THE MISSIONAL THEOLOGY AND PRACTICE OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST
DEMAND THAT GOD’S TRANSFIGURED PEOPLE FULFILL THE MISSIO DEI.

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Thesis under the direction of Professors Robert Hughes III and J. Neil Alexander

The church’s purpose has always been to carry out God’s mission (the missio Dei) in the
world, proclaiming, and working for the building up of the kingdom of God. As Robert
Linthicum points out in his book *Building a People of Power: Equipping Churches to Transform
Their Communities,* Jesus sought to initiate, in humanity, the reign or kingdom of God, God’s
shalom—God’s vision for human society. This kingdom of God is to be brought about by God’s
people, seeking peacefully but shrewdly to re-form a society on the Jubilee principles of a
reversal of fortune; where wealth is equitably distributed, poverty is eliminated, all politics are
just, and all are reconciled to each other because all are reconciled with God (2 Cor. 5:19-20). As
such, God’s people should personify and demonstrate by their lifestyle and behavior, their
transfigured lives through their worship of and commitment to God. Our churches need to learn
from Jesus, how he demonstrated the principles of the kingdom of God which he proclaimed and
hence how tackled the power structures of his day that threatened the manifestation of that
kingdom. When this is meaningfully and practically done by our congregations, then the
proclamation of the gospel will find relevance in the lives of those outside of the church (and
also for many within it).
Consequently this thesis puts forward the point that God’s people worship a God who calls them into union with God’s self through (baptism and) their participation in the Holy Eucharist. As the body of Christ, God’s people participate in the Holy Eucharist such that their transfigured lives, work together for the total transformation of the world—its peoples, systems and structures—into what God intended it to be: the Kingdom of God. Having understood and participated in the Holy Eucharist, this act of worship by its very nature and meaning sends God’s people out into the world as it is, to renew or re-form the world into the kingdom of God, thereby fulfilling the missio Dei.

Using Linthicum’s theology of power, this thesis further asserts that churches should seek to transform themselves in order to transform the societies, the communities in which they are placed or find themselves. This is suggested through the use of relational power as a strategy by which the church is to transform itself through relational meetings and, having done so, to work in concert with other churches and organizations to bring about the transformation of their communities. It is through the use of relational power, (and community organizing) that the Kingdom of God, God’s shalom, in the communities, towns or cities where they are can be established.

Of course this is not the world we currently live in. This is the world as God intended it to be—the kingdom of God. The world that the Scriptures challenge and mandate the Church to work toward. Subsequently, this thesis puts forward the use of relational power among congregations in order that those congregations will transform themselves—be strengthened in all facets of its life—and so be better enabled to go out into the world as it is to transform it into the world as God intends it to be.
[This work is conceived primarily within an Episcopal/Anglican context drawing upon research found mainly among Episcopal/Anglican and Roman Catholic resources but not limited to them.]
The missional theology and practice of the Holy Eucharist demand that God’s transfigured people fulfill the Missio Dei.

by

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Table of Contents

Abstract ......................................................................................................................................i
Title Page .................................................................................................................................v
Acknowledgements ..................................................................................................................vii
Chapter 1: Introduction........................................................................................................... 1
Chapter 2: The World As It Is and the World As It Should Be.............................................. 22
Chapter 3: The Eucharist As Missional.................................................................................. 39
Chapter 4: After The Meal, What’s Next?............................................................................. 55
Chapter 5: God Demands It – Toward the Shalom Community.......................................... 72
Chapter 6: Conclusion............................................................................................................ 99
Appendix A.............................................................................................................................113
Bibliography............................................................................................................................116
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DEDICATION

To my wife Trecia, for her selfless support, love and encouragement that kept me going.
CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION - After the Meal: The missional theology and practice of the Holy Eucharist

The serious Christians that I know want nothing more than these two things: to be agents of change in the world, and to feel close to Jesus. . . . Unless our deeds arise out of our own experience of God’s challenging love for us, they will hardly bear fruit for the kingdom. And unless our spiritual practices propel us in the direction of our neighbor, they are simply exercises in narcissism. – Bishop Thomas E. Breidenthal¹

Many people look to the church for direction, for answers, and for a better option for life worth living. Regis Duffy, in his book Real Presence, stated that in the Western world, in countries like the USA and the Caribbean (Jamaica being of particular interest), Christianity has been a part of the social fabric of these nations for centuries, yet Christians are seldom indistinguishable from their non-Christian counterparts by the appearance of any noticeable commitment to the poor and marginalized, or by involvement in other issues of injustice and inequality. So, he asks, why is there so much participation in the sacraments and worship yet so little commitment among the participants?²

In her opening address at General Convention of the Episcopal Church in 2009, Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, asserted the following:

How do we keep the main thing the main thing? How will we insist that this Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society remember that God’s mission is our reason for existence, and that it has most to do with loving our neighbors? The structures of this Church are resources for God’s mission, but they are not God’s mission in themselves. . . . Jesus’ passion was and is for God’s dream of a reconciled creation. We’re meant to be partners in building that reality, throughout all of creation.³

South African missiologist David Bosch writing in *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, asserts that mission,

. . . refers primarily to the missio Dei (God’s mission), that is God’s self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God’s involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate. Missio Dei enunciates the good news that God is a God-for-people. 4

Further adding that

God’s love and attention are directed primarily at the world, and mission is “participation in God’s existence in the world.” 5

Consequently he concludes:

Neither a secularized church (that is, a church which concerns itself only with this-worldly activities and interests) nor a separatist church (that is, a church which involves itself only in soul saving and preparation of converts for the hereafter) can faithfully articulate the missio Dei. 6

Michael Gecan in *Going Public* states, “The world outside the door of the church always influences your actions, options and possibilities.” 7 The church is not realizing its potential to influence the environments in which it resides in terms of affecting issues of justice, crime, greed and corruption, poverty, and other social and spiritual ills. These debilitating issues arise from the evil assertions of power by our political, economic and religious systems upon individuals and communities, cities and even the nation. This is the world as it is.

In his enthronement sermon in May 2012, the Bishop of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, Dr. Howard Gregory, said “Involvement in ‘mission’ implies engagement with persons where they are, and at the points of their most urgent needs. This means affirmation of the world as it is, in respect of politics, economics, culture and religion, and not merely the judging of it or

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5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., 11.
cowardly escaping from it.”8 The bishop drew the attention of his hearers to Kevin Goodrich, who in his article “Parish Evangelism for a Different Era” in a March 2012 issue of The Living Church magazine, charges that the “old” approach to mission that many Anglican congregations practice is likened to the franchise system that many business chains operate. Goodrich claims that

The old franchise system in which most of the faithful were loyal to a particular brand of Christianity has almost faded away. Few congregations can get away with sustaining themselves by their denominational identity alone. The old system of baptizing, confirming, marrying, and then beginning this process again cannot be guaranteed and will require congregations to reach out to people who have not attended Anglican churches or may have never attended church at all.9

In his sermon, Bishop Gregory invited his hearers to listen to the Rev. Ashley Smith whom he called “one of our own Caribbean voices:”

The partners in Christ’s mission should be continually aware of the need to work with God and the agencies of the community, in freeing persons and whole communities from whatever is repressive and productive of the dependency, fatalism and egotistic competitiveness, that are such significant features of Caribbean reality in general and the life of the church in particular. All who are prepared for the practice of Christian ministry must be continually aware of the various powers that undermine the growth of persons into Christlikeness or authentic humanness in relation to the concept of the Image of God.10

As though listening to Gecan, Gregory further explained that “this means that the mission focus calls us to look outside of ourselves and to see how we relate to and serve the wider community, the people of God, to whom we are called to witness and to serve.”11 Consequently our churches

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10 Gregory, sermon.
11 Ibid.
are being called to be more visible in our communities, making relevant and tangible differences in the lives of the people where they serve.

Robert Linthicum, in his book *Building a People of Power: Equipping Churches to Transform Their Communities*, reminds us that Scripture has always sought to give us a vision of what God intends or wants for the world and the people God has created. The Bible’s account of God’s intention begins with the Garden of Eden in the Old Testament and continues with “‘Zion,’ ‘the city of our God.’”¹² through the Psalms. Jesus himself declared in the Synoptic Gospels that the kingdom of God is at hand, and the New Jerusalem is described in the Revelation to John.¹³

The church’s purpose is to carry out God’s mission (missio Dei) upon the earth, proclaiming, and working for, the building up of the kingdom of God. People look to the church for direction, for answers, and for a better option for life worth living. The church believes it can respond because of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As Linthicum points out, Jesus sought to initiate, in humanity, the reign or kingdom of God, God’s *shalom*¹⁴—God’s vision for human society. This kingdom of God is to be brought about by God’s people, “seeking to peacefully (but astutely) re-form society on the Jubilee principles of a reversal of fortune, where wealth is equitably distributed, poverty is eliminated, all politics are just, and all are reconciled to each other because they are reconciled with God.” (2 Cor. 5:19-20).¹⁵ As such, God’s people should personify and demonstrate by their lifestyle and behavior, their transfigured lives through their worship of and commitment to God.

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¹³ Ibid.
¹⁴ Use of this word, and the concept and idea of shalom will be expanded upon in chapters 2 and 4.
In his reflections on the journey of the Christian person from conversion to transfiguration—“the two great tides”\(^{16}\)—and on the transfiguration stories of (Matt. 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36), Hughes asserts that

Jesus is not changed by the transfiguration. What happens is not transformation but the illumination of Jesus by the light of divine glory, in the power of the Spirit, which reveals to the disciples the truth about who Jesus has been all along. In the same fashion, our own beginning transfiguration in that same light is not transformation into something else, but the revelation and birthing of our own true selves. In the light of Mount Tabor, what we see first is our own betrayal of our Master, but as our eyes adjust and the light strengthens, we begin to see ourselves and all creation revealed in our true existence as sacramental vessels of the Holy Spirit’s presence, and of the economy by which God is making all things well.\(^{17}\)

Hughes continues by noting that because the transfiguration of Jesus occurs not at some special time of retreat in his life but rather in the midst of his active ministry between Peter’s confession and the final trip to Jerusalem, it teaches us to look for this light now, in the midst of life, and to wait for resurrection and glorification in our own experience, even though the light anticipates them. . . . Transfiguration is not transformation, not a magical change of something into what it previously was not, but rather the illumination by the light of God’s glory of what has always been and remains true."\(^{18}\)

Hughes speaks of the Christian as a transfigured being, as one who ‘already is’. That is, through our baptism we are God’s children, redeemed through the life, death and resurrection of God’s Son, and are being made into God’s likeness through the power and illuminating work of God’s Spirit within us. We are the people called upon to carry out God’s mission in Christ.

Why should we carry out this mission of God? God commands us to. Christian love demands it.

\(^{16}\) Hughes, *Beloved Dust*, 245.
\(^{17}\) Ibid., 254.
\(^{18}\) Ibid., 257-8. For more on Hughes treatise on the Transfiguration of Jesus see pgs 258-67.
The church is often seen or perceived as a symbol or bastion of hope for the nation. As the body of Christ, God’s people participate in the Holy Eucharist such that their transfigured lives, work together for the total transformation of the world—its peoples, systems and structures—into what God intended it to be: the Kingdom of God, thereby fulfilling the missio Dei. The church is “God’s instrument in the divine mission to the world,”\(^\text{19}\) a world that will “perish” if the church does not carry out the missio Dei.

Arising from Vatican II, in reference to the meaning of church, the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* states that

> It is of the essence of the Church that she be both human and divine, visible and yet invisibly equipped, eager to act and yet intent on contemplation, present in this world and yet not at home in it; and she is all these things in such wise that in her the human is directed and subordinated to the divine, the visible likewise to the invisible, action to contemplation, and this present world to that city yet to come, which we seek. While the liturgy daily builds up those who are within into a holy temple of the Lord, into a dwelling place for God in the Spirit, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ, at the same time it marvelously strengthens their power to preach Christ, and thus shows forth the Church to those who are outside as a sign lifted up among the nations under which the scattered children of God may be gathered together, until there is one sheepfold and one shepherd.\(^\text{20}\)

Consequently, worship and sacrament have always formed an important part of Christian heritage and the witness to Jesus Christ in the world. But if this indeed the case, Regis Duffy rightly asks, “Why is there so much of worship and so little commitment?”\(^\text{21}\) He uses the lives of Dorothy Day, Mother Teresa of Calcutta, and Damien of Molokai as outstanding models of gospel commitment to the poor of the world. Duffy uses these examples to illustrate that the


\(^{21}\) Duffy, *Real Presence*, xii.
quality of our commitments reveals the values we live by and determines the meaningfulness of the tasks we perform. These three, he says, were motivated by a religious commitment that was challenging to the secular world because of the depth of their convictions and selfless service for others. It involved a reawakening to the realities of their world and decisions about what tasks they would undertake at a turning point of their lives. Consequently, in reflecting on the following question, “Does our continued attendance at Sunday worship, for example, indicate a deeper commitment to Gospel values or only the security of familiar rituals?” Duffy asserts that the honest answer to such a question is a necessary part of any religious commitment. He observes that widespread affirmation of allegiance to Christianity does not necessarily indicate deep religious commitment. Churches can be crowded in countries where torture, suffering, and injustice are the normal way of life. The religious symbols of worship and sacrament in such countries do not seem to call out a deeper sense of commitment to gospel justice and peace from the majority of participants.

In Torture and Eucharist, William Cavanaugh suggests that attempts to use religious signs or symbols to seek to motivate persons to act in the real (i.e., in the political) world, are flawed, as the sacrament is not a symbol of something in the “real world”. While liturgical symbols give Christians new ways to imagine power and perhaps motivate them to commit themselves to making the world a better place, the problem with this view, he says is that to enter the political is to leave the liturgical. When the liturgical must be applied or made relevant to the political, the fundamental modern separation of religion and politics remains intact. Theme liturgies like World Hunger, World AIDS Day, or International Women’s Day are necessary to rescue the Eucharist from practical irrelevance. Issues and principles applicable to political

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22 Duffy, Real Presence, 2.
23 Ibid., 1-4.
action are symbolized in the liturgy in the hope that Christians will read their meanings and internalize them, then return to the political processes of the world and apply the meanings “out there” with renewed conviction. Such attempts, he says, miss what is essential to the Eucharist as liturgy, arguing that liturgy is about the action of a body of people becoming together what they are unable to become as a mere collection of individuals. Consequently, to participate in a communal and public discipline of bodies is already to be engaged in a direct confrontation with the “real world,” its politics, and the coercive use of its power. 24 We elaborate on this in chapter five where Linthicum’s theology of power and the church is examined.

In reflecting about ecclesial transformation and liturgy, Baptist minister Ruth Gouldbourne in her article “Liturgical Identity Carriers For Ecclesial Transformation”, makes the point that in the real world church liturgy should be about

making the ordinary important, indeed recognizing the importance of the ordinary. And that is a significant theological, indeed, a profoundly incarnational approach not just to worship, but to life in the world and before God. . . . What is done, symbolized and embodied in liturgy, in its broadest sense, will demonstrate what is believed-and in particular those places where actual belief differs from stated or intended belief. 25

According to Gordon W. Lathrop in the *Cambridge dictionary of Christian Theology*,

The public and communal event in which Christian symbols and rituals are enacted by an assembly and its ministers sometimes bears the title “liturgy”. That word has also been used to denote the ordered and printed texts that a ritualizing community might be using. But the more common application of the word in current scholarship is to indicate the whole event of a Christian assembly’s symbolic practice – its words, songs, actions, and ritual repetitions – implying that this practice is, as in the ancient Greek use of the word *leitourgia*, a ‘public work’ with public meaning, whether or not printed texts or prescribed orders are used. 26

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Lawrence J. Madden writing in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship* states that “The Greek Old Testament, however, uses the word to refer to divine worship and to the ministry of the Levites. Similarly, Heb 8:2 it is used to refer to the priestly work of Christ. Christ is called ‘a minister (leitourgos) of the sanctuary.’”

In this thesis *leitourgos* is used to mean primarily what is done in a church service: actions and words of clergy and congregants, as in Vatican II’s *Sacramentum Concilium*: “For the liturgy, ‘through which the work of our redemption is accomplished,’ most of all in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church.” Consequently “liturgy is what we do with our lives,” as Price and Weil note in *Liturgy for Living*. They refer to “extensive liturgy,” which begins when the gathered people depart from their worship to “do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord.”

Robert Hughes helps us understand better this important key concept of liturgy by saying that liturgy is essentially a public act, not a private one, and takes place in the public arena and in public space. As such it is a principal interface between church and world, between the public and private spheres of life. Thus any true liturgical spirituality, however personally grounded, must have by its very nature a dialogical relationship with the larger public world of sociality, culture, and politics. Duffy, reflecting on 1 Corinthians 11, says that liturgy is our prayerful response and privilege to share in the expression of God’s presence among the worshippers. “If

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28 *Sacramentum Concilium*, Introduction, paragraph 2.
30 The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church (New York: The Episcopal Church, 1979), 366.
31 Hughes, *Beloved Dust*, 40.
the Corinthians misunderstood the theory of salvation (*lex docendi*), it is because their worship had not taught them the price of Gospel commitment on such salvation.”32 So in questioning “the consequences of naïve or even dishonest use of religious symbols,”33 Duffy answers by restating Paul’s response in 1 Cor 11:27-28: “our sacraments and worship cannot be divorced from our lives.”34 If our participation in the sacraments and other symbolic expressions of worship, “express commitment to the Gospel vision of love and service (*shalom*), but our lives remain unchanged, something is radically wrong.”35

The Episcopal Church in the United States, and the Church in the Province of the West Indies (CPWI), more specifically the Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Island (DJCI) to which I belong, are both “offspring of the Church of England” and carry “the marks of [its] Anglican heritage unmistakably and proudly. In worship this heritage involves clear continuity with the liturgy of the church from earliest times. Its liturgy was also the liturgy of the Catholic Church with its roots in the practices of the earliest Christian community recorded in the New Testament.”36 These roots have been expanded upon by the writings of the Church Fathers, evolving as it journeyed through the Middle Ages, the torturously complex sixteenth century Reformations, the Council of Trent, Vatican II, and Lambeth and ACC Conferences up to our present time.37 Price and Weil further explain that exploration of various historical and cultural circumstances have contributed to making “the worship in the Episcopal Church what it is. There is something in our services that corresponds to the sensuous fullness of medieval liturgy.”38 In addition there is a growing awareness that the liturgy is not the sole purview of the ordained

33 Ibid., 10.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
37 Ibid.
38 Ibid., 4-5.
ministry, an awareness that has shaped and continues to shape, the attitude of vast numbers of Episcopalians toward worship and liturgy. Increased interest in and appreciation of the sacraments have come about because of new information available to us regarding the sacramental worship of the early church and because divided churches of Christendom are once more seeking their unity in the risen Lord as revealed to us in the breaking of the bread.  

Further, there is an increasing desire for manifested efficacy of our sacramental worship to be experienced in the lives of our worshippers. I agree with Price and Weil and suggest that one way this desire has revealed itself has been through greater and more active participation of the congregation in the liturgy, as members more and more begin to see themselves as the church, the body of Christ, and not as merely belonging to a building or institution or clergy.  

“We the Eucharist itself is the most powerful divine action for the redemption of the world.” How does a congregation understand this? Julia Gatta, in *The Nearness of God*, says that during the Eucharist the congregation prays for communities, and nations, for creation and the world, offering it all to God in the context of eucharistic transformation. John MacQuarrie articulates the following perspective in *A Guide to the Sacraments*:  

> It is true that in all the Christian sacraments words are used, and these words enable us to understand what is going on. But a sacrament, is always more than words, it is action. A priest may tell us that he has said mass this morning, . . . He has not just said mass, he has done it. . . . It is in this living immersion in the sacrament by doing it that we penetrate its meaning and realize that it is a meaning that takes us beyond words, a meaning that puts us in touch with the reality of God. The sacrament envelops the whole person of the worshippers, their wills and feelings, all their senses, as well as their minds. Only something total like that could be called an encounter with God.  

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39 Ibid., 6.  
40 Ibid.  
Adding that in such a moment “the whole person is engaged. . . .Word and sacraments together constitute the vehicle by which Christ communicates himself to his people, and the word is made flesh.”\textsuperscript{43}

What can happen when a congregation understands this principle? It will then see the Eucharist not as a mere feeding station for the troops before they march out into the world for Christ, nor will they any longer believe they are merely fulfilling a (weekly) religious duty, rather they begin “to live eucharistically,”\textsuperscript{44} to have sacramental lives the other six days of the week.

Many members of the church seem to be merely going through the ritual of Eucharist because it is the thing to do. Additionally, persons including non-churchgoers and non-Anglicans often do not see the point of the Eucharist when they visit our churches, or how it makes a difference in the lives of those who participate in it. Many people seem to want something more tangible from church, something to hold on to, to take with them, something that will make a practical difference in, or make sense of, their daily lives. Hence people often gravitate towards tangibles like healing services with the laying on of hands—a touch, oil, water—looking for greater hope and change for the better in their personal world.

