as integral elements in the whole. My

assumption is that the AME as an organization is one-sided in favor of rationalist/realist, thus

transactional[85].

Transformational Foundations & Theological Conflicts

Transactional leadership, however, is not the most widespread problem of AMEC. What

is, is its over-reliance on these practices that create an organizational culture that is not

consistent with its theological foundations, nor its mission declared within its doctrine and

theological claims. The foundational ideals of the AMEC are summarized by four specific tenets

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[85] The second reason is that a hybridized Relationist/Raconteur/Retooler Ethical Leadership is essential for us to create a community of connection—one in which we do not see each other as detached individuals entering alone into worship, organized ministry, or any other manner of fellowship, but as a community of discourse and practice in deep connection with one another. The Retooler method allows us to reconstruct the existing transactional paradigm through the Relationist and Raconteur methods by creating a transformational context of morality because it will combine the evolution of moral ecology with the consciousness of communal interconnectivity. The leadership execution methodology has to be undergirded with an ethical foundation that contributes to its efficacy. This means there needs to be a symbiosis between the ethical foundation and the execution methodology that creates the organizational consciousness within the AMEC to achieve its ideal purpose without being constrained by the limitations of a transactional paradigm.

that are printed in every Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church. The four tenets are the

Mission, The Vision, The Purposed and the Objectives.[86]

These four tenets outlined from the mission to the objectives are all focused on a

liberative mission of being a proponent of the gospel to bring transformative change: not just in

the United States, but as a global mission for ministry. These tenets are transformative by

nature, especially the historical foundations used to undergird the Mission, the Vision, the

Purposes and Objectives. Therefore, a transformative mission, cannot be successful in its

implementation, without the integration of transformational leadership and its ethical

undergirding's present within the leadership culture[87]. The proposed remedy is not a departure

from the AMEC's identity; but a method of restoring its intrinsic purpose that has directed both

the vitality and the longevity of AME history.

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[86] Mission
The Mission of the AME Church is to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people.
The Vision
At every level of the Connection and in every local church, the AME Church shall engage in carrying out the spirit of the original Free African Society, out of which the AME Church evolved: that is, to seek out and save the lost and to serve the needy. It is also the duty of the Church to continue to encourage all members to become involved in all aspects of church training.[86]
The Purposes
The ultimate purposes are 1) to make available God's biblical principles, 2) to spread Christ's liberating gospel and 3) to provide continuing programs that will enhance the entire social development of all people.
The Objectives
In order to meet the needs at every level of the Connection and in every local church, the AME Church shall implement strategies to train all members in 1) Christian discipleship, 2) Christian leadership, 3) current teaching methods and materials, 4) the history and significance of the AME Church, 5) God's biblical principles and 6) social development, all of which should be applied to daily living.

[87] Transformational leadership is value-based, innovative, creative, and honors long term sustainability, and builds capable leaders within the organization. Transactional leadership, as discussed in the previous sections, is built upon a system of expectations and contingent rewards; it is a form of active and passive management that encourages a culture of self-centered interest.

Figure 1.1

The Theological Framework

As we observed, the counterintuitive practices that are responsible for the current state of terminal decline in the AMEC did not have their origins solely in transactional leadership culture. These practices are rooted in a theological framework of validation and trauma in which the Depression era[88] (1920–1945) and Baby Boomer (1945–1963)[89] generations thrived, out of which Generation X (1963-1979)[90] transitioned, and which the Millennials (1980–1996)[91] and younger generations are outright rejecting. These theological frameworks, embedded within the practices of the AMEC, have systemically disenfranchised the twenty-first century church and the community called to be the global witness of Christ in an evolving world. These are the communities made up of critically thinking youth and young adults that embrace ideals that are different than those of the generations before them and are key to a thriving and flourishing church. The younger generations are far more inclusive and critical about their social connections. The affirmed exclusion or "don't ask, don't tell" policies concerning LGBTQ members within the Church body have become a divisive point of contention at the highest levels of leadership[92].

Ethicist Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas describes a method used as a means of creating moral agency for Black women using what Audrey Lorde coined as Biomythography[93]— an

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[88] Also knows as the silent generation "Why Is the Silent Generation Called 'Silent'?"
[89] "The Baby Boomer Generation—Birth Years, Characteristics, and History."
[90] "The Millennial Generation—Birth Years, Characteristics, and History."
[91] "The Millennial Generation—Birth Years, Characteristics, and History."
[92] The values of these disenfranchised generations are also exacerbated by the fact that spirituality is not typically a compartmentalized aspect of their lives, and the spirit of judgment and critique birthed from a *habitus* of survival and endurance is causing a great disconnect between the established church and the communities of youth and young adults.
[93] Floyd-Thomas, *Mining the Motherlode: Methods in Womanist Ethics*, 21.

amalgamation of autobiographical fact with mythically resonant fiction that locates the struggle for moral agency and self-identity in the midst of social oppression.[94] This Biomythography is a method of providing agency and voice to complicated experiences that cause internal conflict. Floyd-Thomas argues that Biomythography provides the textual counterpart to the African Cosmological term *nommo*,[95] which Molefi Asante defines as the "generative and productive power of the spoken word."[96] Biomythography is used not only to provide agency and voice to women from a womanist context, but it also creates spaces where ethical and theological understanding are allowed to evolve[97].

We must be able to tell the stories not only of the generations who formed the foundation of Black Liberation and Womanist thought but also those of the neglected, those caught in what Fluker refers to as cultural asylums. Cultural asylums refer to the various institutions of social control to maintain the child/savage imagery of African Americans and other marginalized groups in our market economy.[98] Michel Foucault referred to these institutions of social control (as asylums for the insane, penitentiaries for criminals, and almshouses for the poor) imposed a universal form, a morality that would prevail from "within" upon those who were "strangers" to it.[99] Fluker describes the socially constructed version of *habitus* that was created in this *cultural asylum* context. Fluker uses Michele Foucault's

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[94] Floyd-Thomas, 21.

[95] Floyd-Thomas, 23.

[96] Floyd-Thomas, *Mining the Motherlode: Methods in Womanist Ethics*.

[97] There are historical and Biomythographical scenarios in which Christian Black women had to comply with pathological sexual assault from slave owners and his or her associates while being married in order to protect children or younger women from the same fate. This created deep theological rifts, which were never addressed in the Black Liberation Theological paradigm. Yet, the lack of agency identified in these stories allows for the conjuring of new understanding, one that can evolve *habitus* from an ethical and theological context that is relevant in the communities served by the AMEC today.

[98] Fluker, Walter Earl, *Ethical Leadership*, 199.

[99] Fluker, Walter Earl, 199.

description of what an asylum does to a "madman" and how it takes his guilt and makes him an

object of punishment always vulnerable to himself and the other.[100]

      Cultural asylums have created stories and lived experiences that echo the need for a

Black liberative context. In the preface of the 1997 edition of *God of the Oppressed*, James Cone

wrote regarding the efficacy of Black Liberation Theology and the human reality of the

oppression of people of African descent that,

> Faith is born out of suffering, and suffering is faith's most powerful contradiction. This is
> the Christian dilemma. The only meaningful Christian response is to resist unjust
> suffering and to accept the painful consequence of that resistance.[101]

Cone was responding to the critique regarding Black Liberation theology's conundrum of

whether or not it was a true liberative movement of God. The question posed was: Why were

believers still subject to a consistent degree of oppression and have not received liberation

from the oppression they endure? I chose this quotation because those who have been

encapsulated by the Cultural Asylums implemented in the post-civil rights movement era do not

have a liberative theological context that affirms their story and lived experience. Furthermore,

many of those who have escaped the cultural asylums are not inclined to connect with a church

that is more connected to the past than to the present.

      Historically, the AMEC did operate within a Black Liberation framework, way before

James Cone coined that term. There is evidence of proto-Black liberation[102] theology through

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[100] Fluker, Walter Earl, 199. Fluker expands Foucault's argument and states that the socially constructed habitus
that guarantees the madman's allegiance to a form of liberty that serves a common purpose, the perpetuation of
the status quo

[101] Cone, James H., *God of the Oppressed*, Location 72.

[102] Proto Black Liberationist is describing those who exemplified the fundamentals of Black Liberation Theology
before its identification in the academy by James H. Cone

the actions of the AMEC and its leadership. This can be seen through the actions of the famous

four horsemen,[103] like Bishop Daniel A. Payne who, because he taught both free and enslaved

African Americans in South Carolina was chased out of the state, allegedly for illegally teaching

African Americans to read and write. Also consider the actions and polity of Bishop Henry

McNeal Turner, who ordained a woman into the preaching ministry in defiance of church law

and the General Conference.[104] Even more poignant and illustrative of the point, the actions of

Denmark Vesey, the pastor of the historic Emmanuel AMEC[105], who organized what would have

been the largest slave revolt in US history. All of these examples were rooted in the expressed

and lived theology of the AMEC[106].