Along this train of thought John Koenig wonders, “how many of us in the mainline churches actually experience our services of Holy Communion as a transformative force,”\textsuperscript{45} and whether our services are actually experienced as “more like an obligation, a ceremony to be gotten through. Maybe they bore or anger us or don’t seem real.”\textsuperscript{46} Yet “mature believers of all ages have properly responded to such complaints by pointing out that feelings, while important,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[43] Ibid., 22-23.
\item[44] Gatta, \textit{Nearness}, 45.
\item[46] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
aren’t the decisive element in the Eucharist. God acts forcefully, even if we don’t notice it in our psyches or bodies. God’s promises and Christ’s command (1 Cor. 11:24-25) make the meal sacramentally effective, and we receive its benefits by faith.”\textsuperscript{47} Koenig is calling into question “the status quo we often settle for today, which is just getting through our eucharistic ceremonies as opposed to entering through them into the very presence of God with our body, mind, and spirit.”\textsuperscript{48} He further challenges this minimalistic position by proposing “the triple hypothesis that a) a lot more important things are happening at our eucharistic meals than we typically imagine; b) we can get more involved with them than we usually are; and c) our fuller participation in the eucharistic life of God will radiate out into other congregational meals, helping us to enhance their missionary potential.”\textsuperscript{49}

After the meal, how does the church become an agent of change and, as Duffy says, symbols of God’s presence to be responded to within their communities?\textsuperscript{50} It is difficult, and somewhat impractical to tell someone or a community about salvation, repentance and God’s love when there is little visible display of it either from individual church members or from the church corporate. Additionally it is even more difficult and insensitive to do so when members of that community are hungry, or homeless, unemployed, disenfranchised, have their rights taken away. While they do need to hear of, know and experience God’s love, they will find it more pertinent when it is demonstrated by the church. Such persons and communities have been ravaged by these systems of power and they and the church are often rendered powerless to tackle successfully such systemic evils and bring about sustainable change. Our churches need to

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Duffy, \textit{Real Presence}, 3.
learn from Jesus, how he tackled the power structures of his day and demonstrated the principles of the kingdom of God which he proclaimed.

Linthicum suggests that it is by understanding God’s will and seeking to build the shalom community in their home, church, community, city, and nation. They do so by being a people who

- Become God’s PRESENCE, they PRAY and PRACTICE their faith through action, PROCLAIM the Good News and use relational POWER in the home, church, community, city, nation where God has placed them.\(^{51}\)

It is important to note a few things about the critical importance of the relationship of presiders at the Eucharist (priests and bishops), deacons, and preachers with the living Christ. Understanding the nature and depth of this relationship is a significant help in authenticating the efficacy of the liturgy within the Episcopal/Anglican Church, such that it does not become mere ritual formality coupled with intellectual and theological discourse. Rather it should lead to a life-generating, christologically focused transformation of the clergy and their congregations and consequently, of communities and societies. After all, “The chief responsibility of the ordained ministry is to assemble and build up the body of Christ by proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, by celebrating the sacraments, and by guiding the life of the community in its worship, its mission and its caring ministry.”\(^{52}\)

In *Hidden Manna*, James O’Connor, says that because the priest is, “constituted a channel of grace at his ordination and willingly serving as such a channel each time he offers the sacramental sacrifice, special graces are offered the priest so that, by a growth in his own

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holiness, he may be ever better conformed to the High Priest whose minister he is.”53 As Julia Gatta succinctly puts it, “Christian ministry is rooted in Christian mysticism: Christ’s life in us and our life in Christ,”54 and she points to Gal. 2:19b-20 in referring to a life that is transformed into the life of Christ, “the gift of God and the goal of discipleship.”55 She calls attention to the eclipsing of the eschatological horizons, whereby ministry can become a nostalgic exercise in “doing what Jesus did” or an idealistic attempt at some new form of evangelism or discipleship seeking to motivate the church towards becoming or ushering in the kingdom of God on earth. While I agree with her “that a more mystagogical understanding of the Risen Lord and his church leads us to encounter the living Christ through liturgy, sacraments, Scripture, and prayer,”56 there must be a greater understanding by the church of its power and the use of that power to affect our being transformed into effective witnesses for Christ and his church in the world. By working with Christ, in the world as it is, we become capable of doing the “greater works than these” (John 14:12) that Christ himself declared we would be capable of doing, in order to effect transformation of our communities so these communities epitomize the world as it should be, thus becoming the kingdom of God in the world today.

“The eucharist has this power to define the priest because it also defines the church. Baptism initiates new members into the church, but baptism is unrepeatable. It is the eucharist that continually brings the church into being, making it a spiritual organism variously described in Scripture as the people of God, the royal priesthood, the body of Christ, and the bride of Christ.”57 Gatta elaborates further on the perspective of the priest:

54 Gatta, Nearness, xiii.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid., xiii.
57 Ibid., 32.
We have the best seats in the house to notice what is going on—and not only for ourselves but, to a certain extent, for everybody. This is especially true of the celebration of the Holy Eucharist.

Those who preside at the principal act of Christian worship encounter its strong currents of grace at a place of powerful intersection in the liturgy. Praying at the very heart of the church, the priest sees, feels, and enacts the extraordinary transactions occurring between God and the worshipping community. As the liturgy moves through its various phases, priests apprehend these divine actions at close range. The liturgy then reaches its climax in communion—the conjunction of Christ and his church. Priests are caught up in these breathtaking forces, and moved from several directions at once, precisely because it is our ministry to represent both Christ and the church in Eucharistic presidency. We feel both sides of it.58

Liturgy expresses the grace of what she says the Orthodox call divine synergy: our working with God in creation and redemption. Yet she cautions against seeing liturgy solely as “the work of the people” emphasizing endless human intervention, while at the other extreme being aware of a mentality that gives rise to practices of either “it’s all up to us” or “it’s all up to God” and we miss altogether the essence and spirit of working with God.59 “As participants in the Eucharist, therefore, we prove inconsistent if we are not actively participating in this ongoing restoration of the world’s situation and the human condition.”60

Though this thesis does not seek to expound upon the nature or quality of the clergy’s calling to intimacy with Christ, which is an important if not critical ingredient to being effective ministers of God’s people and pastors to the world, I concur with Gatta that our work does matter and its effectiveness does depend upon our prior and ongoing relationship with God.61 It is God’s work, the missio Dei, that we ought to be about, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Throughout the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is seen and experienced as the manifestation of the power and presence of God—in John the Baptist, in Jesus’ birth and

58 Ibid., 32-33.
59 Ibid., 42-43.
60 Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, 20.
61 Gatta, Nearness, xiv.
baptism, and throughout Jesus’ public ministry. Following his resurrection the Holy Spirit is given to the new Christian community, the church, not being restricted to Jews. The Holy Spirit guides, empowers, and moves the church into its mission, which is God’s mission. Koenig summarizes the Pauline view of the new Christian community thus:

Worshippers at the Lord’s Supper typically took active roles in the service as the Spirit led them. A great deal of bodily movement occurred during the meal as believers reached out to one another to forgive and heal. In Paul’s view, God’s purpose in stirring up this Eucharistic energy was, at one and the same time, to strengthen the baptized in their mutual ministries of building up the community and to attract outsiders (1 Cor 14:1-12, 16, 23-25). Almost from the beginning the church’s meal liturgy was understood to be a missionary event in both the centripetal and centrifugal sense.62

Koenig further stresses that there is “widespread New Testament evidence for an intimate connection between the work of the Spirit and the worship of the people in the celebrations of the Eucharistic meal,”63 and adds that “we may expect to discern Christ’s presence, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the advent of the God’s kingdom in those meals. And when we do, our words and acts of gratitude will multiply.”64 Koenig proposes the following:

Essential to the process, I think will be the developing of a stronger intentionality on our part to understand how we and God “make” our communion together during the Eucharistic service. To do this, many of us will have to adopt some new practices. Here I am not referring to anything arcane but rather to a threefold meditation that anyone can learn.

The first step involves allowing ourselves to enter into an expectant mode, so that we can be open to perceiving new things in the Eucharist we’re about to celebrate.65

In this first step, Koenig goes on to state a number of practices which, from my experience, I believe many Episcopalians and Anglicans already use in preparation for celebrating the Eucharist, though many more need to engage in these or similar practices in order to lift the

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62 Koenig, Soul Banquets, 93. In the context of eucharistic worship, centripetal means an attractive force drawing or attracting others toward the center of an event (the Eucharist), and centrifugal means a power that sends out (participants) or causes participants to move outward from the center of the worship, into the world. Koenig, 89-90.
63 Ibid., 94.
64 Ibid., 95-96.
65 Ibid., 96.
intimacy, intentionality, and intensity of our corporate worship. Koenig mentions actions such as silent prayer and meditation on the scriptures, hymns, or other parts of the liturgy.\textsuperscript{66} I would add personal confession of sin to the list.

For step two, Koenig asserts it is an activity that is done during the service itself: “It’s mostly a matter of learning what to look for and naming what we experience.”\textsuperscript{67} The following are some of Koenig’s examples

- the presence of Jesus, not only in the sharing of the bread and wine, but also in one another as the Body of Christ assembled;
- a growing (or sudden) consciousness of specific gifts from the Spirit—in ourselves, our neighbors, and in our congregation as a whole;
- a powerful sense of calling, often in the form of a new certainty about how we as individuals and communities can use our distinctive gifts for the sake of others; this includes disclosures of what some Christians call “prayer burdens”;
- repentance, forgiveness, and healing in many configurations;
- an uncanny harmony between what we hear (scripture, the sermon, hymns and other musical offerings) and our own self-presentation at the communion table or altar;
- honest and heartfelt thanksgiving;
- prophecy—that is, speaking God’s word of encouragement or exhortation directly to another’s personal condition during the service (see 1 Corinthian 14:22-25);
- an entering into the eternal presence of God where conventional boundaries of time and space don’t apply.\textsuperscript{68}

Koenig relates the third step of his eucharistic meditations as being “a prayerful, reflective accounting of what one experienced at the eucharistic encounter of worship. An intriguing example of the reflective experience of this in an individual’s experience of the Eucharist, is recorded in Owen Chadwick’s \textit{Michael Ramsey: a Life}. Ramsey wrote his aunt concerning his participation in the Eucharist that

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 96-97.
the sacrament of the eucharist was so big he did not feel he had finished with it when he came home after the service at 8 a.m. on Sunday morning. It was many-sided—worship, praise, offering, commemoration of our Lord’s life and death, sacrifice, fellowship with the faithful in the unseen, all the many sides which centre in this one act. He did not need words to join in this act, he could use the words of the prayer book or his own words, but he needed no words at all.⁶⁹

This thesis seeks to be a further contribution to looking at the missional intent of the Eucharist, its practice and efficacy in the life of the church, and how the church can effectively carry out its mandate from Jesus to go and transform the world. As Koenig puts it in The Feast of the World’s Redemption, “the missionary thrust of the earliest church’s table worship goes back to Jesus’ own action at the last supper.”⁷⁰ This thesis seeks to examine the role of celebrating and participating in the Eucharist as motivating the church to respond to the missio Dei. The church is called to be about the biblical vision that presents God’s intention for all humanity—the transformation of the world (i.e. our communities)—its peoples and its systems—thereby helping to usher in the kingdom of God on earth. Since, as Koenig further asserts (and I tend to agree with him):

The missionary dimensions of the church’s Eucharistic rituals are not of primary concern to most Christians today, not even to those who take chief responsibility for organizing the church’s most public activities. Contemporary writings by missiologists give scant attention to the role of the Eucharist, and studies of the Eucharist by liturgical specialists often have little or nothing to say about mission. Scholarly explorations of ritual meals and of mission in the New Testament tend not to bring the two together.⁷¹

He goes on to point out that there are some exceptions, the World Council of Churches’ Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry document of 1982 being one such.

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⁷¹ Ibid., xiii.
John Koenig writes, “Only the providence of God can bring righteousness and bliss together in a loving embrace. Just the right blend of divine and human activity occurs, and the meal becomes a transformative force.” He further reasons that Christian faith holds that a similar conjoining of God’s work with ours takes place in the Eucharist or Lord’s Supper. Through the eucharistic elements, we say, Christ somehow communicates to us the inexhaustible mercy of God. Yet we humans also do a great deal at this meal. We create the ritual orders of the service. We furnish the bread and wine and distribute it. We gather for praise, thanksgiving, remembering, eating, drinking and much more. Still, we declare by faith that it is Christ who takes the major initiative at every Lord’s Supper. He extends the grandest welcome and bestows the greatest gifts, starting with his own presence. He effects the transformation of our lives.

My thesis is that participation in the Holy Eucharist ought to be a catalyst in reawakening church members to the realities of the world as it is, toward a deeper commitment for carrying out the missio Dei. Our participation in the Eucharist can enable the church (our dioceses) to become more effective witnesses of Christ’s love and mercy, and be agents of change in homes, communities, cities and nations by working with God for the building up of the shalom community, the kingdom of God. Reworking some of Koenig’s thoughts with my own, I explore how our Eucharist might become truly missional, that is a meal that gathers together all sorts and conditions of humanity, reaching out even to those who cannot or will not come and join its redemptive embrace for the good news that the church claims to have and ought to be sharing with world. This will be examined in chapter three (3). Before that however, in chapter two (2), we take a look at the context of the world in which the church is called to operate and worship—the world as it is; in chapter four (4) we seek to answer the question of what should the church then be doing following our participation in the Eucharist? This is done by examining the

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73 Ibid., 87-88.
74 Ibid., xiii-xiv.
75 Koenig, *Feast*, xvi-xvii.
concept of *shalom*. Chapter five (5) challenges the church to respond to the demands of the mission Dei through the paradigm of Linthicum’s *Shalom Community* as the manifestation of the kingdom of God—the world as God intends it to be—in our midst, as demanded by Jesus of his church in our world as it is.

He has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the Lord require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8 NRSV)
CHAPTER 2.

The World As It Is and the World As God Intends It To Be.

According to Michael Gecan, the world outside the doors of the church has the power to influence the church directly—our actions, options and possibilities. The street corners and inner-city communities are held hostage by gangs who extort money from construction site workers and shopkeepers throughout our countries—Jamaica and the United States—being the regions of interest for this thesis. Hapless, powerless constituent politicians, in seeking to appear concerned about the happenings in the communities, distract citizens away from the real issues of concern. Market-driven economies reward a few and punish many. The unskilled seek to survive insufficient minimum wage environments while a materialistic culture creates expensive new and often unneeded desires, feeding the insatiable consumer appetites of the masses. Gecan continues: “Institutions shift and drift, responsible at times, damaging at times. . . . Terrorists strike, the terrorists in the housing project elevator late at night, the terrorists in the jets that dive out of the morning sky.”

So Gecan, in his view, describes the world as it is, as “crowded, loud, raucous, confusing, and even dangerous” and often unfair. “A world where power is the prime moving force, . . . where people say “teachers should teach . . . politicians should [rightly and fairly] represent their communities . . . mayors should do the right things for the right reasons . . . cops should treat them [the people] with respect, and banks should give them the same terms and the same access as they offer others.” The world as it is, is the public arena in which the church exists and has to function in, to carry out the missio Dei. This is where the church working to usher in kingdom of God ought to be found.

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76 Gecan, Going Public, 33.
77 Ibid.
78 Ibid., 35.
Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near.” (Mark 1:14-15 NRSV)

According to Robert Linthicum, the scriptures calls us to grasp God’s intentions for creation, to understand what makes the world the way it is, and then work in this same world in order to influence it toward what God intends it to be. These three tasks of grasping, understanding and working, Linthicum says, are strategic in bringing about the world as God intends it to be.79 “Without grasping God’s intentions for the world, we have no vision. Without appraising the world as it actually is, we lack a realistic context. And without the effort to work with God for the transformation of the world, we have no mission.”80

After his suffering he [Jesus] presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over the course of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. (Acts 1:3 NRSV)

Gregory Pierce in *The World As It Should Be*, asserts that following his resurrection, the kingdom was the one thing Jesus spent his remaining earthly days speaking about: the same thing he had been speaking about from the beginning, the thing he cared about most, the center of his mission. This was the thing that he understood his Father wanted him to do, the reason he had come into the world. Jesus spent these forty days (resurrection to ascension) focusing the disciples’ attention on the work he wanted them to care about the most:—the kingdom of God. This was his vision of the world as it should be, the way the Father would have wanted things to be “on earth as they are in heaven.”81 Pierce continues: “Jesus’ entire ministry and mission can be found in the phrase ‘the kingdom of God’ yet it is one of the most misunderstood and

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80 Ibid.
I agree with Pierce’s insistence that what Jesus had in mind was a radically new way for how humanity is to relate to each other and to the world around us. It is noticeable Pierce says, that as Jesus taught his parables they were not just stories to impart a lesson or to give sound-bites on human relations. More than that, Jesus was imparting principles of how we ought to be living in the world today in order to make it into the world as it should be, the way it is in God’s vision for our world and for his people. For Pierce, this is a fundamentally different world view from that which the Scribes and the Pharisees of Jesus’ day enveloped the Jewish people in, “one that has both inspired and repelled millions of people over the past two millennia. Yet it remains every bit as potent and relevant today, as it did more than two thousand years ago.”

... and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:
“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:17-21 NRSV)

Pierce continues, “The Gospels make it clear that Jesus was on a mission to alleviate injustice, pain, and sorrow of any kind.” The Gospel stories are full of Jesus’ response to people’s needs in the present, not after they have died, for he genuinely believed that whatever the kingdom of God is, it had already been inaugurated in and through his ministry and in the community of people he had gathered around him (Mark 1:15, Luke 17:21). Pierce says,

Every single example, parable and teaching Jesus presents about the kingdom of God focuses on this world. The kingdom is about proclaiming the

82 Ibid., 4.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid., 17.
85 Ibid.
Good News to the poor, the oppressed, the widows, the orphans, the prisoners, the powerless, the disenfranchised – proclaiming not that all injustices they experience will be corrected after they die but that there is a new movement in the world that will make things better for them right now, when and where they really need it.\textsuperscript{86}

If this is not so, Pierce declares, then the kingdom of God is a shallow, empty promise of happiness that is just around the corner if we only patiently persevere and endure our pitiful lives here on earth. Of course, one would question where is our good God’s good news in all that? What kind of kingdom has Jesus been proclaiming and ushering in? “It would have been a sham, and the Son of God would not have wasted his time promoting it,”\textsuperscript{87} Pierce says. Consequently Pierce stresses that the kingdom of God is real and is for today, it is a picture of the way God would have things be in this world as well as in the next.\textsuperscript{88}

The whole point of Jesus’ life, Pierce says, was to reveal to human beings, once and for all, what God is really like and what God wants for us. He showed us what the kingdom of God looks like not only by his teaching but also by how he went about living his life and how he dealt with real-world situations. As we look at Jesus, we see a man who cared about other human beings and their welfare, a man who did as much as he could to alleviate suffering and make life more abundant for others. According to John’s Gospel it began at a wedding (John 2:1-11) when he filled the empty jars to the brim with the best wine and made it available for all the guests to drink. This, Pierce says, is what the kingdom of God is about, that all may “have life and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10 NRSV), starting right here and now; that is the reason Jesus came. The kingdom of God is in and for this world.\textsuperscript{89} It had already begun, in his [Jesus’] time.

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 18.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 18-19.
So, Pierce says, Jesus insisted that the kingdom has come near and began to call persons to follow him and he would make them fishers of people. (Mark 1:15&17). Pierce asks why Jesus needed people in order to bring about the kingdom. Could an all-powerful God not do so on his own, without any help whatsoever? Why are we humans needed to help usher in this kingdom? Pierce offers no definitive answers, except to say that it somehow depends on us, on all humanity. Luke says that “the kingdom of God is among you” (Luke 17:22), which Pierce takes to mean that

The kingdom is present in the work of each one of us, to the extent that we act, and whenever we are acting, on kingdom values. The kingdom of God is present every time a parent makes a sacrifice for a child, an employer treats an employee with justice, a voter agonizes over which candidate to vote for, someone stops to help a homeless person, or stands up to the bully. When these things are done in the Spirit of the Christ, the kingdom has already begun. But it seems to depend on us doing our part.  

Pierce goes on to use the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25 to highlight differing perspectives that people have about the kingdom of God and the place of human action concerning it. The sheep enter it because of their acts of mercy. The goats complain that if they had known it was the kingdom, they would have acted accordingly, with works of mercy of their own. Were they waiting for some future sign or indication of when and how and for whom to act? The sheep are those of us who are living the kingdom of God, Pierce says, right now in our daily lives, whereas the goats are those who are waiting for the kingdom sometime in the future. God has clearly chosen to include human beings in the building of this kingdom, one act at a time. This understanding helps to explain why Jesus said, “Follow me,” why he needed his disciples (and all of us) to understand that we have the responsibility to help bring about the kingdom. Though it has already begun, it is not yet a complete reality and apparently will not be until we (the church) get to working on it. We already know what it looks like, for Jesus has

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90 Ibid., 22.
shown us. We need to develop a sense of urgency in building the world as it should be in our jobs, with our families, among our friends, in our communities and civil society.  

Pierce takes us on a reality check in saying that followers of Jesus do not pretend that the kingdom of God has arrived or that they are doing a great job of bringing it about. Borrowing a phrase from community organizing, he says, “We know that we exist in the world as it is and the world is full of sin, which is the word we Christians use for human weakness and failings.” He continues by reminding us “that sinfulness doesn’t have to be the final word on the subject. . . . Jesus has saved the world from sin, that we have been redeemed from the world as it is by Jesus’ own life, death and resurrection.” Yet is clear that we have a role to play in the working out of our redemption. As Paul wrote to the Philippians,

> Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. (Philip. 2:12-15. NRSV)

The letter of James elaborates further when it insists that our salvation requires action, and faith is not a passive, waiting on heaven to appear and set things right.

> What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill”, and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith and I have works. Show me your faith without works, and I by my works will show you my faith . . . Do you want to be shown, you senseless person, that faith without works is barren? Was not our ancestor Abraham justified by works when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was brought to completion by the works . . . You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. Likewise, was not Rahab the prostitute also justified by works when she welcomed the messengers and sent them out by another road? For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead. (James 2:14-26 NRSV)

91 Ibid., 23-24.
92 Ibid., 67.
93 Ibid.
Pierce therefore asserts that it is these works of the church that will help move the world from what it is to what it should be. Further, he says that if we were to deny that the world is not yet the kingdom of God, we would be both foolish and hypocritical, foolish because it is so obvious and hypocritical because we would be telling people that there is nothing we can do about it when in fact there is. This scriptural imperative Pierce continues, is what puts some Christians at the forefront of numerous efforts to make the world a better place, recognizing that the world is in need of redemption and yet that it has already been redeemed through Jesus’ death and resurrection. We are therefore in that place between the two worlds—having a vision of what the world could be like but recognizing that the world is not yet there.\textsuperscript{94}

Pierce discourses on this place between the two worlds. Social justice is neither commutative justice (about fairness or honesty) nor distributive justice (charitable work); rather, while acknowledging the importance of those two kinds of justice, Pierce says that “social justice is the big enchilada of the kingdom of God. . . . Social justice recognizes the reality of the inequalities and poverty and oppression; the world is sin-filled. . . . The good news is that, because of the teaching and example of Jesus, we now know what the world is supposed to be like, and we are committed to working to make it that way.”\textsuperscript{95} This is the meaning of the great commission in Matthew 28v16-20. Social justice, he continues, “is about changing the basic structures and institutions of our society. It is much easier to be kind or honest or generous with others in our immediate circles of influence than it is to fight [these structures and institutions] to make things right for everyone.”\textsuperscript{96}

Pierce supports his claim by arguing as follows:

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 68-69.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibid., 69.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid.
First of all, it is not always clear what is the right thing to do. Sometimes we think a particular reform of society is what is needed to make the world better place, and we discover that- despite our best efforts- we often fail miserably. Changes we make backfire, or they have unintended consequences, or they eventually outlive their usefulness and become part of the problem. We recognize this, and it humbles us and makes us less self-righteous and more willing to listen to others and work with them on other possible ideas.

Second, social justice, while it strives to make the world as it should be, begins with the world as it is. That means that it is governed by the rules of this world, not the next world. Social justice leads us into the realms of politics, economics, business, law and international relations – the realms of power and influence and money. Christians, like everyone else, cannot afford to be rigid and absolute. We have to work with others to come up with solutions, but we also have to exercise our own power to have our point of view heard in the mix. Social justice is the arena of compromise and the art of the possible. No social justice reform ever brings about the world as it should be completely and finally. It is either a step toward a better world or a step away from it.  

Consequently, Pierce adds, Christians live in the tension of the two worlds at all times, with the vision of the kingdom of God at the forefront of their minds. In the meantime we work in the midst of our current realities, the way things are. To focus too much on the former is to become inflexible and self-righteous. On the other hand, being stuck in the latter, the world as it is, we become cynical and manipulative. Pierce concludes: “It is in the space between the world as it is and the world as it should be that the kingdom of God begins.”  

Linthicum also stresses the need for the people of God to make a frank and honest appraisal of the world as it actually is, if we want to be effective in seeking the transformation of our churches, our communities, our societies. This is the context in which God calls the church to ministry. He reflects on Jeremiah 6:13-15 as God’s response to the sin that had overtaken “Judah’s political, economic and religious leaders who have been acting in such a dominating

97 Ibid., 69-70.
98 Ibid., 70.
99 Ibid.
100 Linthicum, People of Power, 22.
and exploiting manner for so long that both they and the people of the nation have become so infected with greed and the lust to control that everyone has forgotten how to blush.”

For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, ‘Peace, peace’, when there is no peace. They acted shamefully, they committed abomination; yet they were not ashamed, they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I punish them, they shall be overthrown, says the LORD. (Jeremiah 6:13-15 NRSV)

Also,

Therefore I will give their wives to others and their fields to conquerors, because from the least to the greatest everyone is greedy for unjust gain; from prophet to priest everyone deals falsely. They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, ‘Peace, peace’, when there is no peace. They acted shamefully, they committed abomination; yet they were not at all ashamed, they did not know how to blush. (Jeremiah 8:10-12)

In other words, they knew no shame for their actions. They no longer knew or acknowledged right from wrong. Consequently, with such attitudes both national leaders and ordinary citizens had rejected and disobeyed God, so much so that even their worship had become nicely coated with correct liturgical nuance and “had become so commonplace that they don’t even know how to be embarrassed any longer by their own actions.” All is said to be well, while the very foundations of their life as a nation and a people are about to collapse, and the true situation remains invisible to both the leaders and the people. This is but one example of what Linthicum says is the Bible’s series of profound analyses of what went wrong and what keeps going wrong in society to thwart God’s intention for the world. Using other biblical examples,

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101 Ibid., 23.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
Linthicum explicates the forces (economic, political, and religious) that the church faces in society in efforts to help people usher in the kingdom of God.\textsuperscript{104}

Linthicum further says that “God intends economic systems to perceive themselves as stewards of the wealth God has invested in them in order to eliminate poverty.”\textsuperscript{105} Nevertheless, Jeremiah (8:10; 6:13) he says, tells us how those in the economic systems of Israel and Judah were so seduced by their desire for unjust gain that they turned their backs on God and God’s intention for the wealth given to them. The corruption of Israel began with the abuse of money. Corruption begins, Linthicum says, when one no longer sees oneself as a steward of the people’s (society’s) wealth but rather as the owner of private wealth. The natural inclination is therefore to accumulate as much wealth as possible and possess an unholy desire for more (greed). In the case of Israel’s numbed economy, the only way to accumulate more was via the exploitation of others, particularly those who are unable to fend for themselves.\textsuperscript{106} In responding to the rich young ruler in Mark 10, Jesus’ response “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me,” (v.21) highlights the challenge that greed brings to us. The rich man was unwilling, Linthicum says, “to follow the stipulations of the Torah regarding being a steward of that portion of God’s wealth invested in him for the elimination of poverty.”\textsuperscript{107}

According to Linthicum, political systems are intended by God to “maintain a just order in society, with a primary purpose to resist tyranny and oppression.”\textsuperscript{108} Yet he reminds his readers of Jeremiah 6:13 and the context of Israel at the time: “For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely.”

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 23.
\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid., 24.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
Pointing out that “An unjust economics will lead to a politics of the unilateral use of power that will result in the oppression of the people.” Linthicum uses the example of the story of Naboth’s vineyard in 1 Kings 21:1-24.

This incident begins with the greed of King Ahab. He lusts after Naboth’s vineyard, “Give me your vineyard, so that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near my house.” Ahab demands of Naboth (21:2). Naboth refuses because it is his birthright, his inheritance from his ancestors, and the inheritance of his children; he doesn’t have the right to give it up. But this will not dissuade Ahab. He seeks to get it legally. And then when that fails, he obtains it illegally. Working through his wife Jezebel, Ahab has Naboth accused of a serious infraction of Hebrew law, and he is stoned to death by a mob (and without a trial) (21:8-14). Then Ahab simply takes possession of the vineyard (21:15-16). . . .

This is a clear example of economic greed leading to political oppression. . . Economic exploitation, driven by greed, inevitably leads to the abuse of political power resulting in the oppression of those so exploited.

Then he uses a New Testament example (John 11:45-53) of similar abuse of political power, Linthicum describes the context as one in which the Jewish religious leaders, who are also the political and economic leaders of Israel, were subject to Rome’s authority and charged with the responsibility to keep the nation in control. For their efforts they were rewarded with economic gain and political power. In this context Jesus’ teaching and actions became a threat to them.

So the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the council, and said, “What are we to do? This man is performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation.” But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all! You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed.” (John 11:47-50)

According to Linthicum the religious and economic systems of Israel worked in tandem to maintain their status quo under the Roman political system. “Economic exploitation and

109 Ibid., 25.
110 Ibid.
111 Ibid.
religious control lead to political oppression”\textsuperscript{112} of the poor and powerless, even if it results in the death of one of their own. “So from that day on they planned to put him to death. Jesus therefore no longer walked about openly among the Jews” (John 11:53-54a). Linthicum asserts that religious systems have a mandate to draw humanity into relationship with God and each other by strengthening the values of a society through the building of positive human relations. So, he rightly asks, “to what purpose did those in the religious systems of Israel and of the world actually give themselves that caused them to turn their backs on God’s vision and to go bad?”\textsuperscript{113} He refers us back to Jeremiah and the beginning of his “temple speech” in chapter 7.

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: Stand in the gate of the LORD’s house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah, you that enter these gates to worship the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, and let me dwell with you in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words: “This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.” For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors for ever and ever. Here you are, trusting in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, “We are safe!”—only to go on doing all these abominations? Jeremiah 7:1-10 NRSV

Linthicum explains:

Both the rulers and the people of Israel have adopted the exploitive and oppressive actions of the nations around them. Out of their steadily increasing greed and lust for power, they live as they so choose. They steal, murder, commit adultery, enter into contracts in order to heighten their profits, and even worship other gods (7:9-10). . . . By going through the rituals, sacrifices and liturgies of temple worship, they think they assuage their guilt and keep God happy with them. But God is not amused. And so through Jeremiah he calls them to do three

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 25-26.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 26.
things: to repent of their sin, to give up their exploitive and oppressive activities and begin to do justice (7:5-7).\textsuperscript{114}

What is happening here, he says, is a situation where, as before, the economic desire for more and more money leads to the exploitation of the poor, which in turn results in the oppression of the powerless by the political power system. These two systems, economic and political, collude to seduce the religious system into manipulating the trust that the people have placed in it in order to control the people’s responses and so gain conformity from the people.\textsuperscript{115} The religious system “uses its power of trust to gain control over the minds and hearts of the people, convincing them that participating in the greed of the economic systems and in the unilateral power of the political system will lead to enrichment of their lives, not their exploitation and oppression.”\textsuperscript{116} In this way the people are manipulated and controlled.

Linthicum uses the remainder of this Jeremiah passage (vv. 32-34) to show that the result of a people who continually give themselves over to rejecting the ways of their God and who embrace the world as it is with its greed, power, and domination of their leaders and of the heathen nations, is to be rejected and abandoned by God. A nation that was founded upon God’s vision of a world, a society, built upon love of God and love of neighbor,\textsuperscript{117} a society built upon “a politics of justice and an economics of equality” had now degenerated into “a nation of economic exploitation, political oppression and religious domination. And the people would not repent. So God’s only choice was to destroy them and begin all over again with a remnant. And

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 26-27.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 27.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
when that too failed then God chose [the] only One who would build a new people of God that would seek to become a people of Godly power working for the transformation of the world."

Linthicum concludes that as Christians we have three responsibilities.

First we need to have a vision for the world as God intended it to be. Second we need to have a realistic understanding of the world as it actually is. And third we are to work in the world as it actually is in order to draw it toward becoming the world as God desires it to be. . . .

. . . The Hebrew word that best captures God’s intentions for the world is the word shalom. Shalom is a rich word, variously translated into the English words “welfare, completeness, security, prosperity, to be whole, to be perfect, at rest” as well as “peace”. At its fullest, shalom captures the Hebrew vision of human society, the non-human world, and the environment as a relational whole.

There are three primary indicators that shalom is being practiced by the people. Those indicators are lived out in the religious, political and economic systems of any society. The first indicator is that “right religion” is being practiced when its beliefs, values and religious practices bring people and the society itself into an active, dynamic relationship with God.

The second indicator is whether the people and their political system are acting justly and mercifully. The church, as a mediating institution in society, is to be about the task of pressuring its society’s political institutions to be truly just in their management of public life while being particularly compassionate toward those who could become powerless.

The final indicator is the elimination of poverty. Israel and the Church were to perceive their wealth as a gift from God, a common wealth God has invested in them so that they could be good trustees of it. The end for which they were to manage that wealth was the elimination of poverty for everyone in that society.

But the shalom community is not the world as we experience it today. The primary corruption of society begins with money. Whereas God calls a nation to be a steward of wealth in order to eliminate its people’s poverty, spiritual collapse begins when it becomes greedy for wealth and therefore uses it to exploit the people. Second, yielding to economic greed that exploits the poor and the powerless inevitably leads to the practice of a politics of unilateral power that result in the oppression of the people.

. . . therefore the bible tells us, the political and economic systems collude with the religious system . . . to manage and control their (the people’s) responses. Thus imitating their leaders, the people become exploiters of each

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118 Ibid.
other, the oppressors of the powerless, the controllers of their societies. And shalom is rejected by the nation and its people.  

Hence one should ask, what of the kingdom of God? Is it realistic? This thesis claims that it is present and can be experienced in the here and now.

Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here.” Pilate asked him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.” Pilate asked him, “What is truth?” (John 18:36-38 NRSV)

Pierce asserts that in this exchange between Pilate and Jesus we can see Jesus’ view of the kingdom of God: the way the world should be. Jesus correctly understood and lived the way God wants creation to live.  

What is this way? John’s Gospel again provides an answer,

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:34-35 NRSV)

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. (John 15:12-13 NRSV)

Pierces elucidates as follows:

And why do we Christians think his view is the true one? We think so for two reasons. One is the testimony of his disciples. The other is our own experience.

The original disciples were an unlikely and difficult-to-trust group. They seemed especially dense in understanding what Jesus was trying to propose. They were constantly making assumptions and going off in wrong directions, only to be brought back by Jesus. Apparently the kingdom of God was such a radical concept that they couldn’t fathom it. (This is comforting for us contemporary disciples who also have a difficult time fathoming that the world could be the way Jesus described it. We have proved equally dense.)

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121 Pierce, *The World*, 137.
122 Ibid., 138.
Pierce points out that the disciples’ post resurrection experiences gave them a better understanding of Jesus’ mission and consequently of the significance of the kingdom of God. These encounters with him enabled them to become “a courageous band of missionaries that took Jesus’ message to the ends of the world. They wanted people to know . . . God loves us and that we are to love one another.”\(^\text{123}\)

Pierce tells us that the disciples lived their lives modeling that of Jesus, who “never stopped believing, because he knew that what he was saying was the truth. And for his faithfulness, God raised up Jesus from the dead in a real way, one that they all experienced and then shared with the rest of us. That is one reason we believe that Jesus’ idea of the kingdom of God is the way the world should be.”\(^\text{124}\)

The second reason Peirce gives us is

We believe because we have experienced it ourselves. We have all experienced times when the world was in sync with the law of love. Maybe it doesn’t happen often or last long, but there are times when we say, “If the entire world could operate this way, what a great world it would be.” It may have been in an encounter with a parent or spouse or child or sibling or friend or stranger; it may have been at work, when someone treated us justly or we did the same for someone else; it may have been at church, when we put the needs of others before our own; it may have been in our community or civic or political affairs, when we stood for the whole and worked for the common good instead of for our selfish interests. Whenever and wherever it happened, we experienced the kingdom of God, and we knew it to be true.\(^\text{125}\)

Pierce rightly states that such a world view should never be imposed on anyone. In the same way Jesus offered it to Pilate and Pilate had the choice to accept or reject it, and he did reject it for the sake of “political expediency.” We also have that choice as the church, as Jesus’ disciples. Jesus “merely accepted the consequences of Pilate’s rejection . . . but he never gave up his belief that

\(^{123}\) Ibid.
\(^{124}\) Ibid., 138-139.
\(^{125}\) Ibid., 139.
his vision was the right one. . . . Pilate asked him, ‘What is truth?’ (John 18:38). . . . Jesus replied with his life. His vision of the world is true. It is the way the world should be.” 126

126 Ibid., 140.
CHAPTER 3
The Eucharist as Missional

In their article “The Eucharist Changes the World: Effects on Society and Culture,”
Ronald Lewinski and Andrew Liaugminas state:

The Eucharist fundamentally reorients our lives. Through communion with God in the Eucharist, we begin to offer all of our life in spiritual worship. In whichever vocation God calls us, we find strength and direction to live it in the Eucharist. In living the love God has for us in concrete actions toward others, we approach the fullness of eucharistic communion and more intrepidly give witness to the presence of Christ we bear within us. The transformation of self in this way leads to the transformation of society. And for that transformation to happen, the individual must become an ever-more conscious member of the body of Christ.

. . . Part of how Christ reorients our approach to others involves our seeing others with the eyes of Christ and sharing Christ's affectivity toward others. Transformed by the Eucharist, we thus begin to "put on the mind of Christ" (Philippians 2:5) and act toward others with that mindset.127

They refer to Pope Benedict XVI who like Gatta emphasizes “living eucharistically.” The Pope’s thinking goes beyond the individual; he says, in the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation:

Sacramentum Caritatis,

Taking part in the liturgy and receiving the Body and Blood of Christ intensifies and deepens our belonging to the one who died for us (cf. 1 Cor 6:19ff; 7:23). Truly, whoever eats of Christ lives for him. The eucharistic mystery helps us to understand the profound meaning of the communio sanctorum. Communion always and inseparably has both a vertical and a horizontal sense: it is communion with God and communion with our brothers and sisters. Both dimensions mysteriously converge in the gift of the Eucharist. "Wherever communion with God, which is communion with the Father, with the Son and with the Holy Spirit, is destroyed, the root and source of our communion with one another is destroyed. And wherever we do not live communion among ourselves, communion with the Triune God is not alive and true either." Called to be members of Christ and thus members of one another (cf. 1 Cor 12:27), we are a reality grounded ontologically in Baptism and nourished by the Eucharist, a reality that demands visible expression in the life of our communities.

The eucharistic form of Christian life is clearly an ecclesial and communitarian form. Through the Diocese and the parish, the fundamental structures of the Church in a particular territory, each individual believer can experience concretely what it means to be a member of Christ's Body. . . . Secularization, with its inherent emphasis on individualism, has its most negative effects on individuals who are isolated and lack a sense of belonging. Christianity, from its very beginning, has meant fellowship, a network of relationships constantly strengthened by hearing God's word and sharing in the Eucharist, and enlivened by the Holy Spirit. 128

Yet, Lewinski and Liaugminas insist, this “is the exact opposite of the direction our culture pulls us. Our culture drives us to live a ‘non-eucharistic’ life. So to be authentic to our faith, a faith that not only involves fellowship but actually means it, we cannot operate out of an individualistic worldview.”129 To live eucharistically, they say, would be quite counter-cultural in today's society and contrary to mainstream lifestyle. Nonetheless it is what Christian discipleship calls the church to. So they ask, “What does our eucharistic form of life look like in the midst of our world overall? What is the eucharistic quality of life that we, as a whole, are called to live?”130 They suggest that living eucharistically must at its very least be marked by a life of love based upon our treatment of each other as neighbor. In advancing the eucharistic sacrifice as the directive for discipleship and consequently the living of a life of love, Lewinski and Liaugminas speak to one implication of the words of institution at the Eucharist: "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."131 Thus in the one action, “Jesus not only gives himself to us, but mandates us to do the same for others. We must not let his words become routine. If they do, we may become immune to the power of Jesus' mandate.”132 Benedict XVI reminds us:

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129 Lewinski and Liaugminas.