Scope, Mission, & Vision

The purpose and scope of this project is to analyze the problem of *terminal decline*

within the AMEC and to propose an ethical leadership model based on the hybrid Retooler-

Relationist-Raconteur method that will include a focus on contextualization, specifically

identifying and reconstructing the substantive elements of traditions, social practices, and

habits that are integral to the institutional life of the Church. This means that I will explore how

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[103] The four horsemen of the AME church are Richard Allen, Henry McNeal Turner, Daniel Payne, and William Paul Quinn. These four men are considered to have done significant foundational work in the building and sustaining of the AME church

[104] This ordination was overturned at the General Conference the following Quadrennium

[105] Brown, *The Blackman, His Antecedents, His Genius, And His Achievements*, 147.

[106] This preached and lived theology was also present during the Civil Rights movement. Yet, at the advent of the twenty-first century we saw a departure from actively living a creed of liberation and exchanging it for power. The preaching stayed the same, the implied liberation was present in sermons and reports presented at annual conferences, but the organizational priority of action has been exchanged for symbolism. This exchange of symbolism in place of action has created a pastoral leadership model that is based on the expected benchmarks of the ecclesiastical leadership associated with transactional leadership without any of the transformative power, and without any adherence to the liberative theological movement expressed in the mission, purpose, and objectives of the AMEC.

to create space within local congregations to create sustainable ministry ecosystems that address the intergenerational imbalance of youth and young adults, as well as the increasing gap between community and church. This I do by creating innovations and evaluating their impact on a local AME congregation in need of shifting the *terminal decline* it is facing. For the purpose of this project, Bethel AME Church, Marysville will be the intended local congregation. And the evaluation of the innovations will concern both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the ministry and how the proposed innovations assist in improving them.

Remembering, Retelling and Reliving the Story of the AME Church

For the sake of transparency, as the researcher and author of this DMin project, I must state that the reason I chose this project is that the AMEC has an underlying mission and set of values still critical to the communities it serves. Part of this project entails creating a method of reincorporating those values within a local congregational setting. There are three parts to this process which I adopted from the book, *The Ground Has Shifted: The Future of the Black Church in Post-Racial America* as a means of identifying three reconnecting points to the AMEC and its identity. The aforementioned three connecting points are *Remembering* (memory), *Retelling* (vision), and *Reliving* (mission).

Howard Thurman told compelling stories and explanations of hatred that illustrate the significance of this methodology. In *Jesus and the Disinherited*, Thurman talks about the response he received while riding a train from Chicago, Illinois to Memphis, Tennessee. Thurman had sat down across from an elderly lady, who immediately took issue with his presence. She even went as far as asking the conductor, "What is *that* doing in this car?" The conductor responds, in a humorous fashion, that *that* has a ticket. Thurman then describes this

same elderly lady going to every other person seated in the car and alerting them to his presence. Thurman describes a shift in the atmosphere from indifference to active recognition and to some extent actual resentment of his presence.[107] Thurman then explains that hatred is an outline of four factors. Thurman argues that hatred is contact without fellowship, combined with unsympathetic understanding leading to an expression of ill will; morphs that ill will into expressed hatred.[108]

In order to restore the memory of the AMEC that its origin and theology were birthed as a response to hatred. James H. Cone states hatred is a denial of freedom, a usurpation of the liberation struggle.[109] Nothing provides more evidence for this fact than the circumstances that occurred in St. George's Methodist Church in 1787 referenced in the earlier section on historical context[110].

How Does the AMEC Remember Its Story?

When leaders within the AMEC talk about its origins, they often use the phrase "the first civil rights movement" in United States history. Our AME history is steeped in significant historical reverence, which is present not only in its history but also in its practices. The legacy within AME history has often been the key in maintaining support for its membership, primarily

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[107] Thurman, Howard, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 77.
[108] Thurman, Howard, 77.
[109] Cone, James H., *God of the Oppressed*, 198.
[110] This origin story is what birthed the AME philosophy of self-help and community development. The strategic plan for remembrance is to create *opportunities of inspiration* that inspire the creation of community, which will serve as evolving consciousness from the old premise of enduring and surviving racism; but also include the elements of reconciliation and liberation. The psycho-social and material challenges posed by the AMEC's *habitus* which is informed and shaped by history and memory, can only be addressed by reframing the historical context to a liberating paradigm for the present.[110]

people of African descent,[111] who look to the AMEC's historical position on oppression and the liberation of marginalized Black people as a source of affirmation and pride. There are several notable moments within AME history that are used to create this sense of communal affirmation. This can be observed through multiple historical events[112].

The AMEC also remembers itself as the birthplace of Black Liberation Theology, starting with proto-black liberationists like Bishop Henry McNeal Turner and going all the way to Dr. James H. Cone, who is considered the father of Black Liberation Theology. The influences of this theology are reflected in events like the annual conference at which Bishop Henry McNeal Turner ordained Sara Hughes in 1885, at a time when women were still expressly excluded from ordained ministry[113]—a decision that created such controversy that the ordination was overturned in the succeeding General Conference[114].

The *Habitus*/Memory Conundrum

With this historical trend of accomplishment and progress, the question for me as a researcher is: How did the church come to the point in its life of documenting a 25 percent

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[111] There are an estimated one million members of the AME church in the continent of Africa, but a formal census has not been published since the 2009 ARDA report. Though the AME church is a multicultural denomination, the primary make-up of our congregations are people of African (Black) descent domestic and abroad

These events ranged from the establishment of the first Black Protestant denomination in history, which has been an anchor to the AME ideology to establishing churches within states and territories where slavery was legal and where the government maintained hostile intent. Add to those institutions of higher learning for African American students, as well as those for clergy in need of an education within a higher learning environment; to the last historical reference point being a grand expansion over two hundred years that took a church from fifteen members and one Bishop to an international church on five continents residing in thirty-nine countries.

[113] "Sarah (Sallie) Ann Copeland Hughes."

[114] This theological influence is also evident in the establishment of Wilberforce University,[114] founded in 1856 at a time when the formal education of African Americans was illegal. Yet, one of the most momentous and memorable recent events of theological and ecclesial evolution was the election and consecration of Bishop Vashti Murphy-McKenzie as the 117th Bishop of the AMEC, shattering the episcopal glass ceiling within all of Black Methodism.

reduction in membership within a twenty-four-month reporting period[115]? The Church still today continues the same practices as led to its historical accomplishments. The memories of these accomplishments are taught consistently through training, workshops, and Sunday schools. Despite practices that were responsible for past accomplishments still being in place, a cognitive dissonance separates the AMEC from the communities in which it is located, and it is not reframing its practices and culture.

This reframing has become difficult based on what Daniel Kahneman, winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics, calls "System 1" thinking. Kahneman defines System 1 thinking as a process that "operates automatically and quickly with little or no effort and no sense of voluntary control."[116] System 1 is cognitively believed to be true and requires a "System 2"[117] process to modify System 1 thought. This means that the System 1 culture of the AMEC creates a cognitive schematic that resists institutional reformation and transformation. Therefore, reframing AMEC practices has proven difficult because AME leadership is immersed in a" System 1" loop with a *habitus* as its primary trigger that has created what Burns called merely a version of managerialism that appeals to the economic self-interest of its followers.[118] That means that its existing practices and ethical modalities are no longer sufficient to sustain the corporate church. This habitus then embeds itself into "System 1" thinking, which operates automatically and quickly, without effort and lacking voluntary control.[119] Creating a cultural and systemic

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[115] The 25% membership was reported in the 2019 General Board Meeting mentioned in the first section of the project

[116] Kahneman, Daniel, *Thinking Fast and Slow*, 20.

[117] "System 2 allocates attention to the effortful mental activities that demand it, including complex computations. The operations of System 2 are often associated with the subjective experience of agency, choice, and concentration" Kahneman, Daniel, 20.

[118] "Ethical Leadership Lectures," 103.

[119] As defined earlier

understanding as fact, contrasting with "System 2" thinking, which can disrupt System 1 processes and possibly modify both the System 1 culture of the AMEC and transform its practices.[120] System 2 thinking is what changes minds and cognitive schemas within System 1 thinking[121].