130 Ibid.


132 Lewinski and Liaugminas.
Our communities, when they celebrate the Eucharist, must become ever more conscious that the sacrifice of Christ is for all, and that the Eucharist thus compels all who believe in him to become "bread that is broken" for others, and to work for the building of a more just and fraternal world. Keeping in mind the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, we need to realize that Christ continues today to exhort his disciples to become personally engaged: "You yourselves, give them something to eat" (Mt 14:16). Each of us is truly called, together with Jesus, to be bread broken for the life of the world.\(^{133}\)

If Benedict is right, then one must therefore agree with Lewinski and Liaugminas when they assert,

*We thus cannot say “Amen” to the Eucharistic Prayer and “Amen” when we partake of the consecrated bread and wine and fail to see that we are being asked to commit ourselves to being bread broken and wine poured out for others. Any who catch the radical nature of what they are being asked to do should find the Mass truly invigorating.*

These insights into the Eucharist lie at the heart of the Church's social apostolate. The image of the servant Christ washing his disciples' feet at the Last Supper and instructing them, "I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do" (John 13:15), serves as a lens through which we can penetrate the meaning and social implications of the eucharistic mystery. This mandate to serve others is not just addressed to us individually, but to us corporately as we are, in reality, a community of disciples.\(^{134}\)

This is one of the reasons for this thesis. Many of our members, like Jesus’ disciples prior to the ascension, still fail to understand. Often also many clergy either fail to understand themselves or refuse to lead lay people into it. Benedict elucidates this thinking even further when he says,

*The relationship between the eucharistic mystery and social commitment must be made explicit. The Eucharist is the sacrament of communion between brothers and sisters who allow themselves to be reconciled in Christ, . . . tearing down the wall of hostility which divided them (cf. Eph 2:14). Only this constant impulse towards reconciliation enables us to partake worthily of the Body and Blood of Christ (cf. Mt 5:23-24). In the memorial of his sacrifice, the Lord strengthens our fraternal communion and, in a particular way, urges those in conflict to hasten their reconciliation by opening themselves to dialogue and a commitment to justice. Certainly, the restoration of justice, reconciliation and forgiveness are the conditions for building true peace. The recognition of this fact leads to a determination to transform unjust structures and to restore respect for*

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\(^{133}\) Benedict XVI. SC 88.

\(^{134}\) Lewinski and Liaugminas.
the dignity of all men and women, created in God's image and likeness. Through the concrete fulfilment of this responsibility, the Eucharist becomes in life what it signifies in its celebration. As I have had occasion to say, it is not the proper task of the Church to engage in the political work of bringing about the most just society possible; nonetheless she cannot and must not remain on the sidelines in the struggle for justice.\footnote{Benedict XVI, \textit{SC} 89.}

The church must be enabled to make that next step. The Eucharist is missional. The Eucharist is about sending, about the participants being sent, a theme to be picked up in the next chapter.

John Koenig, in \textit{Soul Banquets}, points out that in the context of a faith community “all our meals will move toward the fulfillment of their missionary potential. At their best they will become a network for the \textit{Missio Dei} rather than just an expression of our congregational family system.”\footnote{John Koenig, \textit{Soul Banquets: How Meals Become Mission in the Local Congregation} (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2007), 90.} Koenig challenges his readers’ “to imagine that the Eucharist is, or might become, a transformative force in our lives,”\footnote{Ibid., 88. For Koenig, Eucharist must “include the proclaimed word in sermon or teaching.”} because the “worship at the Lord’s Table is the \textit{sine qua non} for building up and expanding the Body of Christ in the world.”\footnote{Ibid., 89.} Koenig states that “our eucharists become mission, which is to say that they enhance God’s presence and power and saving purpose for all creation.”\footnote{Koenig, \textit{Feast}, 252.} Subsequently he says that Jesus through his sayings and meal actions is seeking “to reveal God’s kingdom—that is, the expanding rule of God on earth. Jesus understands this reign as an unprecedented outreach of divine healing and forgiveness. Everyone is invited, even the ‘unworthy’.\footnote{Koenig, \textit{Soul Banquet}, 91.}”

William Cavanaugh in \textit{Torture and Eucharist} relates the Eucharist to the tortuous practices of the Pinochet regime in Chile between 1973 and 1990. In one example, Cavanaugh relates the story of two leftists, fleeing the military forces of the regime, who

\footnotesize{135 Benedict XVI, \textit{SC} 89.\footnote{John Koenig, \textit{Soul Banquets: How Meals Become Mission in the Local Congregation} (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 2007), 90.}\footnote{Ibid., 88. For Koenig, Eucharist must “include the proclaimed word in sermon or teaching.”}\footnote{Ibid., 89.}\footnote{Koenig, \textit{Feast}, 252.}\footnote{Koenig, \textit{Soul Banquet}, 91.}}
three days after the coup arrived panicked at the doorstep of a priest’s residence in the center of Santiago. They were received but were not allowed to stay. Back out into the street they would have to try their luck elsewhere. That evening as the community prepared for Mass, a seminarian spoke up and objected to the celebration of the Eucharist under the circumstances. He said Christ had been turned away at the door of the residence. Communion in the body of Christ had already been denied in the denial of the two seeking asylum.\footnote{Cavanaugh, \textit{Torture and Eucharist}, 205.}

Reflecting on some of Cavanaugh’s ideas, one concludes that there ought to be more than merely symbolic relationships between the ritual and what happens in the world as it is. In consequence, one must explore the potential impact of the Eucharist on our society through its transformational impact upon the worshipping community of faith. If there is a belief that the Eucharist makes real the presence of Christ both in the ritual and in the world as it is, then the church transfigured—living into what it already is: the very body of Christ—is capable of effectively resisting the oppressive and destructive forces of (a) human sin (individuals’ rebelling against God as sovereign ruler over all creation) upon the individual and (b) systemic sin (institutional systems—political, economic, and religious—in rebellion against God’s principles of love, justice, and peace for all persons) upon one’s self, one’s community, and one’s nation, in fulfilling the \textit{missio Dei}.\footnote{Ibid., 205-6.} Cavanaugh continues: “In the Eucharist the church is always called to become what it eschatologically is. The Eucharist does make the church \textit{ex opera operato}, but the effects are not always visible due to human sin.”\footnote{Ibid., 206.} Christians, he says, are called to conform their actions, their practice to the “Eucharistic imagination . . . a vision of what is really real, the Kingdom of God, as it disrupts the imagination of violence.”\footnote{Ibid.} This vision disrupts the whole gamut of oppression, crime, greed, poverty, injustice, and corruption in society.
Consequently, if the Eucharist does make real the presence of Christ, then it is full of life and brings life to God’s people (“I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly,” John 10:10). It will seek to animate the struggles against racism, oppression, economic domination, political injustice, religious ineptness, and environmental degradation. It can strengthen the resolve of individuals and communities, give life to movements that confront these systemic evils, and bring hope to situations that seem hopeless in the world as it is. Thus the Eucharist can enable our church to live out, daily, the Five Marks of Mission expressed by the Anglican Communion:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
- To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- To respond to human need by loving service
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.  

This is what Jesus came to do and what the church—God’s transfigured people, (reminded of who they are and whose they are), through the Eucharist—is called to do, in our world as it is, that the world may become as God intended it to be. Koenig puts it this way: “we may think of the Eucharist as a transformative force that moves outward, beyond its usual location in a Sunday morning service, to change things . . .”  

To be on God’s mission, about God’s business, is the church’s business.  

Mere participation in the Holy Eucharist will not in and of itself cause God’s people to automatically carry out God’s mission. As Koenig states, “No combination of late-twentieth-century statements on liturgy and mission have so far managed to spark a broad-based movement

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146 Koenig, Soul Banquets, 89.
Consequently he suggests five perspectives—promise, presence, practice, abundance and co-missioning for redemption—as “five doorways . . . of what eucharistic mission might signify for the church.”

First, the doorway of God’s promise is that all are welcome to be participants in the kingdom. As has been said earlier, the Gospel references to the kingdom of God have often and easily given the idea of a future event or location. For example,

> While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, “Take; this is my body.” Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.” (Mark 14:25 NRSV)

Koenig, expounding Mark 14:25, says that

> We do not take these words of Jesus as a vow of abstinence but as a vision of the heavenly banquet at which Jesus expects soon to celebrate the fullness of his messianic rule. But Jesus also holds out this near future to his disciples as they share in the bread and wine that symbolize his ministry – especially his impending sacrifice. . . . If they caught any of Jesus’ meaning, they would have experienced high hopes for an imminent completion of God’s redemptive work (the final coming of the kingdom) and their own places in it. Jesus intends the stirring up of great expectations, not only at this last supper, but in all subsequent meals where he appears as the Risen One or is honored by the church for his mighty acts and addressed in prayers and hymns even when he cannot be seen. . . . We have no reason to believe that after he was raised from the dead Jesus’ longing and labor for the world’s redemption in any way diminished. On the contrary, we see this mission intensifying in the church’s Eucharistic meals, What believers do by celebrating Eucharistic meals is to join Christ’s ministry for the life of the world . . . – not apart from the church but through the agency of the church as Christ’s body. This means that something of huge importance will always be taking place in our table liturgies, whether or not we feel personally edified on each occasion.

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148 Ibid. Koenig claims that in the New Testament, celebrations of meals with Jesus were considered basic to full participation by believers in God’s ongoing redemption of the world. 215-16.
149 Ibid., 218-9.
Koenig further adds that the promise embodied in the Eucharist opens itself up for the healing or well-being of the world—in other words, its redemption. We Christians have the privilege, he says, of offering ourselves as living sacrifices to aid that reality.\textsuperscript{150} Indeed, \textit{The Book of Common Prayer of the Church in the Province of the West Indies} (CPWI BCP) offers the following prayer as a prelude to the Great Thanksgiving:

\begin{quote}
Father, we offer you these gifts which you have given us; this bread, this wine, this money. With them we offer ourselves, our lives, and our work, to become through your Holy Spirit a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice. As this bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ, so may we and all your people become channels of your love; through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.\textsuperscript{151}
\end{quote}

Koenig, in seeking to emphasize his view, points to the World Council of Churches’ document, \textit{Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry}, (BEM), which states

\textit{The eucharist . . . is a representative act of thanksgiving and offering on behalf of the whole world. The eucharistic celebration demands reconciliation and sharing among all those regarded as brothers and sisters in the one family of God and is a constant challenge in the search for appropriate relationships in social, economic and political life (Matt. 5:23f., I Cor. 10:16f; I Cor. 11:20-22; Gal. 3:28). All kinds of injustice, racism, separation and lack of freedom are radically challenged when we share in the body and blood of Christ. Through the eucharist the all-renewing grace of God penetrates and restores human personality and dignity. . . . As participants in the eucharist, therefore, we prove inconsistent if we are not actively participating in this ongoing restoration of the world's situation and the human condition. The eucharist shows us that our behaviour is inconsistent in face of the reconciling presence of God in human history: we are placed under continual judgment by the persistence of unjust relationships of all kinds in our society, the manifold divisions on account of human pride, material interest and power politics and, above all, the obstinacy of unjustifiable confessional oppositions within the body of Christ.}\textsuperscript{152} 

\textit{BEM} further challenges our purpose for participating in the Eucharist and our level of expectation from such participation when it states, “The very celebration of the eucharist is an instance of the Church's participation in God's mission to the world. This participation takes

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid., 219.
\textsuperscript{151} Church in the Province of the West Indies, Book of Common Prayer, 126.
\end{footnotesize}
everyday form in the proclamation of the Gospel, service of the neighbour, and faithful presence
in the world. . . .”153 Further “as it becomes one people, sharing the meal of the one Lord, the
eucharistic assembly must be concerned for gathering also those who are at present beyond its
visible limits, because Christ invited to his feast all for whom he died.”154 In so doing the
Eucharist and the church’s participation in it open God’s promise to the world, for all are
welcome into the kingdom, because “God so loved the world,” not merely the church. Jesus
himself exemplifies this welcome: “Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to
listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, ‘This fellow
welcomes sinners and eats with them’” (Luke 15:1-2 NRSV)

A second doorway is that of presence. This has always been a difficult and controversial
perspective, particularly the idea of Christ’s real presence at the Eucharist. John Polkinghorne in
The Faith of a Physicist, for example, gives this perspective: “Just as the experience of salvation
in Christ was so vivid for the early church that theories of atonement were a late development in
its thinking, so the real presence of Christ in the sacrament was experienced for centuries before
divisive debates about its mode and nature began to perplex the Christian world.”155 Koenig
asserts, “In all honesty, we have to admit that we do not often feel altogether embraced by the
Risen One at table. . . . He knows how incomplete his presence with us now remains. God’s
kingdom has not come with finality. Much evil continues to exist. And so Jesus, on the other side
of the resurrection, longs for our presence with him there (Matt. 26:29; John 17:24). . . . Every
Eucharistic celebration exposes the ‘not yet’ of our lives in Christ . . . .”156 Koenig nevertheless
expresses this intersection of the Eucharist, Christ’s presence, and the subsequent impact on

153 Ibid., 25.
154 Ibid., 26.
Press, 1994), 158.
156 Koenig, Feast, 225.
world and community affairs by considering Jesus’ prayer in John 17:21-23, stating, “Clearly Jesus expects an answer to his prayer in the present world order . . . and so the union of believers with himself and the Father can to some degree take shape on the stage of human history even now as a sign to the unbelieving world.” Polkinghorne asserts that,

> From the first, the Eucharist has had this character of “already but not yet”: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Cor. 11:26). It is both the commemoration of Calvary and the anticipation of the heavenly banquet of the kingdom of God . . . the mysterious but undeniable experience of the sense of meeting of past events and future hope of the present reality of the Eucharist.

Regis Duffy stirs our minds even more on this issue of presence when he speaks about action-words. These, he says, act as signs, particularly when coming from a prophet, and “are filled with the power and presence of God . . . calling out the presence of his people. These are no idle rituals but effect what they signify.” He records the following:

> When Mother Teresa stood up to speak at the Eucharistic Congress in Philadelphia a few years ago, she took some bread, broke it and extended it to the audience, saying: “This is the bread of the poor.” This simple action and explanation was transformed by her presence into a prophetic action-word that challenged her listeners to a response in presence and service. In much the same way, the prophets of the Old and New Testament performed an action and gave its explanation. The message was always the same: a call to covenant people to come back to God. This action-word of a prophet is called an *oth* in Hebrew-literally, a “sign.”

He also points us to examples from Scripture, namely Isaiah walking naked around Jerusalem (Isaiah 20), Agabus with Paul (Acts 21:11-14), and Jesus, whose presence effected through action-words made impressions upon those around him. “They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Mark 1:22 NRSV) and “Then the temple police went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, ‘Why did you

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157 Ibid., 226.
159 Duffy, *Real Presence*, 84.
160 Ibid.
not arrest him?’ The police answered, ‘Never has anyone spoken like this!’” (John 7:46 NRSV). Jesus’ listeners and observers were being invited or drawn into the presence of God.\footnote{Ibid.} So Duffy asserts that references to presence are vague until a name is attached to that presence. “To be called by name is to be called to presence.”\footnote{Ibid., 85.} Thus, for Duffy, presence goes beyond the commonly accepted Roman Catholic understanding that real presence stands for “Christ’s presence in the Eucharist,” pointing to an older usage being that of “covenant presence. . . .


The temptation remains to this day. As Duffy says “If during the preceding week, our familial and professional lives have permitted us to be only minimally aware of and responsive to our own and others presence, there is no theological reason for supposing that this will suddenly change in church.”\footnote{Ibid.}

Koenig notes that we daily complain about our lives being inundated with numerous distractions from consumerism, religion, politics, and social conditions, as clouded over by social media and other technological demands for our attention and resources, and as beset by worries that seem overwhelmingly huge.\footnote{Koenig, Feast, 228.}

In the midst of such conflicts and crises, Duffy looks at Moses and Paul. After trying to dodge God’s call on his life from the burning bush (Exodus 3), Moses raised the question of
God’s name. God’s reply was, says Duffy, “the name that describes his active presence in the world. . . . Furthermore, this is a classic instance of name and ‘remembering’ (ZKR) being coupled. In Hebrew thought, name is associated with presence. To ‘remember’ the name of God in worship is not, as in Western thought, to call it to mind or to recite it, but to praise and proclaim it.”

Duffy adds that this encounter also calls into question “Moses’ own presence before a God of presence.” When God said to Moses in Exodus 3:15; “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’: This is my name for ever, and this my title for all generations,” Duffy asserts that Moses, “startled by the demands of God . . . had to gather his resources to be present in this new stage. This task would both clarify Moses’ past experience and stretch the dimensions of his experience. To ‘remember’ such a God in worship was to accept his tasks in life.”

Duffy says that Saul (Paul) was similarly called by God, by name, “and challenged to an unforeseen task by the Lord (Acts 9; 22:5-21; 26:12-18) . . . . Paul is pictured as having readily accepted this radically different vision.” The same question of presence occurs with Paul as with Moses. Paul’s response to God’s presence was “focused by the tasks of mission that were the very doorway to his conversion. These tasks not only sprang from God’s initiating and enabling presence but presented unanticipated choices that deeply disturbed the self-serving visions of Moses and Paul.” Faith is a response to the living God. “Empowered and liberated by his presence, we become more ‘present’ in the deepest sense of the word. This growing willingness and ability to be present will inevitably touch the lives of others and be expressed in

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168 Duffy, Real Presence, 86.
169 Ibid.
170 Ibid.
171 Ibid., 86-7.
172 Ibid., 87.
symbol. The dynamic character of symbol, however, rests not only on the liberating and gratuitous quality of God’s presence, but in its ability to transform our experience.”

Duffy asserts, “The understanding of symbol within the Christian tradition has always tried to safeguard the unique action and meaning that God’s presence provokes.” Hence, in writing of the power of symbols of presence, Duffy says, “If we wish to enter honestly into the meaning of any symbol (such as the Eucharist), we must be willing to deal with our complex experience more perceptively. Symbols are only transforming when they have a whole person to transform. Ritualists can be satisfied with the external actions of symbol (kneeling, singing, etc.) and the resulting satisfied feelings.” This is so because “Ritualism re-enforces the self-serving and consistent mis-readings of the ritualists’ own experience. Secondly, he states that “religious symbols always call us to redemptive presence by deepening the meaning we give our experience and revealing God’s action there.”

Thirdly, Duffy concludes by saying, “Symbols of presence evoke new communal and individual commitment to God’s Kingdom from those who are not yet fully redeemed. . . . Moses and Paul were not invited to be spectators at God’s appearance, nor are we. God’s presence is enabling so that our presence may be serving. But such service is not demanded of us apart from our experience.” Duffy summarizes thus:

God’s presence is always a question of his meaning challenging ours. Whether we think of Moses, Paul or ourselves, an honest experience of God has always called into question the intentions, values and commitments that make up the meaning of a person’s life. But such meanings also constitute shared presence and community. For God’s presence in the Old Testament is a covenant presence which proposes meanings that will unite a divided, alienated people. The new covenant people are brought together by the meaning of Jesus’ life and death. To

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173 Ibid.
174 Ibid., 99.
175 Ibid., 94-5.
176 Ibid., 98.
177 Ibid.
178 Ibid., 100.
Duffy uses his examples of Dorothy Day and Mother Teresa, who lived lives brought together by the meaning of Jesus’ life and death, and whose lives had such meaning that they bridged numerous divisions in our world today. They were able to do this because they were perceived as committed persons “who have worked through a series of conflicts and crises with the help of God’s justifying actions in their lives. In turn, they continue to fulfill a prophetic role in the Christian community and the world at large. Their worship and sacrament affect even the unbelieving onlooker because they sum up the meaning and presence of their lives.”

Koenig says that if the biblical witnesses (especially the New Testament and particularly Paul and the Corinthian church) are accurate, then “we have in the Eucharist an opportunity to focus on who we are apart from the powers of this age, on our own ‘real presence.’ Entering into God’s promise with our neighbors around the table can bring us home to ourselves . . . in ways that reveal to each of us our distinctive identity and purpose within God’s redemptive plan.”

This process begins with seeing ourselves as God’s beloved and seeing our neighbors whom we are called upon to love as ourselves, as equally beloved of God.

Third, regarding practice Koenig discusses the manner and content with which a meal (eucharistic) liturgy is performed. He does raise some questions: Should we, or how do we allow space for the Holy Spirit’s spontaneous influence to be manifested so “that a rich array of charismata can come into play? . . . Can we begin to see our Eucharistic services, from start to finish, as missionary events during which visitors are brought closer to the Body of Christ and the Kingdom, whatever the level of their participation, and we the so-called insiders are built up

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179 Ibid., 103.
180 Ibid., 104.
181 Koenig, *Feasts*, 228.
for our vocation as witnesses of the gospel?"\(^{182}\) Do we ever reflect seriously upon how our current eucharistic liturgies are executed with questions like these in mind?

Fourth, Koenig relates the doorway of abundance to that of the abundant life that springs from eucharistic worship by suggesting that early believers, if asked about their experience of abundant life during their eucharistic meals, would point to the following dimensions of such meals:

Praise, thanksgiving and self-offering; clarification and renewal of vocation; sharing and exchanging of spiritual gifts; strengthening of faith through personal testimonies; mutual honoring and upbuilding of one another in love; repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation; refreshment and healing; tastes and visions of God’s kingdom; enjoyment of Jesus’ presence; communion with the hosts of heaven; discernment and articulation of the boundaries of this age and the next and God’s will for the present; welcoming visitors, both believers and unbelievers. Through the centuries interpreters have repeatedly highlighted these features of the church’s communal life; and we hardly want to argue that they occurred mostly in the context of table worship. \(^{183}\)

Koenig continues by saying that:

Yet the New Testament witnesses . . . do regularly associate manifestations of richness in Christ with eucharistic meals (see esp. 2 Cor. 8:9), perhaps more than any other repeatable event known to us in the church’s formative years. This suggests at the very least that practicing such rituals carelessly or infrequently or not at all would have seemed to the earliest believers a kind of mindless self-deprivation. In their minds, such laxity would not only result in the stunting of personal growth for individuals believers; it would also cripple the church’s universal mission.\(^{184}\)

So for Koenig, “Eucharistic praise and self-offering merge with Eucharistic mission; and abundant life spills out into the world (Rom. 12:1-21; 15:1-13).”\(^{185}\)

In the fifth and final of Koenig’s doorways of eucharistic mission, that of co-missioning, he challenges us to embrace all the previous doorways in seeing that “The Eucharistic Christ

\(^{182}\) Ibid., 237.

\(^{183}\) Ibid., 240-1.

\(^{184}\) Koenig, \textit{Feasts}, 240-1.

\(^{185}\) Ibid., 248.
comes to us as a triumphant figure, but he still carries the cross and he has work to do. He leads our praise and thanksgiving, to the glory of God; and then precisely in our communion with him, we are commissioned to join him as he continues with God’s redemption of the world.”¹⁸⁶

Yet Koenig continues, as a consequence of the worship that occurs during and within the gathering of the faith community, there is (or ought to be) “a strengthening of believers for their vocation outside the walls of the church. And this strengthening can itself be understood as redemptive mission to the world. Wherever evil is conquered by good and God’s name is hallowed, the new creation grows and the kingdom comes closer. . . . The whole world benefits from these small decisions by ordinary saints.”¹⁸⁷ This too is mission.

Linthicum takes a brief look at John 21:1-14. This post-resurrection story provides us with a picture of the church as having shared in the body and the blood of Christ.¹⁸⁸ He writes:

The boat is obviously the church, Jesus’ little community of believers. . . . we see on the shore the risen Christ. He calls to us, and we “cast our nets” into the chaotic sea of the world, seeking to make a difference, seeking to win people to that Lord who stands on the beach, seeking to work for the transformation of the world. . . .

As Jesus’ body, the church performs this mission for Jesus. As we do, we find the Lord awaiting us, a morning banquet prepared for us. He accepts for that banquet the offerings we add to it. And then, as his community gathered around our Lord, Jesus takes the bread and breaks it, he takes the cup and shares it, and we commune together as one joyous family that is now reunited forever! Thus the countercultural Christ has created his countercultural community, and through it transformed the world.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 250.
¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 253.
¹⁸⁸ Linthicum, *People of Power*, 60.
¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 60-61.
After The Meal What’s Next?

If the Church is to impart to the world a message of hope and love, of faith, justice, and peace, something of this should become visible, audible, and tangible in the church itself. (cf Acts 2:42-47; Acts 4:32-35)

- David Bosch, _Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission._ 190

Bradshaw and Johnson point to what I would consider a very poignant aspect of Jesus’ recorded hospitality surrounding his meals. Here I believe we can see Jesus being very visible, audible, and tangible in imparting a message of love, hope and justice. These scholars refer to Jesus’ seeming disregard for some of the established mealtime customs of the pious society of his day. His disciples were criticized for apparent uncleanness (eating with unwashed hands), and Jesus himself was described as “a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34). He willingly accepted dinner invitations from those whom the pious in the society would regard as defiling his rabbinic presence (Matt 9:10-13; Mark 2:15-17; Luke 5:29-32). Hence in his teaching and in action, Jesus consistently portrayed the kingdom of God at the end time by using the Jewish traditional image of a great banquet at which all who enjoyed God’s favor, including perceived outsiders, would feast together at the same table (Matt 8:11-12; Luke 13:28-29). Jesus, it would appear, was relocating the boundary markers set by the contemporary arbiters of behavior and in doing so dismantled the conventional wisdom and norms of that society. 191 In so doing, Jesus was already signifying that the sharing of a meal symbolizes that all are welcome: none is to be excluded from God’s love and grace. The symbolic efficacy of sharing a meal is intended to offer hope—reconciliation of God with the world—God’s _shalom_. Was Jesus already reshaping the thinking of his disciples toward the

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190 Bosch, _Transforming Mission_, 414.
rebuilding/reestablishment of the *shalom* community that God had envisioned for the Israelites from the days of Abraham and Moses?

In their examination of the Corinthian church’s meal practices in chapter 11 of Paul’s first letter to them, Bradshaw and Johnson advance this argument:

Not all who followed him seemed to have understood his message in quite such a radical way, however. This seems to have been a particular problem in the Church in Corinth, where Paul criticizes the Christians both because of the existence of divisions within their community and more particularly because at their communal meals some would go ahead and eat and drink too much while others go hungry. This failure to recognize the fundamental equality of all and to share what they have with one another leads him to conclude that “when you assemble together, it is not to eat the Lord’s supper.” (1 Cor. 11:20)—a designation for the event not otherwise found in the New Testament and hardly known in other early Christian literature\(^{192}\). What is envisioned here is obviously a substantial meal in the home of one of the wealthier church members to which individuals brought their own contributions of food . . . which explains why the host failed to delay the serving of the meal until all were present and what there was to eat could shared equally between the rich and poor . . . . The meal was the Eucharist, or rather in this instance was failing to be the Eucharist because missing from it was the practical expression of love and care for all, and especially the poor, that was meant to be a vital dimension of Christian eating together. A similar failure to live out Jesus’ radical message can be seen behind the letter of James, where the author censures the recipients for showing partiality to the rich in their midst while despising the poor in their assemblies (James 2:1-9).

That provision of sustenance for the poor was meant to be an essential part of the shared life of Christians is also shown by the reference in Acts 6:1-6.\(^{193}\)

It cannot be business as usual for the church in our current postmodern, pluralistic, secular, and ecumenical environment. One would therefore agree with Thomas and Wondra who, writing in their *Introduction to Theology*, state that “the church cannot cling to the institutional forms inherited from the age of Christendom but must be prepared to assume forms required by

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\(^{192}\) See *Apostolic Tradition* 12.1 and Tertullian, *Ad uxorem*, 2.4.

\(^{193}\) Bradshaw and Johnson, *Eucharistic Liturgies*, 10-11.
the rapidly changing shapes of need and hope in the world.” Furthermore the church, in order to respond proactively and relevantly to these changes, must be prepared to learn from those who study and interpret the new social, economic and political structures and processes in the contemporary world, and the ways in which these structures help or hinder human fulfillment. In addition, it means that we have to see the inherited residential parish structure as ministering primarily to the private and family life of people rather than to their public life in the economic and political spheres. It is important to note (and understand) that in the West today, private and family life is on the passive or receiving end of society and is determined largely by decisions made in the public arena.

This is where the church’s theology has to become missional and consequently be more active in the public arena in order to be relevant and effective.

In response to the question, ‘Whose mission is it?’ One answer comes from a quotation attributed to Rowan Williams, former archbishop of Canterbury at the Lambeth Conference in 1998: “It’s not the church of God that has a mission, but the God of mission who has a church.” Additionally, the catechism of the American 1979 Book of Common Prayer asks,

Q. What is the mission of the church?
A. The mission of the Church is to restore [bring] all people to [into] unity with God and [with] each other in Christ.

Q. How does the Church pursue its mission?
A. The Church pursues its mission as it prays and worships, proclaims the Gospel, and promotes justice, peace, and love. [and by its own transformation into the likeness of Christ proclaims His transforming presence]

Q. Through whom does the Church carry out its mission?
A. The church carries out its mission through the ministry [various ministries] of all its members.

If the mission of the church is to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ, then Polkinghorne’s assertion that “the church is the locus of Christian praxis, the

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194 Thomas and Wondra, Introduction to Theology, 265.
195 Ibid.
197 1979 BCP, 855. Italicized words are those included in the CPWI BCP in its catechism, responding to the same identical questions; 401-2.
exercise of a communal commitment to the life of obedience and witness to way of Christ,” is definitely relevant here. He continues, “We all know that Marx says that the point is to change the world, not to simply interpret it, but the two activities are, in fact, inextricably related. . . . We must interpret in order to have a discriminating basis for action; we must be prepared to act in order to demonstrate commitment to our belief.” Good intentions without proper discernment of the context of our intention is both foolhardy and dangerous.

In Going Global with God, Titus Presler says that being on God’s mission is about “joining in what God is up to in the world. . . . God’s sending,” further claiming that Scripture teaches that “God sends God’s very self” into the world not to condemn the world but to redeem the world—in other words, to engage humanity through God’s self, the incarnate Word.

During my years in youth choir, we wanted to strengthen our bible knowledge and improve our use of the bible skills, so we worked through a book called Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God by Henry Blackaby and Claude King. In it was this statement, “Watch to see where God is working and join Him,” which is based on John 5:17, 19-20.

But Jesus answered them, “My Father is still working, and I also am working.” For this reason the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because he was not only breaking the sabbath, but was also calling God his own Father, thereby making himself equal to God. . . . Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise. The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished.” (NRSV)

Certainly this is an invitation for us to join the Son in the work the Son has seen the Father doing. Presler elaborates further:

198 Polkinghorne, Faith of a Physicist, 160.
199 Ibid., 160-61.
200 Ibid., 161.
God’s self-sending climaxes in Jesus, the Word become flesh and living among us. The sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost universalizes and perpetuates God’s self-sending. It echoes the many prophetic witnesses to the Spirit’s coming in the Old Testament, only now the Holy Spirit’s coming is identified with a specific historical outpouring on the entire community of Jesus’ followers in Jerusalem (Luke 24:47-49). The sending of the Spirit, God’s self-sending into the Jesus movement, was intended to empower the movement for the work it was to do as a sent community, that is, for mission.

Yes, an entity that soon was called the church, the “called out ones,” came into being. Yet it was called out, called into being, for the sake of that which it was so to do, the mission of God in the world.203

For emphasis, Presler points us to Swiss theologian Emil Brunner, who states in The Word and the World, “Mission work does not arise from any arrogance in the Christian Church; mission is its cause and its life. The Church exists by mission, just as fire exists by burning. Where there is no mission, there is no Church; and where there is neither Church nor mission, there is no faith.”204

Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” (John 20:21-22 NRSV)

Consequently, reflecting upon what I call “the trinitarian mission mandate,” Presler points to the self-sending of God, the first person of the Trinity, from whose mission proceeds the mission of the Son and of the Spirit—the sending of Jesus Christ, the sending of the Holy Spirit—and consequently the sending of the church; all are directly and intimately linked to each other.205 With Jesus breathing upon the disciples and infusing them with the Holy Spirit, Presler says we can see “one continuous out-breathing of God that begins with God exhaling into the first earth creature in the second creation story, continued through the prophets’ many in-fillings,

203 Presler. Going Global, 41-42.
205 Presler. Going Global, 42.
culminated in the Word made flesh, and then continued as the Spirit came on the disciples and blew them out into the world in a movement continuing through to our own day.”

So Presler offers this definition of Christian mission: “Christian mission is the activity of sending and being sent, by God and by communities, across significant boundaries of human social experience to bear witness in word and deed to God’s action in Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit,” a definition that he says is “grounded in Christianity’s scriptural, theological and historical tradition” whereby sending and being sent are fundamental to the word mission. God initiates the sending, and the faith community responds by being sent itself. Implicit in this mode of sending is the community’s confidence (faith) that God is directly and intimately involved in the sending process and all that it entails. Presler goes on: “Mission historically concerned the sending within the Trinity: God the Father sent God the Son on mission into the world, and the Holy Spirit was likewise sent to empower the church.” In the New Testament, “Jesus sends out the twelve disciples, who are consequently termed apostoloi, apostles meaning ‘sent ones’ (Luke 9:1-2, 10)” Presler identifies the declaration of Jesus to his apostles in Acts 8 that “You shall be my witnesses” as the content of what Christians do in mission. He therefore concludes, “Mission involves sending and being sent. Significant boundaries of human social experience are crossed in mission.” He adds that “mission that seeks reconciliation in a world of difference . . . is not an optional direction for mission to

206 Ibid.
207 Ibid.
208 Ibid.
209 Ibid.
210 Ibid.
212 Presler, Going Global, 42.
213 Ibid., 43.
214 Ibid., 47.
take.” Subsequently, the Christian church must more and more embrace its responsibility to work with God for the redemption of the world as it is to make it into the world as God intended it to be.

Having declared what the mission of the church is, the 1979 BCP’s catechism then states that this mission is carried out “through the ministry of all its members” (855). This ministry includes all persons who participate in the eucharistic worship life of the church: word and sacrament (in which singing, praying, confession, offering and sending are all a part).

Almighty and everliving God, we thank you for feeding us with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ; and for assuring us in these holy mysteries that we are living members of the Body of your Son and heirs of your eternal kingdom. And now, Father, send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord. To Him, to you, and to the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and forever. Amen.

This is a call for the transfigured people of God who, having been graced with the Word and the body and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, are being sent by the church, to be the church in the world by working in the world as it is, to transform it into the world as God intended it to be, by fulfilling its mandate, the missio Dei.

Linthicum expounds upon Pierce’s radical view of the kingdom of God (see chapter 2 above) by introducing the word *shalom*, a word that Linthicum says “best encapsulates the world as God intended. . . . [t]he word used most often throughout Scripture to describe God’s intention for the world . . . It is a description of the people of God as the shalom community.” Shalom, he says, is used 397 times in the Hebrew Scriptures. *Eiréne*, its Greek counterpart, he says is

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215 Ibid., 52.
216 1979 BCP, 366.
218 “The concept of *shalom* (the Hebrew word usually translated “peace” in the Bible) implies much more than mere absence of conflict. At root *shalom* means wholeness or well-being. . . . It is also used as a general greeting, as a farewell; It is associated with other terms, namely security, prosperity-material well-being, good harvests and safety. . . . Peace is
found in the New Testament 89 times. The word permeated both Hebrew and early Christian society. Linthicum continues:

In order to capture the unique nuance of the Hebrew word as it is used in specific contexts, translators have had to use the following English words: weal, welfare, completeness, to cause to be at peace, to make peace, peace offering, at rest, at ease, secure, safe, to finish well, to prosper, to be whole, to be perfect, to be victorious. In other words, in any given context, shalom can mean any of the above English words.

The same is true to a lesser degree of the Greek equivalent of shalom, eiréné. While not as rich a word as shalom, eiréné still requires other English words besides peace to translate it, including unity, concord, and to desire peace.

What this comparison reveals to us is that shalom and eiréné do not simply mean what the English word peace means. The English word is essentially a negative word—that is, the word peace is expressing the absence of something—war, conflict, violence or confrontation. Therefore peace exists in conflict’s place. But the Hebrew word shalom goes far beyond that.

Shalom . . . at its fullest, . . . captures the Hebrew vision of human society, the non-human world, and even the environment in an integrated and relational whole where “the wolf and the lamb shall feed together and the lion shall eat straw like an ox” (Isaiah 65:25). Shalom is the theology of hope of Israel and the early church, its vision of what some day will be.

Walter Brueggemann, in his book Peace, states that

The central vision of world history in the Bible is that all of creation is one, every creature in community with every other, living in harmony and security toward joy and well being of every other creature. In the community of faith in Israel, this vision is expressed in the affirmation that Abraham is the father of Israel and every person is his child (see Genesis 15:5; Isaiah 41:8; 51:2). Israel has a vision of all people drawn into community around the will of its God. In the New Testament, the church has a parallel vision of all persons being drawn under the lordship and fellowship of Jesus (Matthew 28:16-20; John 12:32) and therefore into a single community (Acts2:1-11).

As Linthicum did, Brueggemann suggests that shalom is the term that most closely captures the essence of wholeness, togetherness, harmony and prosperity in an all-embracing

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also found in conjunction with moral concepts . . . .with truth in the sense of faithfulness. Above all, it is parallel with righteousness. . . . In the NT the Greek word . . . Eirene acquires much of the range of shalom, albeit with specifically Christian understanding.” Joana Dewey, “Peace” in The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary, 763.

219  Linthicum, People of Power, 4-5.
220  Ibid., 5.
221 Walter Brueggemann, Peace (St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2001), 13.
vision that expresses the “many dimensions and subtle nuances: love, loyalty, truth, grace, salvation, justice, blessing, righteousness.”

_Shalom_ is the substance of the biblical vision of one community embracing all creation. It refers to all those resources and factors that make communal harmony joyous and effective.

The origin and destiny of God’s people are to be on the road of _shalom_. . . .

. . . The vision of wholeness, which is the supreme will of the biblical God, is the outgrowth of a covenant of shalom (see Ezekiel 34:25), in which persons are bound not only to God but to one another in a caring, sharing, rejoicing community with none to make them afraid.

Brueggemann says this communal vision is an important part of the dynamism of _shalom_ and that we need to understand its power. For him, _shalom_ is:

_A vision encompassing all reality_, expressed in the mystery of creation expressed in the mystery and majesty of creation images:

[without _shalom_]

The earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep. (Genesis 1:2a)

[with _shalom_]

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, The calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like an ox. . . They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain. (Isaiah 11:6-7, 9a)

[from chaos to _shalom_]

A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. . . .and they woke him up and said to him, ‘Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?’ He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, ‘Peace! Be still!’ Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. (Mark 4:37-39)
The Greek word translated peace here means quiet rather than shalom, but the passage still applies. The storm at sea represents all the same ominous, chaotic forces presented in Genesis 1:2. And the word of Jesus in Mark serves the same purpose as the hovering spirits of God in Genesis 1:2, namely, to bring fundamental disorder under God’s rule—into harmony—so that light, life, and joy become possible. Creation in Genesis and by Jesus (see Colossians 1:17) is the establishment of *shalom* in a universe that apart from God’s rule is disordered, unproductive, and fulfilling.\(^{224}\)

Brueggemann also discusses *shalom* in the context of social disorder. He writes, “The absence of *shalom* and lack of harmony are expressed in social disorder as evidenced in economic inequality, judicial perversion, and political oppression and exclusivism.”\(^{225}\) Reflecting on such biblical texts as Micah 2:1-2 and Amos 4:1, he asserts that the prophets of God continually voiced God’s disapproval of these offenses “not simply as ethical violations but as the disruption of the community God wills for his people in history. Their call is continually a call for righteousness and justice:”\(^{226}\)

> Seek good and not evil, that you may live;  
> and so the Lord, the God of hosts, will be with you, just as you have said.  
> Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate;  
> (Amos 5:14-15a NRSV)

> Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean;  
> remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes;  
> cease to do evil, learn to do good;  
> seek justice, rescue the oppressed,  
> defend the orphan, plead for the widow.  
> (Isaiah1:16-17 NRSV)

Consequently, such a community of *shalom* is built around the consistent practices of righteousness and justice being dominant characteristics. In such a community the oppressed and the marginalized regain their dignity, find that they have a voice, and so experience power as

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\(^{224}\) Ibid., 15-16.  
\(^{225}\) Ibid., 16.  
\(^{226}\) Ibid., 17.
recognized members of this community (Psalm 34:1-4; Isaiah 32:16-17). Alternately, where there is injustice and unrighteousness there is no \textit{shalom}, no well-being (Isaiah 48:22; 57:21).\footnote{Ibid., 18.}

Brueggemann declares, \textit{"Shalom can mean many things. . . . The way we define it in the context of our lives. We define the word and use it . . . as a bearer of peculiar meanings that match up with our needs, hopes, fears, and visions. And the context in which we set the word \textit{shalom} will make a difference in how it comes through to us and what freight we assign to it."}\footnote{Ibid., 25-26.}

He then puts forward two nuances in which he says \textquote{biblical faith most likely was articulated,} the \textit{shalom} for the \textquote{have-nots} and the \textit{shalom} for the \textquote{haves.}\footnote{Ibid., 26.} He is not suggesting two different worldviews or pitting one against the other. He is \textquote{suggesting that there is ample evidence in the Bible for two different views of \textit{shalom}. . . . If we are sensitive to the sociopolitical-economic factors in our theology, we may be more perceptive about what we mean when we use the word \textit{shalom}—of course, always with good biblical authority.}\footnote{Ibid., 33.}

So for Brueggemann, survival is the main concern for the \textquote{have-nots,} rooted in the tradition of the prophets beginning with Moses. They declared a change from the way things are to the way God wants things to be based upon God’s action, primarily by making \textquote{radical demands for new obedience} to God. This tradition, he says, points us toward Jesus and his radical declarations of the kingdom of God. On the other hand, the tradition of the \textquote{haves} with their abundance of resources is located among those most likely to act prudently and with compassion, equitably distributing their resources as a blessing on all.\footnote{Ibid.} Brueggemann says,

\begin{quote}
They are the people who care so much for the way the world is that they devote primary energies into ordering what has been entrusted to us. So they care
\end{quote}
a great deal about the costs and benefits of alternative ways to manage resources. They do not await a new age because the present age—that is, the present arrangement—already has within it the forces of creativity and generativity.