The AMEC's *habitus* is influenced by a multiplicity of factors, the first being a thriving group of African Americans who created a religious institution in opposition both to the white supremacist agenda of the Methodist Episcopal Church and to the overwhelmingly white supremacist leaning of the early United States government. This *habitus* includes theological elements critical of sustaining a community comprised of both free Black people and Black people still attached to the institutional chains of chattel slavery[122]. This means that the "structured-structuring" dynamics of habitus determines both the church's failure and its success because *it* is a powerful foundational element of its organizational practices. Bourdieu explains in his book, *The Logic of Practice*, that societies reproduce themselves because humans are historical beings,[123] which means that the AMEC's history has been a structured and structuring culture rooted in a history of trauma and survival.

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[120] Kahneman, Daniel, *Thinking Fast and Slow*, 20.

[121] The root of this issue is due to how the *habitus* of the AMEC was formed. When I first introduced the problem of this project, I defined *habitus* based on Pierre Bourdieu's interpretation as the "logic of practice: the ordinary invisible operations by which a society perpetuates itself." I furthermore incorporated Bourdieu's definition of habitus as the cognitive schema that is internalized by leaders because of their adaptations to social constructs. In other words, *habitus* is an amalgamation of experience, history, trauma, and whatever else influences the cognitive consciousness of an individual and community in their navigation of the world. *Habitus* is foundational, is passed down from generation to generation, and is absorbed in all aspects of a given group.

[122] Thus, the Church's habitus has been influenced from every lived experience of Black men and women, from those of the original thirteen colonies through the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. This specific rendering of *habitus* within the institutional life and practices of the AMEC involves a deep sense of inherited trauma passed down from generation to generation with the survival and endurance of a white supremacist power structure as a foundational element.

[123] "Ethical Leadership Lectures," 225.

The Practices Formula

In the beginning of this project, I introduced this socio-analytic formula to demonstrate the role of *habitus* in informing and sustaining *practices*. The formula is: (*habitus x* capital) +field (AME Leadership) = practices[124]. We used Fluker's description earlier, referencing the socially constructed version of *habitus* that was created in this *cultural asylum* context. Fluker uses Foucault's description of what an asylum does to a "madman" but more importantly how cultural asylums impact the people that have been created for. Cultural asylums did not begin in the post-civil rights era, but every member of the AMEC experienced them. The origin story repeated throughout this project entails a cultural asylum of overt white supremacy and systemic bondage, that the AMEC both challenged and endured within its 235-year history, creating a dichotomy of social justice and careful conformity. This contextual juxtaposition created a very nuanced habitus that was based in a transformational leadership, yet subject to the constraints of white supremacy. As the product of history, habitus produces individual and collective practices, and thus history, in accordance with the schemata engendered by history[125].

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[124] As stated in our previous introduction this formula analytically, it illustrates how habitus interacts with capital as a social system that is already a realized end (an institution). . . that is, agents (leaders) as historical beings who have inherited a world of socially-determined goals, rules, procedures that lead to struggle over capital in a particular field; and it is the inherent struggle or competition for the rewards that capital represents that produce certain social, cultural, and symbolic rewards within a specific field of endeavor, in this case the institution of the AMEC.

[125] Habitus ensures the active presence of past experiences which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemata of thought and action, tend, more surely than all formal rules and all explicit norms, to guarantee the conformity of practices and their constancy across time. (Bourdieu [1980] 1990, p. 91F).

In respect to this formula, I am defining capital as an expansion of Fluker's definition of social

capital[126].

This is important because the AMEC was one of the earliest African American

institutions to navigate civility in American society, in which reciprocity at best was an

unreasonable expectation. If reciprocity was an unreasonable expectation, but also a

requirement of social capital, then we can assume that the importance of kinds of capital i

became important to the AMEC, both as an institution and as a means of social mobility. To be

clear, the argument is not that there was intended impropriety or an intention to abuse

positions for economic capital, but that capital was important to make the vision of the AMEC a

reality. The universities, mission work, scholarships, and social actions of the AMEC would not

have been possible without the capital the church had gained.

The field is the most important. The habitus and capital both deal with the historical and

the praxis of AME practices. The field is the contextual element that directs the culture of those

practices. The field being AMEC leadership means that both the habitus and need for capital

have influence on the culture of the church. During my ordination training and time with the

Board of Examiners, I was told by a supervising pastor that it had been a normal practice in the

1960s and 1970s (and even earlier) for licentiates[127] to plant churches. This pastor explained

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[126] Fluker defines social capital as an element of civility.
Civility, however, does not refer simply to etiquette, manners, and social graces but is inclusive of social capital and the inherent benefits accrued by these networks of reciprocity. Civility also has to do with the individual's social dignity within that system. It represents the public space of the leader where she negotiates the intersection between lifeworlds and systemworlds.

[127] Licentiates are un-ordained clergy who are provided with annual licenses to preach until ordained a deacon

that certain bishops believed that in order to be ordained, you needed to be paying a *budget*.[128]

The Doctrine and Discipline of the AME Church was clear on who was legally allowed to receive

pastoral assignments as well as who can actively participate in ministerial duties[129].

Vision – Retelling the Story

This project is about diverting the shift of the AME church from a place of *terminal*

decline to a place of sustainability and growth. In order to do that, we have to discuss what a

sustainable AME church would look like. For this part of the project, I want to reference my

currently assigned ministry site, Bethel AME Church, Marysville, as ground zero for the change

we envision.

Ground Zero – Bethel AME Church, Marysville

Bethel AME Church, Marysville[130] is an ideal site due to the intersection of multiple

challenges facing Bethel Marysville's viability in comparison to what many AME congregations

are encountering today. Bethel Marysville is a historic church founded in 1854 and located in

Marysville, California, and is the last of the original Valley churches that were based out of the

Sierra mountains north of Sacramento. Other valley churches were founded around the same

time, including Grass Valley AME Church,[131] as well as Nevada City AME Church,[132] which

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[128] The budget is a term directly associated with paying all budget assessments within an annual conference year. This applies to both Midyear and Annual Conference Assessments

[129] Licentiates were not allowed to marry, serve nor consecrate Communion or to baptize new members. But there was an expectation in more than one Episcopal District[129] for licentiates to plant churches.

[130] Henceforth, Bethel Marysville.

[131] Grass Valley AME Church was founded in 1854 as well and has been closed for decades. We are collaborating with Nevada County to aggregate our historical records. Due to the destruction of historical records, the church was given the name Grass Valley AME Church.

[132] Currently collaborating with Nevada City's historical commission. We do not have the name of the church in our archives, so we have applied the city name in its commemoration.

worked with Bethel Marysville as part of the Underground Railroad. Bethel Marysville was

founded by a group of freed slaves led by Jim Churchill[133] that traveled with the Donner Party.[134]

Currently, Bethel Marysville is one of the oldest Black churches in the state of California. Bethel

Maryville fits within the median membership range of the AMEC.[135] Approximately 80 percent

of the active congregation are between sixty-five and eighty-eight years old. Children, youth,

and young adult membership have been in an overall decline in the past fifteen years, prior to

my assignment to the church as pastor.[136]

With an active membership roll of sixty-four members, seven to nine members work in

concert to the church running, and also provide the majority of lay leadership and ministry

support. There is a dichotomy regarding the microculture of Bethel, in that, there is both a

severe aversion to change while at the same time a desperate need for the influx of youth and

young adults to take over. The culture around discipleship and Bible study is split along

generational lines, a fact that the pandemic particularly exposed.[137]

The pandemic exacerbated these challenges. Eighty percent of the church membership were in

the high-risk category for infection, and several members contracted COVID-19, with two dying.

Due to the church being technology averse, financial offerings and worship participation

declined significantly. These trials prompted the development of my innovation for this project.

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[133] This is from the historical archives kept by members of our church.

[134] This group broke off from the Donner party before the fateful winter storm that killed several of its members.

[135] These are the averages reported by General Board Meetings and Annual Conferences over the last ten years. No formal report has been provided, but this is the understood average church size across the Connection.

[136] Several youth and young adults have joined since my assignment; I will expand on that process when detailing the innovation.

[137] Members in both the Baby Boomer and Depression era generations preferred in-house traditional Bible study, while youth and young adults prefer virtual interactive methods of Bible study.

The Numbers Problem

Our church's situation is not unique. Since the advent of the pandemic in 2020 most AME churches have been facing the same circumstances. Bethel's problem is also compounded by a level of community disconnect and demographic imbalances. There was a pronounced communal disconnect between Bethel Marysville and the Yuba/Sutter County community when I first arrived. Bethel Marysville was used for political purposes, being the oldest Black church in the area.[138] The demographics also reveal challenges. In an area that houses 3,919 Black residents,[139] the oldest Black church in the area is comprised of only sixty-four members, and at least 20 percent of the membership are non-Black members. The Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA) research reveals there had not been any substantial growth in the AME churches before 2009.[140] [141]

Membership alone increased by 1.6 million members globally in 1991 and a total of 8,000 churches. But upon closer examination, the reporting periods of 1999 and 2009 show a sharp decline in both membership and churches. Between 1991 and 2009, the church reported a 50 percent decrease in active churches and a drop of over 50 percent in the number of clergy between 1999 and 2009. What makes these numbers even more alarming (to someone in the

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[138] Yuba/Sutter County has a deep history of actively terrorizing its Black and other nonwhite citizens and used Bethel AME Church as a site for meetings in an attempt to appear more tolerant.

[139] "Race/Ethnicity | ARDA Community Profile Builder | The Association of Religion Data Archives."

[140] "Religion | ARDA Community Profile Builder | The Association of Religion Data Archives."

[141] More precisely, ARDA reports some interesting trends in regard to the number of clergy and churches reported since 1925. From 1925 through 1942, we saw a stable number of churches between 7,100 and 7,300 on average. The number of clergy averaged between 6,500 and 7,300. From the years 1950 to 1979, there was a drastic decline in both clergy and churches. This trend showed a closure of over 2,800 churches and a loss of 3,000 clergy. These numbers do not add up; for despite the closure of several thousand churches, there has been a membership increase of 800,000 members. But from the years 1980 to 1991 these numbers increased drastically for both membership and churches.

US) is that the majority of churches that have been growing are in places considered indigenous

districts[142].

The Future Vision

The data, I suggest, show the inefficacy of both the practices and leadership model of

the AMEC. Based on the information from ARDA, the AMEC has experienced declining numbers

in both members and clergy, yet seventy years later the church is still in operation[143].

Addressing the trend of *terminal decline* requires us to reframe the pastoral leadership model

itself, and the strategic practices to respond to the status quo condition of the church. There

needs to be a diversified method of ministry within the AMEC[144], one which would allow the

community to see itself as part of the Beloved Community, and its local congregation as the

connecting point.

This is a key to the future AMEC because we now exist in a realm of neo-liberal

capitalist[145] culture, which determines the efficacy and viability of an organization through the

lens of corporate context. The Christian Church by definition is about transformation and

restoration through the gospel and teachings of Jesus Christ, which do not align with the

corporate ideals of profit and revenue generation. Therefore, the mission must connect to a

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[142] These are primarily in Africa, and unlike domestic districts 1-13, they do not produce any economic support for the Connectional AME Church. In fact, they depend on the assessments paid by episcopal districts 1 to 13, to maintain their work. These trends are not being solely experienced outside the California Conference, but since my tenure in pastoral ministry began in 2017, I have personally seen the closure of four churches in my annual conference, which at one point comprised a total of twenty-nine congregations.

[143] During annual conference, our efficacy is ministry is based on specific metrics which are primarily conversions, accessions, baptisms, weddings and amount raised within the fiscal year.

[144] That fully integrates the transformation trinity into the culture of the church creating a different climate and environment for both members and those in the community. The goal is not to change the purpose of the church, the goal is create ministry that is relevant enough to reconnect with the community.

[145] This refers to culture that adds corporate elements to noncorporate institutions and/or organizations using aggregated quantitative metrics to determine success or failure.

Christian ideal that can translate across the lines of theological rhetoric and connect with the community at large.[146]

For this, I identify the principle of love described in John 13:34–35 as the primary expression of the church to the community. There are two parts to using this principle as a definitive vision. First, this pericope states that the way in which the apostles love one another will indicate that they are indeed disciples of Christ, which means that Bethel Marysville should incorporate a strategic practice of active love and support for the Yuba/Sutter County, CA community.

This means that Bethel Marysville will implement a ministry that is grounded in the *mission* of the AMEC.[147] As part of this initiative, Bethel Marysville will aggregate a group of strategic partners in order to be "in community" while serving the community. Therefore, the leadership will be chosen and assigned based on gifts and their willingness to love and serve. This is not a claim that Bethel Marysville will push for a multicultural church model, because being "in community" we create a congregation that reflects the community. Therefore, a spirit of inclusiveness and radical hospitality will be key in creating a welcoming and safe space for those considering becoming a part of the Bethel community.

This also means that there has to be a ministry consciousness that is aware of creating spaces. Creating spaces refers to how we minister to those in our community, essential to the survival of the corporate church. Fluker argues in *The Ground Has Shifted* that

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[146] In keeping with the original purpose of Methodism, creating a worship experience that the community can understand and receive.

[147] Referenced in earlier sections the mission is to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical needs of all people

the future of Black churches in the United States will depend on how we minister to the most disproportionately impacted group in our communities, Black youth of all sorts (poor and middle-class, male, female, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer).[148]

Moreover, creating space within our work and ministry to serve those who have been

ostracized from the beloved community is not only a practical solution but a moral imperative.

Ethicist Emilie Townes in her discussion of James Baldwin's critique of Black identity being used

as property and commodity said, "we have used memory and myth and history to deceive

ourselves-all of us."[149] Townes was referring to how white people used and commodified the

identity of (Black) images such as Aunt Jemima for their financial gain. Yet, it is reminiscent of

the LGBTQ members who serve as integral members of congregations, who are allowed to

share their gifts and their tithes, but not their identity. It is a reminder of how victims of sexual

victims/survivors were commodified and ostracized for making their abuse known, specifically,

that the perpetrator was a leader in the church. It is "a dangerous memory" of the places and

spaces where the church chose lies to protect the ideological paradigm of transactional

leadership because ministry had become a commodity. Agency and an affirming modality of

ethics that acknowledges the lived experience of *beloved community* requires the use of ethical

techniques such as *Biomythography* as well as *virtue ethics.*[150] Both of these womanist ethics

modalities as explained by Floyd-Thomas are active processes of reclamation, with

Biomythography created to reclaim agency and *virtue ethics* as a means of reclaiming the moral

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[148] Fluker, Walter Earl, *The Ground Has Shifted*, 237.
[149] townes, Emile M., *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, Location 600.
[150] Floyd-Thomas, *Mining the Motherlode: Methods in Womanist Ethics*, 33.

character that oppression historically compromised.[151] There needs to be a reclamation of agency and character for those deemed disenfranchised in order for an evolution in moral ecology and relational ethical paradigm to be received by the community. All of this requires telling and re-telling the communal stories of the people and Bethel Marysville.

The Outdated Paradigm

The AMEC is operating in an outdated cultural paradigm that has created an intergenerational schism both inside the church and in the communities it serves.[152] The AMEC has not involved itself in many social justice movements in the twenty-first century, compared to its active presence in the Civil Rights movement of the twentieth century. Re-telling the story gives the Church an opportunity to accomplish two things. First, there is an opportunity for the AMEC to do a reclamation of its historical practice of declaring agency. Biomythography encourages the use of historical data as well as fictionalized stories of true lived experiences to affirm agency, especially of the marginalized. Even though Biomythography is an ethical tenet of womanist ethics, it carries with it two aspects of the proposed ethical trinity[153] of this project.

Biomythography carries the evolutionary aspect of moral ecology by providing contextual agency to lived experiences of Black bodies essential aspect of a Retooler. Biomythography requires the re-telling of stories as a means of affirming agency in situations

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[151] Speaking specifically of acts that went against the moral code of Black women, men and children but were committed due to a lack of agency and authority to protect themselves. Creating a moral dichotomy for many Black women who were raped during slavery yet, practiced Christianity

[152] The schism is not just between the AME Church and youth/young adults, but across all age and gender demographics within the connectional church.

[153] Ethical Trinity – Retooler, Relationist, and Raconteur

that provide nuanced context to what is moral in relation to the lived experience.[154] The

inclusion of this womanist ethical method allows an application of the ethical modalities

proposed, in a context that relates both to the community within and to that outside of Bethel

Marysville.

The second benefit of re-telling the story is that it allows for the self-actualization of

moral character in relation to history and experience. The Raconteur has a particular way of

tying the narrative of story, with the process of self-actualization. I prefer the Raconteur's use

of historical context in comparison to the Rationalist's because the Rationalist's attachment to

rules often neglects the moral lessons of history. The Raconteur embraces the use of virtue

ethics,[155] an ethical practice that deals with the contextuality of communal experience.