The introduction of the *shalom* emphasis in the church was to stress the possibility of the new age in a radical way. But that poses two problems for us. First, a strong case can be made that *shalom* in the bible is closer to blessing than salvation—closer to valuing a prosperous, beneficial order than to the radical expectation of a new one. . . . Second, and perhaps more crucial, my impression of the constituency of the average church is that we are by and large a “blessed” people. We are not the deprived, the “have-nots.” . . . Our life is not terribly precarious even though we have our anxieties. . . . Shall we focus on “already” or “not yet”? Shall we stress a new future or the maintenance of what is?

I have the impression that a case can be made that Jesus practiced both of these.234

Linthicum summarizes Brueggemann’s descriptions of *shalom* in the Scripture by insisting there are two groups of Israelites: the powerful influential Jews (the haves) and those who in the past have faced or who are in the present facing oppression and exploitation by those in power (the have-nots).235 Linthicum states,

The tradition of the have-nots begins with Moses and moves from him through Joshua, Samuel and most of the prophets, and then culminates in the New Testament in the person of Jesus. This is a shalom for people who live in a precarious place, who are economically exploited, politically oppressed, or religiously controlled. Their shalom is understood in terms of their crying out of their pain and of being delivered—whether that deliverance is from slavery in Egypt, from precariousness in a new land, from the injustice of dominating and exploitive Jewish kings, from the persecution and humiliation if Babylonian exile, or from domination by Rome and the Jerusalem clerical aristocracy. That shalom is captured in such Scripture as: “The Israelites groaned under their slavery and cried out. Out of slavery their cry for help rose up to God. God heard their groaning, and God took notice of them” (Exodus 2:23-25). Or consider this instance of shalom:

When he (Bartimaeus, a blind beggar) heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth (walking past him), he began to shout out and say, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” . . . Then Jesus said to him, “What do you want me to do for you?” The blind man said to him, “My teacher, let me see again.” Jesus said to him, “Go; your faith has made you well.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way. (Mark 10:47, 51-52)

234 Ibid., 33-34.
Such shalom is an act of liberation, of salvation, of setting free—whether such a setting free is from political oppression and economic exploitation (Egyptian slavery), physical deformity (Bartimaeus’ blindness), or was yet another domination. In all instances of shalom for the have-nots, the theme is one of being set free, of being liberated. It is therefore a tradition of liberation and salvation.\footnote{Ibid., 5-6.}

He next looks at the tradition of the haves, declaring that it can be “traced through Noah, Abraham, David, the wisdom literature, Isaiah, and the rabbis culminating in Paul. . . .This tradition is for people who are essentially secure . . . concerned about the appropriate management of the resources God has placed at their disposal as well as celebrating . . . a generous God.”\footnote{Ibid., 6.} As an example Linthicum refers to 2 Samuel 7:8-9, 11-12, 16, God’s promise to David as king:

This is a shalom, not of a tyrannized people but of a secure people, not of a people living under oppression, but a people of well being. . . . it is a shalom, not of liberation, but of celebration and of wise management of the resources God has invested in you (in this case, management of the kingdom God has invested in David). Thus this shalom is carried out in the recognition that when a community is economically or politically well-off, that is an indication of God’s blessing upon it. Therefore, with such a shalom, the community’s task becomes the wise use of those resources (stewardship), which are an investment made in that community by God and thus are to be managed in such a way that justice and economic equality will result for everyone. People in this tradition do not want a disruptive act of liberation—“God’s outstretched arm” freeing them, but rather the continuance of a social order that will continue to benefit them and those around them. They want security, not liberation.\footnote{Ibid., 6-7.}

Like Brueggemann, Linthicum asserts that the two traditions (the haves and the have-nots) are not mutually exclusive and suggests that in both the Old Testament and the New Testament they are combined into a single larger social tradition. He therefore points to Deuteronomy 7:7-14; 26:1-10: “Deuteronomy . . . combines the two shalom traditions of liberation of the have-nots and the thankful stewardship of the have into a new tradition, a
tradition that applies to all the Israelites—king and commoner alike—united in the building of God’s kingdom on earth, the shalom Community.”

He goes on to say,

It is in the New Testament that the shalom community finds its apex—a worldwide kingdom of gentiles and Jews, of all nations, races, and conditions of human and of their societies and even their environments. That zenith of shalom is brought about by Jesus of Nazareth.

It is clear that Jesus’ main emphasis was on shalom . . . on the liberation of the poor (the peasants of Israel) and the poor in spirit (the rabbis and land-owners of Israel who had been seduced by the systems and yet were pure in heart). But it is also clear that Jesus placed a heavy emphasis on awakening the rich and powerful to the responsibility of their position. He saw them as being blessed in order to be a blessing, with the responsibility not to be protective of their wealth and power but to be primarily concerned with reclaiming for Israel the vision of society as God intended it to be—relational, just and equitable. That reclamation was to occur both by the political and economic policies they should pursue and in the personal exercise of their wealth and power. This is what his confrontations of the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18-25), the tax collector Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) and the Pharisees (Matt. 23:1-36) were all about. It wasn’t so much that they were more evil than the peasants or even his disciples. It was that, because of their power, prestige and money, they had so much potential for good—and they were squandering that advantage by building a society that would maintain themselves and the compatriots in power, wealth and control.

The biblical message on shalom is that it is for both the haves and the have-nots. . . . One of the essential tasks of the church is to bring together through Christ those searching for liberation or salvation and those who are the managers of society and seek security, so that they might work together to build a shalom that is truly just and equitable for all, that brings people into an ever-deepening relationship with God and each other, and consequently contributes to the formation of society as God intended it to be lived.

Linthicum challenges a typical “old school” type of understanding or limiting notion of Jesus’ purpose and salvific work when he states that “what the Bible is essentially about when it is dealing with shalom and eiréné is public justice, not private morality.” He states, “A Jesus that has been represented to Christians as God’s answer for solely our personal sin gives precious little direction or offers precious little hope to Christians who are being sinned against by the

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239 Ibid., 7.
240 Ibid., 7-8.
241 Ibid., 8.
political, economic and values-shaping systems of our society.” He is rightly asserting that Jesus’ salvation is for the entire world, even the universe. So he asks,

    How would the church be different if it believed that Jesus worked for both the transformation of people and the transformation of their society so that people and their systems would embrace authentic relationship with God, exercise a politics of justice, and a practice of stewardship of their common wealth so that poverty would be eliminated from that society? What would happen if we believed that God’s work of salvation was as big as the totality of sin—corporate as well as individual, economic and political as well as spiritual—and that Christ had come to die for the entire world? How would the church be different if it saw itself as working with Christ for the building of the shalom community? And what would Christian people accomplish to right the wrongs in their city, and view such work as being the logical extension of the work that their Lord and Savior had come to do?243

Noted African American recording artist Louis Allen "Lou" Rawls (December 1, 1933–January 6, 2006) sang a song with the lines “What’s the matter with the world, has the world gone mad, nothing’s wrong with the world, it’s the people that’s in it.” Linthicum would say that it is not just the people, but rather the people, the structures, and their values that make up the systems that are in it.

    The political system, called by God to practice compensatory justice, instead seeks to accrue power to its own institutions and people and thus acts oppressively toward the weakest and most marginalized of its subjects. The economic system, called by God to perceive themselves as stewards of the city’s and nation’s common wealth in order to equitably distribute that wealth, instead seeks to grasp the wealth for itself and its institutions and systems and thus ends up exploiting the poorest and most powerless in its midst. The religious system, called by God to bring humanity into relationship with God and each other, instead seeks to build its own power, prestige, and parochialism as it seeks to control the thinking and responses of the people. And finally, the people become seduced by the values and ethics of the systems and they themselves became corrupted by the same lust for power, prestige, possessions and parochialism and thus become exploiters, oppressors and controllers of one another.244

242 Ibid., 62.
243 Ibid.
244 Ibid., 65-66; Italics mine.
Consequently if the church has been sent into the world to address “the world gone mad”—the world as it is—then we need to look at how our sending Lord addressed the world as it is and, from his approach, similarly direct our own approach. The salvation Jesus wrought for us is both personal and individual; yet is also corporate and universal. After all “For God so loved the world that he . . .” (John 3:16 NRSV). His salvation, however, “is also social, corporate and even cosmic,”\textsuperscript{245} because the very systems that humans create to structure and order our lives actually destroy our lives and societies. “The very nature of our humanity will inevitably seek to take advantage of any system that structures our lives. . . . By our very nature as sinful (that is, self-serving) creatures, we corrupt the very systems we create to structure life.”\textsuperscript{246} In other words, we love to “beat the system.” Linthicum concludes,

> If we believe that God is actively at work through Jesus Christ to redeem the structures and systems of our city and nation, that God is seeking to transform society’s values into relational and just values, then we will have a much more holistic and comprehensive understanding of God’s work in our midst. . . . Further if we believe that God is actively at work through Christ to redeem the world’s systems as well as its people, we will be able to move into ministries that affirm the world and work for its full transformation.

> The truth is simply this. . . . [Jesus] was crucified on a rugged cross between two thieves, on a city’s garbage heap, at the kind of place where the powers conspire and systems dominate, and the people become powerless victims.

> And that is what he died about. And that is where his people should be. And that is what his people should be about.\textsuperscript{247}

Too often the church fails to transform society because it is unable to produce sustainable change in society’s systems because it tackles only one or two of the components that comprise our systems. Unless the church is able to tackle all three components—people, structures, and their values—it will not be able to effect sustainable change and so bring about transformation of those systems.

\textsuperscript{245} Ibid., 83.
\textsuperscript{246} Ibid., 78-79.
\textsuperscript{247} Ibid., 83.
What is the work of the church to which the bible calls us? How do we translate God’s mandate to the church as outlined in Scripture (Luke 4; Matt. 28:16-20, John 3:16-17, 20:21-22; 2 Peter 3:8-9; Micah 6:8). Paul wrote, “For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power” (1 Corinthians 4:20 NRSV). The next chapter will examine a theology of power that helps us work toward the shalom community, the kingdom of God. Such a theology will examine the nature and use of relational power in bringing about sustainable change—transformation—by engaging the political, economic, and religious (values-creating) systems so as to further the building up of the shalom community.
CHAPTER 5

God Demands It – Toward the Shalom Community

So what is the work that we—the church—have been sent out into the world to do from a biblical standpoint and “in the face of society—controlling systems operating out of the value of domination?” Chapter two looked at the world as it is and also examined the idea of the world as God intended it to be. This chapter is an examination of the nature and context of how God envisions the working out of the shalom community and how God expects God’s servants to work toward making such a vision a reality.

Linthicum’s shalom community is one articulation of the manifestation of the kingdom of God—the world as God intends it to be in our midst as demanded by Jesus of his church in our world as it is. Linthicum’s biblical and contextual response to the question comes through the message of the prophet to the exiled people of Israel in Jeremiah 29:1-11. “Shalom is an enduring vision. It is promised persistently and hoped for always,” Brueggemann says. He too maintains that during Israel’s biblical history there have been times when this hope has become very pivotal for their present and future. One such time, he says, was during Israel’s exile, in the time of one of their greatest visionary spokesmen, Jeremiah.

The exegetical methodology used by Linthicum, he calls “discourse discernment.” This methodology, Linthicum says, calls on us to allow Scripture to speak to us out of itself, and in so doing it requires us to do three things. First, we must discern to whom that particular Scripture passage was written. For whom was it intended? Second, we must understand what were the major events and the major movements occurring at that time and to the people to whom this Scripture was intended (especially what was happening politically, economically, and religiously in that society).

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248 Ibid., 85.
249 Brueggemann, Peace, 20.
250 Ibid.
251 Linthicum, People of Power, xiv.
Third, in the light of the message the writer was seeking to communicate to the people to whom he was writing, what is that Scripture saying to us? Thus, the task of working with Scripture is to ask three questions: What was going on at the time this Scripture was written? What did it say to the people to whom it was written? What does it say to us?^{252}

Jeremiah the prophet lived during one of the most terrifying and crucial periods of Jewish history—the destruction of Jerusalem, of Solomon’s temple and the beginning of the Babylonian exile. Linthicum describes the scenario thus:

The southern kingdom of Judah was conquered by the Babylonian empire. The political, economic, and religious systems of the nation had collapsed, and with them the nation. The city of Jerusalem had been burned to the ground and the temple destroyed. The political, economic and religious leaders had been dragged off as captives to the city of Babylon by the invading king, Nebuchadnezzar. There, in the city of their captors, the former Israelite leaders lifted up their voices and wept. There in exile, they began to despair that God would ever deliver them from the hand of their captors.^{253}

It was to such a downtrodden and despairing captive nation that the prophet wrote “a word we need to hear as we seek to be God’s faithful people in our time and place.”^{254} Jeremiah possessed a firm belief that, following the period of God’s punishment of the people, Israel would return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and restore the city.

I am going to bring it recovery and healing; I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security. I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and rebuild them as they were at first. I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me. And this city shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them; they shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the prosperity I provide for it.

Thus says the Lord: In this place of which you say, ‘It is a waste without human beings or animals’, in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without inhabitants, human or animal, there shall once more be heard the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voices of those who sing, as they bring thank—offerings to the house of the Lord:

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^{252} Ibid.
^{253} Ibid., 85.
^{254} Ibid.
‘Give thanks to the Lord of hosts,  
for the Lord is good,  
for his steadfast love endures for ever!’  
For I will restore the fortunes of the land as at first, says the Lord.  
(Jeremiah 33:6-11 NRSV)

Yet before this vision could become a reality, Jeremiah wrote to the despairing exiles, exhorting them through God’s word in chapter 29. This word, prophetically spoken to the political, economic, and religious leaders (elders, priests, prophets), was to be their charge and challenge from their God as to the attitude and action they were to take while in their despair in exile.255

These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. . . . It said: Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. For thus says the Lord: Only when Babylon’s seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfil to you my promise and bring you back to this place. For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. (Jer. 29:1, 4-11 NRSV)

While the Babylonian captivity was a cruel fate for the Jews, Jeremiah makes it clear that God had a plan for them, meant for their good and the good of their captors. Linthicum asserts that in the midst of their bad news, there was good news: “But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jer. 29:7 NRSV). While in exile they were to work and pray for the welfare, the well-

255 Ibid., 86-87.
being, the prosperity, the peace (*shalom*) of the city where they found themselves. Their being in Babylon was not an accident. God sent them there because that city needed them. God loves the entire creation; wherever God’s people are, God seeks to work through them for the sake of all people (even the ‘wicked’ – recall Joseph in Egypt [Gen. 39-50], Jonah in Nineveh). While they were in exile in Babylon, God wanted the captured Jews to know that they were there for the sake of that city. In like manner wherever the church (God’s people) is, it is there not necessarily because of its own circumstances but rather for the sake of the place where it is. God called us to be there, sent us there, needs us to be there, and for what purpose? The same reason Jeremiah declared that the exiles were in Babylon: to seek and pray for the prosperity, well-being, *shalom* of that place. Linthicum expounds the double meaning of a Hebrew word used by Jeremiah, in the following argument:

“Work for the [*shalom*] of the city where I have *sent you into exile*.” The English words “sent you into exile” are actually the attempt by English translators to translate a single Hebrew word. The Hebrew word that is here translated “sent you into exile” has a double meaning. It can rightfully be translated “exile.” And it can also be translated “sent.” Thus it is reasonable to assume that in the use of this one Hebrew word, Jeremiah is seeking to communicate two distinct ideas to his Hebrew brothers and sisters in Babylon. He is in essence saying to the Israelites, “You are in captivity because your nation was defeated, your army destroyed, your city burned, and you were clapped into chains and marched across the desert into Babylonian exile. That is your *circumstance*. But you are also in captivity because I the Lord your God, sent you there. You are in Babylon because I need my people in this wicked city. That is your *call from God!*”

He then concludes by answering the question,

What are we called—as God’s sent people—to be and do in the place where God has planted us? We are called to the very same task, as were the Israelite captives in the city of Babylon 2600 years ago. “[You are to] seek the [*shalom*] of the city where I have sent you into exile . . . for in its [*shalom*] you will find your [*shalom*].” Our calling as God’s people into whatever situation

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256 Ibid., 87.

257 The Hebrew word is *galah*. As it relates to the word “exile,” *galah* has the nuance of “take into exile,” “going forth,” “emigrating”; see Brown, Driver, and Briggs, “*galah*,” in *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 162-163. See also Ludwig Köhler and Walter Baumgartner, “*galah*,” in *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 4: 193.

which God might call us is to seek that city’s shalom—its peace, prosperity, well-being, wholeness, fullness, reconciliation.\textsuperscript{259}

Subsequently it is important note that Israel (and we ourselves) were to seek peace, not in the familiar or comfortable—not in Jerusalem—rather in Babylon. Linthicum elaborates,

The Israelites are called to seek God’s shalom in the midst of Babylon. They would not experience either personal or corporate shalom as long as Babylon was not at peace within itself.

What made this statement such a revolutionary statement was that Babylon was the ultimate symbol of evil to Israel. . . . Babylon was a virtual synonym for depravity. This attitude toward Babylon is reflected throughout Scripture. Thus in Genesis 11:1-9, the Tower of Babel\textsuperscript{260} (the Hebrew form of the name Babylon) is the symbolic place of the “confusion of language” where the unity of the world (symbolized by one tongue) is shattered. Throughout the Bible’s historical books and the prophets (e.g. 2 Kings 20:12-19; 24:10-25: 30; Jeremiah 25:8-14; Isaiah 13, 14, 47, 48; Amos 5:27; Acts 7:43), Babylon is pictured as evil. And in Revelation 17-18, the elder John gives the name “Babylon” to human civilization lived in defiance of God, practicing a politics of oppression and an economics of greed and exploitation.

To Israel, Babylon is the epitome of the wicked and darkest of cities. It is precisely in the midst of such wickedness and darkness, Jeremiah is saying, that we are to work for shalom. . . . And why? Because God loves Babylon, and can only transform it by sending God’s people there (even against their will).\textsuperscript{261}

Again one recalls the biblical story of Jonah and Nineveh. For that matter, today we all want a peaceful, just, and equitable society, city, neighborhood, and nation. No matter how well off a person or family or city may be, total shalom is still absent because of corruption, oppression, and exploitation of the systems around us that threaten to attack and reduce the shalom one may have or wants to experience. “Even one who is in relationship with God and within the embrace of a relational culture can never fully know peace for his own life, his family or his people, if his

\textsuperscript{259} Ibid., 88.
\textsuperscript{260} The Hebrew word is \textit{bawbel}, which has the nuance of “to mix up,” “confound – languages, confusion of tongues”; see Köhler and Baumgartner, “Babylon,” in \textit{The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament}, 1: 134-135.
\textsuperscript{261} Linthicum, \textit{People of Power}, 88.
city does not experience peace. So God sends his people into precisely the darkest areas of human society to be ambassadors for peace there.”

Having considered God’s vision for our society and world—that of establishing the *shalom* community in the midst of the world as it is—we now explore its workings in the context of the missio Dei and the church’s mission. But first, look at how Jesus himself spoke of the concept of the *shalom* community. According to St. Luke, it was Jesus, quoting the prophet Isaiah, who said,

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” . . . Then he began to say to them,
“Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:16-21 NRSV)

Linthicum seeks to understand Jesus’ mission and intentions through understanding the context in which he operated.

First-century Israel was under the control of Rome politically and economically, so that Rome, the most powerful empire at that time, influenced all the decisions and actions of Jewish leadership and peasantry alike. The Roman Peace or Pax Romana was further enforced by the military might with which Rome bound its empire together and dominated the Mediterranean world—including Israel.

Whenever possible, Rome governed through devolving authority to the local, even non—Roman leadership—whether it was a puppet king, priests, or locally selected leadership. Thus, what was formerly the state of Israel had been divided by Rome into three basic political entities: Galilee, Trans-Jordon, and Judea (which included Israel’s capital city, Jerusalem). Galilee was ruled by King

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262 Ibid., 88-89.
Herod Agrippa, a descendant of King Herod the Great. . . . Trans-Jordan was ruled by Philip, also a descendant of Herod. . . . Judea was ruled by . . . Roman procurator . . . the High Priest of Israel (who was also a Roman appointee), and the Sanhedrin.  

To understand Jesus, one must realize that the Jewish religious system was . . . an apparently religious body granted by Rome the responsibility to govern the nation. . . . To share that responsibility in Judea with the Roman procurator, and in Galilee with the Herodian nobility. But their primary role was to be the on-the-ground political operatives of Israel, controlling the legislative and judicial systems of Israel, maintaining peace among the people, and administering justice. And they were to exercise this control through the religious vehicles of synagogue, the temple, and the Mosaic Law.

Further, we must understand that these “religious” leaders, along with the Herodian nobility and the land-owners, controlled the vast percentage of the wealth of the nation.

Linthicum asserts that the peasantry of Israel were the “expendables” of the society, made up of the poor, the women and children, the marginalized and oppressed of the time such as farmers, the sick, the shepherds—all these lived on the margins of economic uncertainty, dependent upon the generosity of their neighbors, mostly peasants themselves, who without help were condemned to starvation and death through neglect and illness. These formed Jesus’ main audience, he says. He describes the daily governance of the people thus:

The vehicle the Jewish leaders used to control the populace and to maintain this grossly unbalanced economic and political structure was their interpretation of the Mosaic Law. The Pharisees taught the Law to the people, the scribes adjudicated and interpreted the Law, the temple priests conducted public life and the affairs of both the temple and the state under the guidelines of the Law, and the nobility, landowners and the religious establishment all benefitted from the Law.

But. . . . they interpreted the law to require obedience on the people’s part in such ways that it would not jeopardize the aristocracy’s maintenance of themselves in power and wealth.

265 Linthicum, People of Power, 33-34.
266 Ibid., 34-35.
267 Ibid., 35.
It was in such a context that Jesus came preaching and teaching about the kingdom of God and its availability for all persons. Linthicum analyzes Jesus’ actions in each of the four Gospels. He says that in Mark’s Gospel “Jesus confronts the dominant Jewish systems of his day and calls them to accountability, and often defeats them.”

Commenting on Mark 11:11-26, Linthicum relates these three stories, the withering of the fig tree (vv.11-14), the cleansing of the temple (vv.15-19) and the lesson from the withered fig tree (vv.20-26) to Israel’s governance. Jews in the time of Jesus would know that the fig tree was repeatedly “used in the Hebrew Bible (e.g., Jeremiah 8:13, Isaiah 28:3, Hosea 9:10-16, Micah 7:1) as an emblem of peace, security, and prosperity both in Israel’s past and in God’s coming kingdom. The fruitfulness of the fig tree is the symbol of God’s blessing upon the nation. The withering of the fig tree conversely, is a sign to Israel of God’s judgment upon them!”

Jesus, Linthicum says,

is illustrating that the Jewish nation, created by God to be “a blessing to all the nations of the world” has, instead, not produced fruit. . . .Therefore, it is cursed by Jesus for not only not reaching its potential, but also for refusing to do so. And this is primarily due to the refusal of the temple leadership to seek the shalom of the nation and its people because of their own greed and lust for control. Therefore, having received God’s curse through Jesus, the nation has become withered and the system rotten “to its roots” (Mark 11:20).

Jesus then visits the temple (Mark 11:15-19) and “cleanses” it, declaring that “My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations, but you have made it a den of robbers“ (11:17).

“Called by God to build a society of justice, equitable distribution of wealth, and a shalom community, the religious, political and economic establishment of Israel have built a society of lust for power, oppression, exploitation, and domination. And the temple has become its chief symbol.”

In pointing to the fig tree, Jesus teaches his disciples about the source of their faith.

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268 Ibid., 48.
270 Linthicum, People of Power, 48-49.
271 Ibid., 49.
272 Ibid.
Faith is enduring and will outlast Jewish structures and systems of dependency. Faith that is placed in the kingdom of God, however, will move mountains, Jesus says.  

Linthicum asserts that “Jesus is for the poor and oppressed,” a commonly recurring theme in Mark’s Gospel where Jesus goes around doing good, casting out demons, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and empowering the powerless. Linthicum uses the story of the Syrophoenician woman as one example to highlight this characteristic of Jesus’ mission.

From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophoenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, “Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children’s food and throw it to the dogs.” But she answered him, “Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.” Then he said to her, “For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.” So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone. (Mark 7:24-30 NRSV)

Linthicum argues, “What is not immediately apparent to twenty-first century eyes is the unbelievable effrontery of this woman’s actions. In that day, no woman would approach a man without his permission. No Gentile would approach a Jew. And no one, under any circumstances, would invade the privacy of a rabbi when he was on retreat in a private home.” In her desperation, the woman has totally disregarded these three codes of the acceptable decorum of Jewish relations. In yielding to the woman’s desperate demands, Jesus “in essence willingly suffered the indignity of her importunity, included her in the community of those gathered for

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273 Ibid., 49-50.
274 Ibid.
275 Ibid., 50.
276 Ibid.
that retreat, and became ‘least’ to minister to her need (and her daughter’s need), welcoming her as his equal.”

Jesus was saying “I am for you and with you in your journey.”

Linthicum says that in appointing the twelve disciples on the mountain, like Moses in Exodus 19:3-6, “Jesus does more than confront the Israelite systems and carry on ministries of compassion and justice.” Pointing to the significance of the number twelve to Hebrew history, Jesus, he says, is “obviously reminding everyone of the twelve tribes of Israel. . . creating a new ‘nation of Israel’ to follow him in authentically implementing the Deuteronomic code and thus God’s intentions for the world.”

Linthicum says that Mark is pointing his readers toward an understanding of power that is the root of Israel’s problem. From the Roman occupiers to the revolutionaries, the Jewish priests and the Pharisees, all “understand power as domination, as control, as enforced.” Linthicum suggests a different understanding when he asks, “What if true power is relational?” He suggests that this is what Jesus is advocating when he says, “whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” (Mark 10: 43-45 NRSV) This radical perspective captures the way of Jesus for building a people of power for creating the shalom community. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus calls each person into relationship with himself, and each time this call happens “the new covenant community keeps being recreated, and we follow Jesus into our ‘Galilee’ as we each answer his ongoing call to discipleship.”

Linthicum summarizes Jesus in the four Gospels as

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277 Ibid., 50-51.  
278 Ibid., 51.  
279 Ibid.  
280 Ibid., 51-52.  
281 Ibid., 52.  
282 Ibid.
one who was committed to the realization of jubilee for the Israelite society, a radical who was creating a culture counter to the dominant culture of control, oppression, and exploitation, and who was marginalized from that dominant culture because he was calling for God’s alternative to the world as it is. . . . A Jesus who saw himself as God’s means to bringing about the transformation of society, the one who through his life, ministry, death, and resurrection would inaugurate God’s kingdom. . . . A Jesus who was engaged in the pain and struggle and radicalization of society, a Jesus who confronted the political, economic and values-forming leaders and systems of his day and sought to change them, a Jesus who knew the powers of the world would reject him and therefore set himself to building those who followed him into a people of power who could join with him in seeking the transformation of the world.  

This is what the church has been called to be and to do, the missio Dei. In carrying out this mission, the church works with God to establish, in the world as it is, the shalom community—the world as God intends it to be. As Linthicum puts it, faithfulness to our ministry requires us to “call and equip people to work effectively for shalom at both the systemic and individual levels. . . . And when we as the church and as Christians consistently, continually and faithfully do that, then we will discover the fulfillment of God’s profound promise to us,”  

as outlined in Jeremiah 29:11: “I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.” Linthicum then asks, how do we work for the shalom of our community, city, society and nation in the midst of the world as it is? He gives five elements that are essential for carrying out this work. He suggests that Jeremiah points us to three of those elements and the New Testament adds a fourth.  

The fifth is the use of relational power, leading to a theology of power.

Regarding the first element, we are called to become God’s presence in the city, in the context in which we find ourselves. Speaking through the prophet Jeremiah, the Lord said,

“Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your

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283 Ibid., 61-62.  
284 Ibid., 91-92.  
285 Ibid., 92.
daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and
do not decrease.” (Jeremiah 29:5-6 NRSV)

In other words, Linthicum says, Jeremiah encouraged the full participation of the exiles in the
life of the city of Babylon.

Don’t isolate yourself from the rest of the Babylonian community and
create a Jewish ghetto. Enter fully into the life of that city. Get a job and enter into
its economy. Buy a house or rent an apartment. Become a Yahweh-lover who
loves your city’s people and who commits himself or herself to its life and being.
Weep with those who weep. Laugh with those who laugh. Live and move and
have your being in the city as people who are transformed by the magnetic love of
Jesus Christ. And by so doing, become God’s presence in the city to which I have
called you.²⁸⁶

Secondly, we must pray for the city to which God has called us. “But seek the welfare of
the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you
will find your welfare.” (Jeremiah 29:7) This counsel seems both simple enough and entirely
appropriate. He also advocates not just individual prayer but also deliberate, intentional, and
assertive corporate prayer for the city, which may take differing forms. Whatever mode these
prayers take, “it is crucial that God’s people be praying regularly and systematically for the
economic, political and value-creating leaders of their city, the systems they represent and the
principalities and power behind those systems.”²⁸⁷

The third element that Jeremiah points us to is that of practicing our faith “by working
for social justice and shalom.”²⁸⁸ We carry out social outreach ministries, serving the needs of
the poor and marginalized in the community or city where we are. “But seek the welfare of the
city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you
will find your welfare.” (Jeremiah 29:7) Linthicum goes further to assert that “there is a second

²⁸⁶ Ibid.
²⁸⁷ Ibid., 93.
²⁸⁸ Ibid.
way we are to practice our faith besides deeds of mercy. We are to be advocates for the powerless. . . . To ‘stand in the breach’ and defend the cause of the poor, the powerless, and the marginalized before the ‘principalities and powers’ of the city and the state.” He gives the example of Jeremiah, who confronted King Shallum, son of Josiah, for his ostentatious lifestyle in the midst of the abject poverty of the people.

Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice; who makes his neighbours work for nothing, and does not give them their wages; who says, ‘I will build myself a spacious house with large upper rooms’, and who cuts out windows for it, panelling it with cedar, and painting it with vermilion. Are you a king because you compete in cedar? Did not your father eat and drink and do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? says the Lord. But your eyes and heart are only on your dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood, and for practising oppression and violence. (Jeremiah 22:13-17 NRSV)

Linthicum adds to this advocacy role the action of community development. Paraphrasing Isaiah in 65:19-25, he suggests that Isaiah calls to us today to be

working with and mobilizing the poor to provide needed community services for them. Isaiah states it quite clearly when he calls God’s people to work with all of society to pressure for health care that would guarantee long life and the elimination of infant mortality, for adequate and affordable housing for everyone in the city, to create fulfilling work for everyone, to eliminate unemployment, and to work for all ethnic, racial, and national groups that have lived at enmity with each other so that they would live in harmony.

This is something that many churches are already doing.

St. Paul admonished the Roman Christians (and we ourselves) when he wrote, “For, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?” (Romans 10:13-14 NRSV),

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289 Ibid.
290 Ibid., 93-94.
Thus Paul points to the fourth element—the core of the church’s mission—the verbal and active proclamation of Jesus Christ to the world: our neighbors, our communities and cities, and our nation, including the structures within them. “It is the responsibility of the church in the city to proclaim God’s prophetic and reconciling word to the political, economic and value producing systems of the city and to the people who provide leadership to those structures.” This is the challenge from Scripture: presence, prayer, practice and proclamation are all incorporated in our mandate from Scripture; (e. g., Micah 6:8; Matthew 28:18-20; John 20:21). Together they “make up the substance of the work of God’s people for the transformation and shalom of the city. . . . They are the strategic work of the church. But, very frankly, neither in the global urban world of today nor in the biblical world are these four ministries sufficient.”

Linthicum explains that whether the four ministries are taken individually or together, “none . . . are powerful enough to pressure the giant political, economic, educational, media/entertainment, religious, or social and health provider institutions and their massive bureaucracies to practice shalom. If presence, prayer, practice and proclamation are essential and strategic but not sufficient, what must the church do in order to truly make a difference?” He refers us to what he calls “one of the most disturbing statements ever made by Jesus,” while Jesus was addressing his disciples among the crowds.

I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed! Do you think that I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division! (Luke 12:49-51 NRSV)

Linthicum asks the obvious: Did Jesus the prince of peace not come to bring peace, but rather division? In order to explain what he was getting at, Linthicum uses the example of an

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291 Ibid., 94.
292 Ibid.
293 Ibid.
294 Ibid., 95.
experience he had within his own parish, among his members and the community his church served:

We were about to begin a meeting of the governing board of the church I served in Chicago. . . . Suddenly the door opened with a bang and one of our elders—John—stalked into the room obviously deeply agitated. . . . “I have just been turned down by our community banks for a housing-renovation loan.” He then told us his frustrating tale. He had applied to bank after bank for a home-remodeling loan and had been rejected by each one.

We were as shocked as John. John was a top executive in his corporation, a man with considerable income and equity, as well as thirty years of longevity in the community and a reputation for involvement in community affairs. On what grounds could he possibly be rejected for a home loan?

“That’s strange,” spoke up another elder who lived in the community. “I was turned down for a home-renovation loan only the other day.”

A third elder and a fourth spoke up. They too had been turned down for home-purchase or remodeling loans over the past three years. What was going on?

I was suspicious. So at the next meeting of our ministerial association, I shared with the other clergy the strange discovery at that meeting of my church elders. The other clergy all promised to check with their respective church lay leaders as well.

At the next meeting a month hence, the results were gathered. Every lay leader in each religious institution who had requested a home loan or home improvement loan for property they owned in our neighborhood had been rejected for that loan, no matter how good their credit rating might be. With that news, we spread out into the community, and soon discovered that we could not find a single homeowner requesting a home-improvement or home-purchase loan over the past three years who had actually been granted one.

The banks and fiduciary institutions in this declining neighborhood, a major insurance company, several major contractors and the city government were involved in a conspiracy to “red-line” the community so that property values would plummet, the community would rapidly decline, buildings could be purchased at basement prices and the area could then be condemned and eventually rebuilt with luxury condominiums and apartment houses at great profit to the banks and developers.

295 Redlining is the practice of arbitrarily denying or limiting financial services to specific neighborhoods, generally because its residents are people of color or are poor. . . . Like other forms of discrimination, redlining had pernicious and damaging effects. Without bank loans and insurance, relined areas lacked the capital essential for investment and redevelopment. As a result, after World War II, suburban areas received preference for residential investment at the expense of poor and minority neighborhoods in cities like Chicago. The relative lack of investment in new housing, rehabilitation, and home improvement contributed significantly to the decline of older urban neighborhoods and compounded Chicago's decline in relation to its suburbs. “Redlining,” The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago © 2005 Chicago Historical Society. http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1050.html, accessed Nov. 5, 2014.
The very future of the neighborhood was at stake. What were the churches going to do?\(^{296}\)

Linthicum says the churches considered a number of options. These included maintaining the churches’ presence in the community through their ongoing fellowship activities; holding prayer meetings for the community; carrying out joint evangelism campaigns—proclaiming God’s word throughout the community; providing ministries of outreach and social services to victims of the conspiracy, a practice he says "would actually encourage them (the systems), because our provision of social services would make less apparent to the rest of the city the results of the exploitive action the government and businesses were taking in red-lining our community."\(^{297}\) They considered advocacy by the ministers at the city council but wondered what twenty-three (23) ministers could do without the numerical and vocal support of the entire community behind them. They also considered community development, whereby the community would seek to take care of itself through community policing, garbage cleanup, and the like. Again the conclusions were the same.\(^{298}\) Linthicum said they came to a frightening conclusion: “We had to directly confront those greedy political and economic leaders with sufficient people-power. . . . They would have to listen. . . . If we were to save our community and our churches from literal destruction, we would have to learn to use power.”\(^{299}\) This they found to be a daunting proposition. After all, Christians are taught to avoid conflict and to obey those in authority. Yet, as the quotation usually attributed to eighteenth century British parliamentarian Edmund Burke goes, “All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good

\(^{296}\) Linthicum, *People of Power*, 95-96.
\(^{297}\) Ibid., 96-97.
\(^{298}\) Ibid., 97.
\(^{299}\) Ibid.
men do nothing." If the ministers in that community did nothing, the evil systems would succeed and their neighborhood would be destroyed.300

Linthicum concludes by saying, “Whereas prayer, presence, proclamation and the practices of social services, advocacy and community development are essential and strategic elements in the church’s ministry in today’s society, they are not sufficient. There . . . is a clearly biblical way that is often ignored—the discerning use of power301 by God’s people.”302

In defining power as “the capacity, ability and willingness to act.”303 Linthicum sees these attributes of power in this way “Power is the capacity to act. ‘Capacity’ means ‘the facility to produce, perform or deploy.’ For a group to have the capacity to act it means that they have developed or gathered the resources together in order to exercise power.”304 As an example, he says that an army going to face the enemy with rifles but no ammunition to fire has no capacity to act and so cannot exercise power.305 “Power is the ability to act. Ability consists of having the skill, aptitude and/or competence to carry out the action one wishes to undertake. . . . capacity without ability still creates a powerless state.”306 Again using his army example, Linthicum says that if the army, has been given ammunition but is unable to fire the rifles with accuracy, it does not have the ability to act and so remains powerless.307 “Power is the willingness to act. There must be a resolve and a commitment on the part of the group to act, even if it means taking the risks necessary to act.”308 If the army has rifles and ammunition (capacity,) and the skill to use

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300 Ibid.
301 “Power, the actual or potential capacity to effect something by virtue of inherent excellence or rightful authority. . . . Various forms of political authority are also a manifestation of power (Luke 7:8; Acts 26:10; Rom. 13:1).” Werner E. Lemke, “Power,” in The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary, 824.
302 Linthicum, People of Power, 97-98.
303 Ibid., 98.
304 Ibid.
305 Ibid.
306 Ibid.
307 Ibid.
308 Ibid., 98-99.
them properly (ability,) but lacks the will to go into the battle, that army remains powerless. All three attributes, Linthicum asserts, must be present at the same time for power to be exercised.  

“Change cannot occur in a city, a neighborhood, a church, a tribe, or a nation unless the people and their institutions have developed their capacity, ability and willingness to act. Then—and only then—do they have power.”

Linthicum points out that there are aspects to the use of power that make power either good or bad. The persons or entities that wield power do so based upon their personal or corporate agendas—what they want to achieve and how they wish to achieve it. He contrasts Hitler and Jesus, both of whom had the capacity, ability, and willingness to act, but whose motives took them in differing directions with differing impacts upon individuals and systems around them. One brought the world to global war, negatively transforming numerous countries and millions of lives. The other built a faith community, challenged the governing systems of the Israelite nation, and in doing so “began a movement that has transformed society and millions of lives for more than two thousand years.”

Both Hitler and Jesus demonstrated that there are two types of power. Linthicum calls them unilateral power and relational power. He says, “Either type of power can be used for good or used for evil—but most often is a mixture of both. But unilateral power primarily organizes institutions and those institutions’ capacity to create and adjudicate laws, use military power, control wealth, or act symbolically.” In contrast, “relational power, . . . organizes people and the institutions of people (e.g., churches, clubs, community groups, unions, etc.) to act as one.”

Linthicum argues as follows:

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309 Ibid., 99.
310 Ibid.
311 Ibid.
312 Ibid.
313 Ibid.
Unilateral power is the kind of power used by banks, fiduciary institutions, government and contractors in the illustration I presented earlier . . . about suspected red-lining. . . . Unilateral power is basically “power over” a people. There are two types of unilateral power. **Dominating power** is the lowest form of power. . . . Exercised . . . through the force of guns and physical intimidation. It is the tyrannical use of power—colonial, plantation, paternalistic power. It was dominating unilateral power against which most of the prophets protested.

A second form of unilateral power is **constitutional power**. This is a “higher” or more “sophisticated” form than dominating power. But it is still essentially unilateral in nature. Constitutional power is power over people as defined by law rather than defined by force. It tends to be highly structured and hierarchical, with responsibility being delegated by the people to those who hold power. That was the kind of power being exercised by Pilate in his trial of Jesus as presented in the Gospel of John.

Under constitutional power, those in power theoretically rule by the consent of the governed and thus are responsible for representing the governed. But, in reality, the governed play little role in the operation or influence of the government. Thus, in the United States, the people’s responsibility is to vote upon their selection of representatives and to write letters of protest or telephone their protest. That is what people assume is the limits [sic] of participation by the people in the decision-making process. 314

Relational power on the other hand, is that which is exercised as “power with” one’s constituents rather than unilateral “power over.” 315 He defines relational power as

a higher form of participatory power than is either dominating or constitutional power. There are two types of relational power, the first being **mutual power**. Mutual power exists when two people or groups hold fairly equal power. Rather than trying to enhance their own power at the expense of the other party, however, mutual power will respect each other’s power and position, working, together for common objectives. . . . A negotiating exercise of power. 316

Using the biblical story of the friendship between Jonathan and David as an example, Linthicum says that each could have used his position of power—monarchical and military popularity, respectively—to seek the other’s downfall. Instead, they worked together to the mutual benefit of each other and the kingdom of Israel. 317

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314 Ibid., 99-100.
315 Ibid., 100.
316 Ibid.
317 Ibid.
Linthicum defines the second type of relational power called *reciprocal power*. This he says,

is the deepest form of relational power. It is one in which people understand that both parties or forces can benefit from power decisions if they authentically share decisions. Therefore, reciprocal power is truly shared power, in which each party is of equal strength, is equally participative in the decision-making process, and each commits itself not to its private or exclusive good but to the common good. . . . If power is the ability to get things done, relational power is the capacity to organize people around common values, relationships, and issues so that they can bring about the change they desire.\textsuperscript{318}

To make his argument for distinguishing between unilateral and relational power clearer, Linthicum reflects upon Jesus’ address to his disciples concerning seats of power in Mark 10.