Womanist theologian Katie Cannon argued for the specificity of ethical parameters for the Black

community, stating,

> "In the African American community, the aggregate of qualities that determine
> desirable ethical values regarding the uprightness of character and soundness of moral
> conduct must always take into account the circumstances, paradoxes, and the dilemmas
> that constrict Blacks to the lowest range of self-determination."[156]

This is especially critical when an organization built for this marginalized community of people

has wrestled with its identity from its beginnings. Re-telling is critical because it is an essential

part of conjuring the desired community and the transformation necessary to survival.

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[154] The Slave/Master forced adultery example of a married Christian Black woman without the agency to deny the sexual advances of her slave master who is also married as a means of protecting her children and/or others from rape.
[155] Fluker, Walter Earl, *Ethical Leadership*, Location 779.
[156] Floyd-Thomas, *Mining the Motherlode: Methods in Womanist Ethics*, 34.

What is in place now is an organized institution with a grand history, which depends on a culture of bureaucracy and transactional leadership that has been cannibalizing the AME Church's viability for the past thirty years[157].

Theological & Ethical Perspectives

The theological and ethical foundation of this proposed solution combines tenets from Black Liberation theology, Womanist ethics and theology, and an amalgamation of the ethical trinity discussed in the previous sections. In the previous section I introduced *Biomythography* and virtue ethics[158] as a means of countering outdated attachments to memory and re-telling the story of what could be by using these two tenets of womanist ethics. These tenets deal with contextual morality when someone is entrenched in institutional marginalization and power dynamics do not allow for an adherence to dominant ethical tenets that govern those in power.[159]

These womanist ethical countermeasures are important because these highly contextualized paradigms of sustained systemic oppression have long-term impacts on agency and moral character.[160] When you add the cognitive schema of habitus that is engrained within the System 1 framework, one must establish a mechanism to create departure from status quo ideology. Womanist ethicists argue the need for these mechanisms because marginalized communities, in this case Black ones, are not afforded equal opportunities nor the freedoms to attain the financial success of their white counterparts.[161] In order to be inclusive contextually

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[157] This is in accordance with the ARDA statistics provided in the earlier section.
[158] This is directly tied to the Raconteur way of doing ethics.
[159] Refer to Katie Cannon's argument in the previous section.
[160] Floyd-Thomas, *Mining the Motherlode: Methods in Womanist Ethics*, 33.
[161] Floyd-Thomas, 34.

the elements of *virtue ethics* I include are invisible dignity,[162] quiet grace, and unshouted

courage, which Cannon describes as the three parts of womanist virtue ethics.

I integrated Black Liberation theology into the framework because of Cone's statement

that we cannot afford to do theology unrelated to human existence.[163] Cone adds that there

needs to be an investigation of the socioreligious experience of black people, and how that

experience is reflected in black stories of God's interaction with Black people.[164] Bethel

Marysville, lies in the Yuba/Sutter County area of California, which has a reputation of racial

terrorism despite being only thirty-five miles northeast of Sacramento, the state capital. The

community maintains an imbalanced harmony that has often sustained by fear and

complacency.[165]

When Cone quoted Tertullian's question of what Athens has to do with Jerusalem,[166] he

was not only framing the historical cleavage between reason and faith, but he was also framing

the picture that Black theology begins with the story of how we got over here. To implement

my proposed solution, Bethel Marysville must be able to tell that story. Part of that process

involves creating spaces to have discourse on what is true and relevant in the present moment.

Otherwise, we risk creating the same disconnect that the young seminary student Brandee

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[162] Womanist Ethical framework of self-celebration of self for Black women I am expanding to be inclusive of community in need

[163] Cone, James H., *God of the Oppressed*, 15.

[164] Cone, James H., 15.

[165] Churches in the area served as arenas of catharsis and safe havens for the Black community; yet there was an unspoken censorship concerning issues of racism and justice. Yuba/Sutter County was not a welcoming place for Black Liberation theology, but the liberative tenets contained within this school of thought have benefit for both the Black and non-Black members of the community due to the widespread marginalization that crosses lines of race, gender, sexual orientation, and economics.

[166] Cone, James H., *God of the Oppressed*, 15.

Mimitzraiem identified when she said she felt abandoned by the Black theological discourse.[167]

[168]

Transactional leadership in tandem with AME culture assumes that all its members
conform to one theological ideology, even though theology is based on lived experience, which
can differ between churches within an annual conference that are within close proximity to one
another, much less an entire denomination with a global presence. Mimitzraiem, an AME
pastor, questioned the relevance of Black theology, while actively serving in a denominational
organization out of which James Cone, considered the father of Black Liberation theology,
came.

We saw this same type of melding of transactional leadership, theology, and
culture in Germany after their loss in World War I. This trauma of war and the stories from that
trauma birthed a rationalist/utilitarian ethical narrative model from an ethics that was steeped
in a mythologized narrative of power and domination. This led to the concept of the pure
Volk,[169] which argued for the prioritization of Christian humankind for the pure Volk, the pure-
blooded Germans who suffered the trauma and tragedy of an unjust war. These Germans
insisted that a theology that argued setting aside Christian morality in dealing with others who

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[167] Mimitzraiem, Brandee J, "Too Young to Be Black: The Intergenerational Compatibility of Black Theology,"
Location 6495.

[168] Mimitzraiem then posed a question that exposed a pastoral challenge in the present age: whether Black
theology had the ability to be relevant to generations that only experience it through textbooks and did not live in
the eras in which that theological formation took hold. There needs to be a fusion between ethical modalities and
theology that provides space for the present lived reality of served communities, creating synergy between the
corporate church and the communities it serves.

[169] Williams, Reggie L., *Black Bonhoeffer*, 16.

were not the Volk[170] was in line with the will of God. Both examples provided social context and

historical reference; but they also show that interpretation can be a challenge.

Bonhoeffer dealt with this detachment of theological framework and ethical modality.

When Bonhoeffer was in Germany, before his post-doctoral fellowship at Union Seminary in

New York City, he adhered to this Triumphalism-based theology as well. Reggie Williams talks

about Bonhoeffer's before and after theological frameworks in his book *Bonhoeffer's Black*

Jesus. Williams makes it a point to illustrate Bonhoeffer's affinity towards the theological

framing of the Volk,[171] despite conflicting theological tenets to Bonhoeffer's core theology.[172]

When Bonhoeffer came to Union and experienced a theological reconstruction at Abyssinian

Baptist Church, it was the lived theology reflected in the congregation of that church that

informed Bonhoeffer of his theological disconnect. Bonhoeffer becoming an active *watch*

care[173]member was not an instance of theological appropriation; but an example of a Black

Liberation context creating space for spiritual formation that expands far past the confines of

the Black Diaspora.[174]

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[170] Williams, Reggie L., 19.

[171] Williams, Reggie L., 16.

[172] In other example of when the leadership ideology can have impact on a professed theological position

[173] Baptist term for temporary member away from their home church

[174] Volkish German Christianity was a response to Germany being stripped of its imperial identity and the traumatic impact of World War I. According to Williams, Bonhoeffer was being affirmed by a Black Liberation movement that was outside his lived experience and understanding. Perhaps it was the authenticity of the spirit of worship along with the Black Christian walk and its attachment to the narrative of the Black experience that triggered the theological reconstruction that led to Bonhoeffer's efforts in Germany.

In some respects, I agree with Karl Barth's 1933 assertion that the real crisis of the church is not only to be found in the external forces and outside influences but is primarily a question of the church's ability to be the church.[175]

Reliving the Story in the Present – Our Mission
The Proposed Strategic Project

From the Old Church to the Transformation Temple

Discernment- "What's Going On?

Before a strategic plan is implemented for ministerial restoration, there needs to be an integration of both temporal analysis and spiritual engagement. This means an intentional practice of discernment. I will use Elizabeth Liebert[176]'s definition of discernment, which is the spiritual practice of seeking and responding to God's call in the midst of all the forces, options, and decisions that mark our lives.[177] While my proposed remedy includes transformational leadership, the ethical trinity, and a clear view of the problem, discernment is key in determining the right implementation of these tools within the ministry site. The ethical modalities, transformational leadership structure, and theological undergirding all requires discernment specific to the ministry and the community it serves.[178] In order to integrate transformational leadership practices into the daily operational method and into the pastoral

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[175] Dreyer, "The Real Crisis of the Church." Barth's assertion illustrates a level of theological authenticity that is essential in diverting the shift of crisis. That terminal decline in the institution, according to Barth, is not a new phenomenon. That's why Cone's call for a reinvestigation of the stories and experiences of those who have detached themselves from being active members of the AME Church is a critical step diverting the shift of AME *terminal decline*.

[176] Author of *Soul of Discernment,* and *The Way of Discernment*

[177] Liebert SNJM, Elizabeth, *The Soul of Discernment: A Spiritual Practice for Communities and Institutions*, 19.

[178] The primary argument of this paper is based on a systemic cognitive disconnect, in which a lack of discernment is a key contributor to terminal decline.

vision, there must be a strategic plan for the congregation.[179] The church conference is the most

opportune meeting to introduce both the strategic plan and agenda for the conference year,

for the church conference establishes the tone and purpose for the conference year,[180] and

because all active members are invited—and indeed expected—to participate.

The Assessment of Needs and Gifts

A significant element in the Re-Tooler's method is the process of discernment, which

asks the primary ethical question, "What's going on"? This is where both the Retooler's and the

Raconteur's ethical modalities work in concert. If the Retooler is looking for new truth, moral

ecology, and understanding, the stories must be present to give the Retooler's pursuit context.

This initial step points involves memory—remembering the story.

In order to determine the "how"[181] in exercising my pastoral leadership model, I need to

determine the "what"[182] in terms of community and congregational assets at our disposal.

Assets, for the sake of the project, are community partners that can contribute to the local

church and the community, to create connection.

Assessment of Need

The next step is the assessment of issues impacting the community, and the historical response

the church has provided to those community needs. Discernment is a critical part of this

context because it requires an evolving approach to ministry. When serving a community that

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[179] In the AME Church, pastors have the final say over all matters of church operations, policy, and method.
[180] AME Churches operates within a conference year system. Everything from pastoral assignments to ordination of clergy, conference elections and payment of the annual conference assessment
[181] This speaks specifically to how the pastoral ethical leadership model will be exercised within a local congregation.
[182] This speaks to the available resources to execute the pastoral ethical leadership model.

suffers from food and shelter insecurity, an assessment of both needs and resources must come into play. Specific community needs and concerns are not the focus: the focus is how and where the church can be present within a community in need. Communal needs are opportunities for the church to be present and relevant within the served community. To create community connection Bethel Marysville, must be present and relevant[183].

Without a cognitive awareness of need, the opportunities for congregational transformation will not be realized. Opportunities for congregational transformation are often an opportunity to address toxic congregational culture, or ineffective leadership culture. Congregational transformation opportunities can be occasions to address neglect[184].

Gifts Assessment

Assessing the gifts of both members and community partners who are invested in the community as a whole is an essential part of implementing this ministry model. Creating a community requires communal buy-in and participation. John McKnight argues that community is built by focusing on people's gifts rather than on their deficiencies.[185] One of the strategies of our proposed innovation of creating sustainable church is connected to creating community.

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[183] The second part of the needs assessment is in regard to the members of the ministry site. Discernment is a key trigger that transcends the leadership method alone because ministry must have dual awareness concerning the communal and congregational needs that are unaddressed. Assessing the pressing community needs on behalf of the members of the ministry site allows a pastor to determine where opportunities of service and ministry are available.

[184] Bethel Marysville's discussions regarding youth and young adults evolved from the fact that their needs had been neglected within the church culture. It was determined church leadership that youth and young adults were sought after to do the work of the church, and not for discipleship or their intrinsic importance to the church. The opportunity was not caused by lack of interest, but by elements of Bethel's culture that proved not to be conducive to sustaining youth and young adults from Generation X to the Gen Z eras.

[185] Block, *Community: The Structure of Belonging*, Locations 385-391.

Determination- "How do we determine best practices in conjunction with the data we have collected through assessment?

The next step after engaging discernment is the step of **determination**.[186] "How" is the primary question that determines what to keep or include in the re-tooling process. What are the rich and transformative elements of the past, *the habitus,* which is also present, that we need to include. What are some examples[187]? Determination also asks: What do we need to exclude? What are the toxic and dangerous elements that prevent growth, and, in this case, which prevent the youth from coming or returning to the church?[188]

Decision— "What do I take forward for the future that is in alignment with my vision and mission to relive it in the present?"

The Re-tooling process then makes a "decision." It keeps the elements that serve the vision of the AMEC and "cuts off" the dangerous and toxic elements that prevent human flourishing. Fluker identifies a decision-making model that asks three questions. "Who am I?" "Who are we?," and, "Who is my community?"[189] The decision model is a systemic evaluation of self and community that requires an introspective process both of the individual and of the community. In order to make our decisions within this ethical decision model, we must combine an introspective evaluation concerning the individual decision makers, with the community the decision impacts, and defining what that community is. It is only by this introspective work that we can evolve the practices suitable to achieve the desired change.

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[186] (Determination is vision work that holds the past—memory—and the future—vision—in dialectical tension for the sake of observation and analysis.)

[187] (Resiliency, hope, struggle, liberation, love, justice, etc.)

[188] Some of the examples were lack of agency, restricting the voice of youth, overt judgement and criticism, and overloading youth with manual church labor

[189] Fluker, Walter Earl, *Ethical Leadership*, Location 2593.

Plan for Ecclesial Expectations

A paradigm-shifting pastoral leadership model with evolving ethical modalities will not convince the General Conference to reduce assessments to levels that reflect the current financial state of the AMEC.[190] The strategic plan must therefore include provisions to address the transactional requirements of AMEC.[191] The proposed innovation at Bethel Marysville will diversify the economic weight of ministry by establishing a partner nonprofit corporation, and work in concert with other community partners with similar interest. John McKnight's insight concerning the power in the community asserts that sustainable improvements in the community are possible when citizens discover their own power to act.[192] Creating viable community partnerships are a key component to diversifying the cost of ministry, creating a budgetary margin more favorable to ecclesial assessments.

Goals & Objectives

There are three objectives for the proposed innovation. The first objective is to prove that the proposed leadership model (which will include all five ethical modalities and be executed with a transformational ideology) can impact the *terminal decline* of a local church. The second objective is to create a ministry model from the proposed innovation that can be used as a training model for both new and experienced clergy. The third objective is to be able to provide proof of concept to Connectional AME leadership.

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[190] Several churches in the AME Connection reported increased budget assessments throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, including my ministry site Bethel AME Church, Marysville

[191] The AME church is not going to adjust their budgetary assessments based on the current transactional leadership focus, therefore provision in your model must account for these operating expenses.

[192] Block, *Community: The Structure of Belonging*, Location 387.

The goals of the proposed innovation are to stabilize the theological environment of the ministry,[193] to redefine Bethel's position in the community,[194] and to establish community partnerships to bridge church/community relations.

Strategic Model

The innovative strategic plan is based on the following queries: What creates relevant ministry within an anti-church climate?[195] What creates community regardless of social boundaries and limitations? The Assessment, Goal, and Objective sections provided context for these questions, but not answers. Bethel Marysville was planted in a sundown town,[196] whose congregation experienced racial terrorism and marginalization for over 168 years. The assessment process determined three primary needs for the site ministry community. They were identified as: housing and food insecurity, deficient educational resources, and disproportional poverty across all racial lines.[197] These became the foundational issues motivating the strategic plan.

Strategy Step 1 – Preparing the Congregation

The innovation required a preparatory period, so the congregation was prepared in three stages. Stage one is a meeting with leaders within the church that support the transformation church culture: these members willing to provide transparent feedback on the

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[193] The internal theological environment of the church must be stable, because the practiced theology of the congregation determines its ability to connect be

[194] Historically Bethel AME was defined by its choir, the Black Congregation, and its age.

[195] In Yuba/Sutter County, the high population of poor as well as ex-cons has created a spirit of resentment by large population segments in the community.

[196] Commonly referred to in publications like the Green Book, as areas where Black people were considered in danger if seen out in public after dark

[197] "Income | ARDA Community Profile Builder | The Association of Religion Data Archives."

feasibility of the proposed innovation, and members capable of assisting with building support and operating with integrity. Stage one is not an alienation of other leadership or the congregation, but a stage of receiving feedback to assist with drafting the final proposal. In an AME context this may be the Steward Pro Tem[198] and Trustee Pro Tem, or certain members of the Official Board, who are privy to the plan.

This was the stage of the innovation implementation when the proposed creation of a Housing & Economic Development Corporation community nonprofit.[199] The rationale for this proposal was to create an outreach vehicle capable of securing funding to address the needs determined in the assessment period[200].

Stage two is a meeting with the primary leadership body, the official board, to field questions and concerns regarding the proposal and to receive budget approval to move forward.[201]

Stage three includes submitting a proposal to the church conference[202] for discussion and ratification of the proposal[203].

This strategic step is key because congregational support is necessary if the project is to have an impact. Congregational approval is not required for the implementation of ministry in

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[198] The Pro Tem of the Steward Board stands as Chair of the Steward Board in absence of the assigned pastor who is automatically chair of both the Steward and Trustee Board per the Doctrine & Discipline of the AME Church

[199] The Housing & Economic Development corporation was suggested as a community nonprofit and not a subsidiary of the church as a means of separating liability and avoiding the fear of the church misappropriating funds

[200] without the limitations of a church nonprofit which has a limited scope to raise funds for community purposes.

[201] This is specific to the AME context due to the fact that the Official Board like the Quarterly Conference is a representation of all the leadership within a local congregation, it is also the very body that approves and ratifies the church budget annually.

[202] The representative body of the entire congregation

[203] Pastoral authority does not require this action in order to begin executing

the AMEC. Yet in order to create a transformational leadership culture, there must be
opportunities for members of the site ministry to develop and use their voices for the
betterment of their church and community.

Strategy Step 2 – Assemble Your Team

The second strategic step involves assembling a team capable of implementing the
innovation plan. This team should include ministry leaders, strategic community leadership
partners, and members of both the church and the community at large. Community partners
with influence are critical, but this second strategic step must engage community partners who
have community insight, regardless of position or influence. There are two reasons for this: first
transformational leadership fosters and encourages the development of others' potential. If
every member of the team is a person of influence, fostering new leadership may prove
challenging. The second reason is that focusing on people of influence is a path primarily
focused on transactional leadership[204].

One of the other key components of assembling the team is to establish core leadership
within the group. Pastors must be willing to support leaders within their innovation plans
because trying to lead everything can impact the primary purpose of pastoral
ministry.[205]Transformational leadership is necessary, because there is a required need of
diversified leadership that can serve both autonomously and together with other members of

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[204] The team should represent the community you serve. The demographic range within the Marysville area will
include strategic partners who are white, Latino, Sikh Indian, Middle Eastern, Jewish, LDS, as well as African
American. The assessment stage contributed to the team formation due to a clear understanding of the
community need.

[205] This is in reference to the average size AME church of sixty active members or greater

the team. Smaller churches usually do not fit this model in the AME context due to the fact that

most pastors in that position work an outside full-time job. This is why I included establishing a

community owned nonprofit as part of my innovation and locating talent within the community

to serve as its leadership. The search for a viable CEO ended when doing the congregational

gifts assessment. Board members came on as partners and viable volunteer support came from

multiple resources. Building the appropriate team that commits to the vision is essential, as

they become the core team needed to execute ministry projects.

Strategy Step 3 – Plan Your Projects

If you implement McKnight's tenets concerning building community and doing so in the

assessment process if you have built your team; and you have gained both congregational

support; now is time to plan your projects.[206] Projects should be implemented within the

conference year. For pastoral assignments are made annually,[207] and local churches operate

within an annual fiscal year in all matters. These projects should also be planned in conjunction

with the core team assembled in strategy step two, meaning the assembled team of both

congregation and community partners.

The goal of this planning step is to implement what Howard Thurman defined as being

the first step of love, which is a common sharing of a sense of mutual worth and value.[208] [209] The

re- connection of church and community will not start when the project is executed but during

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[206] To be clear projects are the subjective part of our innovation
[207] Changes in pastoral leadership can occur without warning to the congregation, therefore any project stage should be attainable within that timetable. Long term projects are also important, but have less impact in the short-term and do not provide immediate support against terminal decline
[208] Relationist insertion within the model.
[209] Thurman, Howard, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 92.

the planning process when both congregation and community partners engage in a mutual

community building process. When our team collected data from the implemented projects

after the preliminary steps and project implementation; the data reflected 8,000 people were

fed as a result community collaboration with multiple community volunteers and partners that

have no affiliation with the church. Even though the project was facilitated through Bethel's

Women's Missionary Society, the planning phase of this project evolved a local church project

into a community cooperative supported by multiple volunteers. During the planning process

the intersections of race, class and status become less of an obstacle because of the common

goals and values shared within the work.[210]

Strategy Step 4 – Execute Your Projects

This is the last step of the innovation strategy. For my innovation, my team determined

a group of projects, which would allow us to observe the results of using a transformational

model of leadership, within in the local context of Yuba/Sutter County and Bethel Marysville.

Project execution is the last step of our strategy because it allows us opportunities to evaluate

the efficacy of the innovation, as well as the process that created the projects. Our innovation

implemented the following projects: it established a series of racial reconciliation seminars,

initiated a housing development project for survivors of domestic violence, established a new

food ministry, established a community nonprofit, and provided a washer and dryer to a local

elementary school serving a large population of homeless children. The execution of these

projects allowed for a new community experience in regard to Bethel Marysville. These projects

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[210] This doesn't mean that racism and the issues concerning disenfranchisement were solved, but this one project alone created space for dialogue across racial lines to take place on an equitable level.

also created opportunities for goodwill and fellowship, which had not been prevalent in the

Yuba/Sutter communities in the past.[211]

Outcomes

Projected Outcomes

The projected outcomes included an established resource of community partnerships

that co-labor in outreach ministry programs and as an evangelizing vehicle to through its

actions and presence. They also included a return of members who had fallen out of fellowship

with the congregation. The final projected outcome was to start seeing interest of younger and

unchurched members of the community, interested in connecting to God.

Projected outcomes were impacted by the impact of COVID and current regulatory restrictions

by the Yuba/Sutter County health department.

Actual Outcomes

There were several outcomes of note, which provided encouraging results to the

problem of *terminal decline.* The first outcome that was not projected was the emergence of

new leaders within the congregation. The innovation process and project execution required

providing agency to those with gifts and graces, which resulted in an emergence of new leaders

within Bethel Marysville. The second outcome of note was the pride and ownership

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[211] The immediate observation was how community spontaneously arose create itself between groups that normally remained homogenized within their own group. Project execution from a community team also created new community intersections that have since put new projects together that intersect between sacred and secular, creating a positive association with Bethel AME and its community.

nonparticipatory members of Bethel felt in response to the project implementation[212]. There

was also an influx of both youth and young adult members even during COVID-19.

The communal outcomes were significant. The established nonprofit partner[213], gained

community support that spanned a 50+ mile radius from the Yuba/Sutter County area. The

culture of Bethel Marysville changed from one based on conflict, to an environment of

community encouragement and love. The core team was essential in creating partnerships with

unlikely projects such as a joint worship service with missionaries of the LDS church singing in a

combined choir. The most pronounced outcome was that Bethel's communal identity evolved,

and the church is growing because of it.[214]

Conclusion

This project was an attempt to shift the *terminal decline* of the world's oldest Black

protestant denomination by proposing a pastoral leadership model using transformational

leadership and its undergirding modalities. With the assembled leadership team comprised of

congregation members and community partners, we attempted to re-imagine what Bethel

Marysville could be in a community with a hurtful history. Bethel Marysville faces all the

challenges associated with *terminal decline* and could have easily been a casualty of the

economic environment of COVID.

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[212] Membership attendance went up by 60% after the first racial reconciliation seminar in November 2021
[213] LOFT Institute (Lifting Others Forward Together) Originally named Bethel Housing & Economic Development Corporation
[214] COVID interfered with normal church operations, but the outcome that provided the most insight was that more people joined, were baptized, or converted during the pandemic, than in any previous year. The primary driver was the work and environment that Bethel Marysville and its community partners created.

Instead, our innovative strategies and implementation of transformational practices showed that leadership could be grown and developed, that people can be "in community" with others despite a history of separation and estrangement; and that communities will embrace a church which seeks a liberative, compassionate, discerning theological understanding about God and of the creation of the Beloved Community. In turn, the outcomes of this project suggest that terminal decline need not be a terminal diagnosis of the AMEC, but a state of being that can be changed with a transformational model and its ethical modalities.

Appendices and Key Terms

Key Terms

Annual Conference: A geographical grouping of congregations in a specified geographical area to form the legal entity of Methodist polity. This is where mission, resource personnel (clergy and lay) and property are administered and where a bishop is the president.[215]

Appointment: Designation to an office (e.g., church, government, committee). A term frequently applied to the position or charge to which the minister is assigned by the bishop[216].

Bishop: General superintendent, chief executive, chief pastor, administrative head of the AME Church, who is an elder, elected and consecrated to the office of Bishop by the General Conference[217].

Board of Incorporators: (The name formerly ascribed to the Trustee Board of the African Methodist Episcopal Church): Connectional custodians of all African Methodist Episcopal Church properties[218].

Capital: Resource that creates value for its stakeholders, a driver of intent, the reward gained from established practices. it also includes not only accrued networks of reciprocity and public spaces available for leadership to navigate within a given social strata, but also both the contingent and long-term rewards that come in tandem with the social capital associated with civility.

Chief Information Officer (CIO): Also known as the General Secretary. Responsible for providing pertinent information concerning the many facets of the African Methodist Episcopal Church[219].

Church: (1) A "Congregation of faithful persons, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered according to God's ordinance" (Article 13). (2) The visible "faith-community" of those who are baptized in Christ and share in His ministry through

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[215] Belin, Rev. Roderick D. The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition. Libre Digital. Kindle Edition.

[216] Belin, Rev. Roderick D. The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition. Libre Digital. Kindle Edition.

[217] Belin, Rev. Roderick D. The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition. Libre Digital. Kindle Edition.

[218] Belin, Rev. Roderick D. The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition. Libre Digital. Kindle Edition.

[219] Belin, Rev. Roderick D. The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition. Libre Digital. Kindle Edition.

witness and service in His world. (3) Often refers to a building where the people of God gather for worship and disperse for service[220].

Cognitive Theological Disconnect: When the proclaimed theological belief of a person, group or congregation is counterintuitive to how they engage God in their daily life and congregational interactions[221]

Community Assets List: using the method of asset-based community development, developing a list of community members and associated gifts they can contribute for community benefit. (Examples community gardeners, proofreaders, retired teachers, etc.)[222]

Conference: A term denoting an administrative body in the structure of the AME Church (i.e., General, Annual, District, Quarterly and Church Conference)[223].

Corporate Church: the legally established entity created for the corporate operations of ministry such as worship, reception of financial gifts, organized projects and denominational (if affiliated) requirements. The corporate church is the institutional tool of the ecclesia (the church comprised of the people of God), to actively engage in ministry through an organized institution.

Council of Bishops: The Executive Branch, consisting of all the bishops, and familiarly called the Bishops' Council of the African Methodist Episcopal Church[224].

District: An administrative subdivision of the AME Church (e.g., on the connectional level, an episcopal district, or on the Annual Conference level, a presiding elder district)[225].

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[220] Belin, Rev. Roderick D. The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition. Libre Digital. Kindle Edition.

[221] Specific term I coined for this project that defines how the cognitive schemata within habitus can create a disconnect between the leadership of the AME Church and its theological roots. The cognitive aspect is a combination of habitus that reinforces System 1 thought which is automatic and accepted as true.

[222] Focus on gifts. First, he asserts that community is built by focusing on people's gifts rather than their deficiencies. In the world of community and volunteerism, deficiencies have no market value; gifts are the point. Citizens in community want to know what you can do, not what you can't do. In the professional world of service providers, whole industries have been built on people's deficiencies. Social services and most of medicine, therapy, and psychology are organized around what is missing or broken in people. McKnight points out that if you go to a professional service provider and say you have no deficiencies or problems, that you just want to talk about your gifts and talents, you will be shown the door and treated as though you are wasting their time.
Block, Peter. Community. Berrett-Koehler Publishers. Kindle Edition.

[223] Belin, Rev. Roderick D. The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition. Libre Digital. Kindle Edition.

[224] Belin, Rev. Roderick D. The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition. Libre Digital. Kindle Edition.

[225] Belin, Rev. Roderick D. The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition. Libre Digital. Kindle Edition

Ecclesial Leadership Culture: The contextual leadership culture of the AME church that is reflected in the General Conference, Episcopal Districts, Annual Conferences, and local Churches

Episcopal District: Geographical Area comprised of annual conferences that is assigned to an active Bishop for a period of four years at a time.

General Board: The connectional administrative body of the AME Church whose responsibility is supervising the financial program of all of the agencies and persons receiving monies from the General Budget Fund. Its actions are subject only to the General Conference and, in the interim, to the Judicial Council. The members are elected by the General Conference[226].

Habitus: "ordinary invisible operations by which a society perpetuates itself"-Bourdieu Habitus is informed by the historical experiences, practices and cognitive schematics of a group, community and/or organization. Habitus is informed through historical, contextual experiences of a community[227]

Institutional Stakeholders: Members of an organization that stand to gain capital based on their position within the organization and the institutional capital already in their possession

Institutional Capital: Capital that is tied specifically to an organization, group or community that allows for increased position, mobility, and benefit within a group.

Neo-Contextual Idolatry: The practice of applying the properties, esteem, authority, and reverence of God (Yahweh) to a person, organization, values, or institution that is not God[228]

Pastor: An ordained or licensed person who is the spiritual leader, appointed by the bishop as the official head of a local station, circuit or mission church, who is responsible for the total program of the charge to which he or she is appointed[229].

Practice: [Habitus + Capital] + Field – the amalgamation of habitus, capital and field that drive the processes and operations of an organization

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[226] Belin, Rev. Roderick D. The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition. Libre Digital. Kindle Edition.

[227] Fluker, Walter Earl, *The Ground Has Shifted*, 206.

[228] Term I developed for the project in terms of how there seemed to be a deifying aspect of giving the denomination and its practices the same authority and position as God, therefore creating a state of idolatry within a microcosm of the church. This is also referring to anything a person gives the authority, power and energy to a person, place, thing and/or organization as God

[229] Belin, Rev. Roderick D. The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition. Libre Digital. Kindle Edition.

Quadrennial: Occurring or being done every four years (e.g., the meetings of the General Conference and the Connectional Women's Missionary Society)[230].

Successive Generations: Generation X, Millennials, I-Gen & Gen Z generations essential for the growth, development, and continuance of the corporate church

System 1 Thinking: System 1 operates automatically and quickly, with little or no effort and no sense of voluntary control. This is the primary operating thought process that governs 95% of thought processes including informed values, theological framework, qualitative and quantitative thought, and social interactions and operation. Fast, automatic[231]

System 2 Thinking: System of thought that deals with creating thinking, expansion of understanding, **questioning the tenants of established System 1 thought**, which create new contexts of understanding that later on inform[232]

Terminal Decline: The decline of an organization or institution that denotes an impending end date. This specifically applies to practices that are directly creating a detrimental trajectory of an organization's sustainability and survival[233]

Transactional Leadership: Leadership methodology primarily executed as a systemically organized set of values, rewards, and consequences. Most effective in large organizations requiring consistent methods of operations, procedures, and practices across the organizational body. Transactional leadership rewards the ability to meet and exceed short term goals valued within a given organization[234].

Transformational Leadership: Leadership methodology that focuses on internal development as a means of creating long term success. Qualities such as creativity, innovation and leaders raising followers into higher levels of morality and motivation (James MacGregor Burns)[235]

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[230] Belin, Rev. Roderick D. The Doctrine and Discipline of the African Methodist Episcopal Church - 2016: Bicentennial Edition. Libre Digital. Kindle Edition.

[231] Kahneman, Daniel, *Thinking Fast and Slow*, 20.

[232] Kahneman, Daniel, 20.

[233] Merriam Webster Dictionary (https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/in%20terminal%20decline)
- getting worse without any chance to improve

[234] Bernard M. Bass, Jane Howell, and
Bruce Avolio defined three elements of transactional leadership as *contingent reward*,
passive management, and *active management.* [lxvi] *Contingent reward* refers to the
process of setting expectations and rewarding workers for meeting them. Rewards
come in the form of recognition, pay increases, and promotions. Those who do not
conform are penalized.
The second element of transactional leadership is *passive management by exception*,

[235] Transformational leadership made its first appearance in James V. Downton, Jr.'s 1973
Rebel Leadership: Commitment and Charisma in the Revolutionary Process.
However, the late James MacGregor Burns, a political scientist at Williams College in
Massachusetts is credited with introducing the concept of transformational leadership.

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        Infed.Org:" Accessed April 11, 2022. https://infed.org/mobi/pierre-bourdieu-habitus-capital-
        and-field-exploring-reproduction-in-the-practice-of-education/.

In his 1978 book, *Leadership*, Burns defined transformational leadership as a process
where "leaders and their followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and
motivation." Burns﹜ massive study argued that transactional leadership in itself is merely
a version of managerialism that appeals to the economic self-interest of followers' while
transformational leadership alters the experience of the followers.
But like

"Race/Ethnicity | ARDA Community Profile Builder | The Association of Religion Data Archives."
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