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” And he said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” They replied, “We are able.” Then Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:35-45NRSV)

Linthicum suggests that this pericope, expresses “the root of Israel’s problem . . . its understanding of power.”\textsuperscript{319} After Jesus told his disciples about his impending cruel treatment by the authority systems of the day (vv 32-35), James and John made a plea for places of power in his coming kingdom. As expected, the other disciples took exception to their colleagues’ attitude

\textsuperscript{318} Ibid., 100-101.
\textsuperscript{319} Ibid., 51-52.
and presumptuousness. In response, (vv 36-45) Jesus expounded the tenets of shalom, “the standards for the use of power.” He pointed to the Gentile leadership as tyrants over the people who ruled by domination, exploitation, and fear through their exercise of unilateral power. Jesus in contrast asserted that the way of God is one of relational power. Using the image of the servant as the way of the kingdom, Jesus is

is teaching that the image of the servant captures the essence of true power! The “one who gives his life as a ransom for many” captures the essence of true power.

Jesus is teaching his disciples . . . the power of relationships. Rather than “power over,” relational power is “power with,” shared power, mutual power, reciprocal power. It is not power of weakness, of acquiescence, of apathy. It is direct, specific, realistic, flexible, accountable, and negotiable. It is a power that is built upon the relationships one has carefully built with others and that seeks the good of the other as well as one’s self. Therefore, by definition, it is a power that seeks “not to be served but to serve,” even if it means giving one’s life as “a ransom for many.” This is Jesus’ . . . radical solution.

Linthicum adds that

Yahweh is described in Scripture as a relational God; He yearns for relationship both with the people and society he has created. Even the words used for God are relational in nature—Father, Mother, Son, Spirit—and his work in and through us is described in relational terms—chesedh (grace-filled love), agape (selfless love), phileo (brotherly love), grace, truth, covenant. Evil, on the other hand is described unilaterally—whether it is the evil of people, society, the demonic, or the Evil One. The work of Satan is seen as a work of domination, of “power over” people and nations, with evil as its primary intent.

Now that is not to say that all relational power is good and all unilateral power is evil. Relational power, when carried out by humanity, can become manipulative and destructive; that is why the biggest danger of the oppressed, once gaining power, is to become the oppressors. But relational power is never evil or destructive when in the hands of God. It is our responsibility, as children of God, to use relational power in a way that will be both pleasing to God and transforming with each other.

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320 Ibid., 101.
321 Ibid., 101-102.
322 Ibid., 102.
323 For more on these terms, Chesedh (or Kheseb), agape and phileo, see Karl P. Donfried and Mark A. Powell, “Love,” in The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary, 570-572.
324 Linthicum, People of Power, 103.
Regarding Linthicum’s redlining issue mentioned earlier, the results provide excellent examples of successful relational power being exercised by the church, working with other organizations to achieve a semblance of shalom for the community in that city and a framework to answer the question asked earlier at the end of the scenario outlining the problem: What could the churches do?

The twenty-three churches joined with other community-based organizations and confronted the bank’s president with the “people-power” they had mobilized, threatening to withdraw all their funds and investments from the bank, which in turn would lead to an inevitable financial collapse. The bank’s president agreed to their terms regarding home and renovating loans; which began to be reissued to members of the community.325

Linthicum describes the results:

Faced with the effective withdrawal of that bank from the red-lining plot, the other parties gave up and the conspiracy collapsed. Our community had been saved by the willingness of all that neighborhood’s twenty-three churches to confront those who intended to destroy the neighborhood for their own profit.

The leaders of the religious institutions in that community learned a valuable lesson through their willingness to confront the “principalities and powers.” They learned the profound limitations of the church’s traditional response to the world through its ministries of presence, prayer, proclamation, and practice. They learned that such ministries are all essential and strategic. But they are not sufficient to deal with the political and economic institutions of the city when those institutions become caught up in greed and unilateral power that both drive those institutions and corrupt their leaders. Only learning how to use relational power is sufficient to bring about the changing of the systems that in turn brings long-term change to the city.326

Linthicum concludes the story with a very salient point for the church when he says, “In the final analysis, the ultimate problem is not the people or the churches or the poor themselves. . . . The problem lies with the way the political and economic systems organize themselves to amass and maintain power. Such misuse of unilateral power is, at its root, a

325 For details of the community action that was taken see Linthicum, Building a People of Power, 110-111.
326 Ibid., 111.
He gives us a further example of the use of unilateral power for good when he tells of the meeting with the bank president as one that was confrontational and with demands. This, he points out, was not relational action, nor was the purpose to shut down the bank. Rather it was about establishing a relationship with the bank’s president. He says, “Our confrontation was for the purpose of shocking the bank president into a true appraisal of what he was doing and to change his ways.” As Linthicum says, “we wanted . . . public accountability by that bank and its president. . . . But there is something more: we wanted conversion . . . to convince our adversaries to embrace the God-intended purpose for their systems and for their lives both as individuals and as institutional leaders.”

How and why do we build relational power within a congregation and a community? How do we help empower those persons within a church and/or community to become transformative? We build relational power relationally, Linthicum declares. He gives what he believes is an obvious but also radical example of such action; “intentionally building relationships that engage people in public life. . . . This is the initiating and continuing radical action that . . . ought to lie at the very heart of the church.” This work is done, he says, by conducting individual, relational meetings with persons. “People engaging one on one in intentional conversations about one’s own life as it relates to public life, are at the very core of building a people of power.” He calls this action “radical” because, though seemingly obvious, it is not normally or easily perceived as a “primary means for building power. That is not how we been taught by the world.” We have been too long taught by the world how power is built.

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327 Ibid.
328 Ibid., 113.
329 Ibid.
330 Ibid., 117.
331 Ibid.
332 Ibid.
institutions as they engage in public life seems out of touch with the world as it is. Therefore, to build power relationally is the most radical of acts,” he says.\(^{333}\)

Gecan adds that building relational power is a way for congregants to be mobilized and taught how to mobilize others to “love, engage, and uphold our most cherished institutions, while watching them, questioning them, and pressing them to change, all at the same time.”\(^{334}\) One-on-one meetings are about building the power of honest, well-meaning human relationships in a very unfriendly and impersonal world. Developing the habit of individual meetings can help us rediscover our fading public humanity and rebuild the dignity in one another, especially among the downtrodden, oppressed, vulnerable, weak, voiceless, and powerless among us. “The person who walks in the door of the congregation is no longer just a congregant or client. And the person who works on the parish staff ceases being a one-dimensional provider,” says Gecan.\(^{335}\) Consequently, we emphasize the power of recognition and reciprocity within the relationship being built, without which there can be no real respect or action or change on behalf of individuals, churches, or communities. Gecan argues that one primary reason the world is as it is, is the lack of such relationships and actions. People are alienated from each other. Technology, which has pervaded nearly every area of our lives, has contributed greatly to this situation. As he further points out, “in a culture of quick encounters and multiple contacts, of instant access and photo-ops,” there is an increasing decline in the depth and quality of meaningful public relationships,\(^ {336}\) the absence of which, creates great gaps in our society, alienating people in the society, in families, and even in our churches. Technology, inappropriately used, has stepped into

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\(^{333}\) Ibid.  
\(^{334}\) Gecan, Going Public, xix.  
\(^{335}\) Ibid., 25.  
\(^{336}\) Ibid., 32.
this gap and made things more difficult. Edward T. Chambers, in his little book *The Power of Relational Action*, speak further to what relational meetings are about:

They are the glue that brings people together and allows them to embrace the tension of living between the world-as-it-is and the world-as-it-should-be. Properly understood, the relational meeting is not a science, nor a technique, but an art form in which one spirit goes after another spirit to create connection, confrontation, and an exchange of talent and energy, eventually leading to some kind of joint action.

Linthicum adds that such relational meetings are carried out, particularly in the context of a church, by the clergy leadership and by members. They are “intentional and systematic” in meeting with members of the church and with people in the community the church serves “in order to begin building relationships, to identify potential leaders, and to help discern a community’s most felt issues in order to enable that community (or church) to organize itself to cope with its most substantive problems.” Linthicum makes it clear that these goals are not accomplished by carrying out surveys or conducting interviews, nor are they the “networking” encounters of peers.

Underlying the conduct of individual meetings is the essential assumption that all human beings, however uneducated, exploited, or beaten down by life, have a greater capacity to understand and act upon their situation than the most highly informed or sympathetic outsider. Every human being, no matter how deprived, is created in the image of God and as such is no less innately capable of determining his future than the most highly educated and self-determined individual.

You can’t bring about significant change for justice and equality without building intentional relationships. All truly transforming change—whether in a neighborhood or a city or your congregation—must be built upon the building and maintaining of strong relationships. But relationships that change people and systems are not superficial, uncommitted relationships. Nor are they “warm, fuzzy, gentle” relationships. . . . Relationships that change society or even a church must require intentional, deep and demanding commitments. . . . Investing

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337 Ibid.
340 Ibid., 125.
time in them for the purpose of encouraging and equipping them to be powerfully engaged with each other in public life.\textsuperscript{341}

Linthicum highlights some of the benefits of carrying out such intentional visits. They can enhance the worship life, programs, and activities of one’s church by such means as making one’s preaching more relevant, probing, and real, so that the message can speak more compassionately and realistically to the concerns of one’s members, (their pains and joys,) while bringing biblical insights to bear upon them. The clergy’s presence to the church’s members and within the community is more pronounced and experienced if the church shapes its activities and plans in line with the issues and concerns of the community it serves. It can open doors for more direct and personal evangelism. In so doing the recognition and effective witness of the church grows. Yet with all these potential benefits, the church and its leadership must never lose sight of the primary objective of conducting relational meetings. These build relational power so that the church and the community can act powerfully regarding their common issues of justice and inequality against the systems that produce these evils.\textsuperscript{342} Chambers states that “the relational meeting is a means to an end. The end is always collective action, and with that kind of power we can change the world.”\textsuperscript{343}

The church then becomes more and more transformative in its intentions and actions by using relational power, while it continues to pray, be present, proclaim the good news, and provides social services, advocacy, and community development.\textsuperscript{344} Such deliberate and intentional action should be part of every congregation’s life. Our participation in the Eucharist demands no less. The power, grace, and life of eucharistic worship should compel us to want to

\textsuperscript{341} Ibid., 125.
\textsuperscript{342} Ibid., 125-126.
\textsuperscript{343} Chambers, \textit{Relational Action}, 20.
\textsuperscript{344} For more detailed discussion on individual meetings, see Linthicum, \textit{People of Power}, 117-145.
build such intentional relationships for the transformation of our churches and the communities in which our churches are created.
CHAPTER 6.

Conclusion

For the kingdom of God depends not on talk but on power. (1 Corinthians 4:20 NRSV)

John Hull advances a most sobering declaration in his book, *Towards the Prophetic Church*:

The Christian tradition in Europe and North America today face a critical choice. The medieval concept of Christianity was replaced by the modern concept of Christianity. This was an understanding of the Christian tradition as being a systematic structure of belief forming a world religion in competitive relations with other similar religious systems. As such, Christianity was para-phenomenal, being the reified expression on the plane of ideas of the emerging global competition between Europe and the rest of the world. The period of Christianity is now coming to an end. The future lies with what we might call Christian-ness, a revival of ethical discipleship to Jesus inspired by biblical faith in God as sender, sent, and sending, the triune God in redemptive action on behalf of God’s world.

Is there a future for the church? There will continue to be a future for the church as the instrument of Christian faith as long as the church is true to the Christian faith and Christian faith is faithful to the mission of God. However, one might imagine another future for the Church, a future in which it becomes the shrewd and hardened collaborator with the powers of financial oppression. Then the Church would no longer be the Church.  

We have looked at the world as it is and as we believe God intends it to be. The world—our communities and cities—is looking to the church for leadership, guidance and action that will bring transformation to the world as it is. The missio Dei is serious, demanding realistic, workable strategies and approaches to being church. The redemption of the world—God’s love for humanity—demands that the church, the people of God act!

The world in which the church finds itself has been described by Brueggemann as a society that has:

Lost its way in its easy violence against the vulnerable
Lost its way in its uncritical exploitation of the less entitled

Lost its way in its easy commitment to greed as a way of life
Lost its way in false promises of happiness and security
Lost its way in its presumption about entitlement and privilege as the chosen people

Regis Duffy asserts that “the kingdom of God remains a vague teaching until people can see in a reconciled and serving community of Christians the attitudes of faith, hope and love that challenge a [very unfriendly and impersonal] world.”

Thomas and Wondra assert that

the worldwide spread and growth of Christianity means that Western churches that are part of worldwide churches must consider whether they need to modify their self-understanding, teachings, and practices to take into account theological, missiological and pastoral developments in churches throughout the world. In the Anglican Communion at the beginning of the twenty-first century, this is particularly evident in discussions of Third World debt, racism and sexism, and human sexuality.

In light of these developments, there is a growing consensus in regard to the understanding of the mission of the church. The church is called to be the place where God’s purpose for the world becomes visible in history, as a sign to the world of its own destiny. Thus the church is called to struggle in history against the powers and structures that stand in the way of God’s purpose for the world. This presupposes that God is already at work in the world in self-disclosure, leading people to strive for justice, liberty, equality, and the humanizing of society and culture. The church is called to perceive where God is at work, to take visible shape and form in these places, and to call others to the struggle.

In order to do so the church will have to undergo a resetting or realigning of its vision and sense of its mission in and to the world. This will require change. Change usually upsets people or at least makes most persons uncomfortable. We have examined the world that the church is called to work in, the missional demands of the Eucharist, and God’s demand for the church to work for the establishment of the shalom community through the power of relational action. The challenge of this work is to bring an awareness of the transformation that can occur in and to

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348 Thomas and Wondra, *Introduction to Theology*, 265.
congregational life, church mission and community efforts, through the power of relational action. This will bring with it growth and purpose; the building of stronger, deeper congregational relationships; the development of leaders; renewed strategic congregational visioning for missions; new and creative ways of organizing church for more effective functioning in its context; more effective witnessing to God’s gift of salvation in Jesus Christ and God’s love for all humanity; the generation of increased income; and community transformation, all through powerful relational action.  

As this thesis claims, our participation in the Eucharist should cause us to face what James L. Empereur and Christopher G. Kiesling, writing in *The Liturgy that Does Justice* call, “an immense challenge—celebrating liturgy which changes not only the hearts of worshipers, but, through them, the way the world—and the church—are organized and function.” Such worshippers do so as they respond to the daily stories and visions on our media screens which vividly display the horrific results of poverty, violence, abuse of all kinds, the hunger and despair that’s occurring in the world around us—in the world as it is. Empereur and Kiesling further assert that while most of the images are coming from the developing world, they also included the United States, and are a result of the powerlessness of people who do not have a say in what happens to the resources (often because of political and economic mismanagement, and manipulation of the religious [values-creating] systems of belief) found in our respective countries, their cities, and communities. As is commonly known and accepted, these resources are mostly controlled and manipulated by the rich and powerful nations and individuals, and those of the “right” social strata. Consequently Empereur and Kiesling say that such realities

351 Ibid., 1-2.
should “challenge Christians who gather weekly to worship Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. . . .
To make God-in-Christ’s-reality presence, compassion, and healing of humanity visible and
tangible through their efforts to establish . . . justice in neighborhood, city, nation, and the world
community—and, yes, in parish, diocese, . . . and universal church.”³⁵²

In the BEM we read that “the very celebration of the Eucharist is an instance of the
Church’s participation in God’s mission to the world. This participation takes everyday form in
the proclamation of the Gospel, service of the neighbor, and faithful presence in the world.”³⁵³
The Eucharist is therefore a challenge to mission, locally and internationally. And Presler speaks
of “a growing desire” by “missionaries, church leaders and church statements, . . . to ‘be with’
instead of ‘do for,’ to develop mutually transformative relationships between diverse people
groups rather than parachute in to fix problems. This is a shift that scripture and theology solidly
reinforce.”³⁵⁴

The Eucharist—the worship of the church—should provide that point of departure for the
leaders and members to recognize more and more that in the world as it is, it cannot be business
as usual for the church. The Eucharist challenges the church and God demands of the church,
that it live out the call to carry out God’s mission that it signifies. Consequently based on the
arguments of this thesis, the BEM statement above, seems to limit the scope and lacks a full
understanding of the vision of the shalom community as being an essential part of the missio
Dei.

³⁵² Ibid., 4.
³⁵³ Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, 25.
³⁵⁴ Presler, Going Global with God, xi.
We are called to live out our transfigured lives in the world as it is. Jeremiah 29:1-11 is not merely talking about our individual spiritual or contemplative renewal,\(^{355}\) as essential as that is to the process. Through participation in the Eucharist and a proper grasp of, and commitment to, its missional theology, the church should be anticipating the transformation of its leaders and congregations who, as transfigured persons, have the potential to transform communities, cities and even their nation. The Eucharist in and of itself, will not and does not magically effect such a change in anyone; rather as Duffy says, “In worship and sacrament, God calls Christian communities to be a credible witness to his presence and teaching.”\(^{356}\) Transformation of congregations and of communities and cities, will necessitate more than hope for some magical change.

God’s mandate to the church is both for the individual and for the church universal. As individuals we are called to exemplify the essence of the missio Dei as we seek to love our neighbor as ourselves, through lives that demonstrate Christian characteristics which include, respect for all persons, forgiveness and reconciliation, patience and tolerance with those different from ourselves, treating all persons fairly and justly. However as put forward in previous chapters, this is not enough. God’s mission demands that the church use the power—the capacity, ability and will to act—that it has, to transform itself in order that it may go and transform the world. We need to recognize that, while our presence, prayer, proclamation and practice with social services, advocacy and community development are all essential, they are not sufficient, by themselves, to bring about transformation of systems and people, within the

\(^{355}\) Hughes, *Beloved Dust*, 160. Spiritual renewal (transformation?) means more than an increase in individual fervor, piety, and virtue; it must also mean a call to the whole community of God’s people to a life of radical virtue and gospel and covenant obedience for the sake of mission.

church, the community, a city and a nation, resulting in the manifestation of the shalom community.

Linthicum accurately summarizes the essence of this thesis with these words:

The future of the church lies in our capacity to move out of the comfortable ways we have learned to be “church” in order to embrace “church” as that community which is in mission to the world. We exist, like Jesus, to “bring good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, to recover the sight of the blind, to enable the oppressed to go free and to [work for the coming of God’s kingdom of peace and justice]” (Luke 4:18-19). The only way for the church to bring the Shalom Community to the city or nation is for those who wish to pursue God’s intended values and organize together across lines of denomination, tradition, theology and liturgy so that they can develop the power to address the causes of that society’s corporate pain. It is only by using the power of a relational culture that the church can work for the shalom of the city and thus become, in their deeds as well as in their words, the people of God!\(^{357}\)

The establishment of the shalom community is possible through the exercising of relational power by the church against the political, economic and values-creating (religious) systems of the world. The utilization of relational power begins within the church, among its leadership and members, then from there, out into the community where the church has been “sent” by God to “Seek the welfare (shalom) of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare (shalom) you will find your welfare (shalom).” (Jeremiah 29:7). This is the mission of the church in the 21\(^{st}\) century, and in every generation, the execution of the missio Dei. This is God’s call on the church today. Linthicum declares that the church

is to work for shalom through its being an example of a shalom community before the world (“presence”), praying that God’s shalom kingdom would come, proclaiming the gospel of the shalom kingdom to the world, and actively working for shalom through acts of mercy, advocacy, and community and economic development. But most of all the church is to work for the world’s shalom by using its power to bring about justice in the world.\(^{358}\)

\(^{357}\) Linthicum, *People of Power*, 113-114.

\(^{358}\) Ibid., 114.
And it takes power to bring about change. It will take the right use of the right type of power, to transform the world as it is, into the world as it should be. It will require committed and trained persons, who are clear about God’s mission, and who are willing to act to accomplish that mission.

In contrast to this is the current position of too many of our churches’ lives and practices today. Many have “wandered far from the biblical model”\(^3\) says Hull, who summarizes the culture of churches that have wandered, under these main headings. They express

- Words of faith without faithful actions,
- Kingdom of God words without kingdom of God actions and
- Uninterpreted actions.\(^4\)

Hull asserts that these three cultural expressions may be used as criteria for assessing “fresh expressions of Christian faith, ecclesial structure or mission. . . . Do the structures make the mission of God visible? And if not, how is this to be brought about?”\(^5\)

Here in the West, in the Episcopal Church, and certainly in the Caribbean and Jamaica in particular, it has been regularly reported, that there is a significant decline in the membership of many of our churches. Many of our programmes to stimulate numerical and financial growth remain bound within the ambit of “maintaining church”, that is, seeking to keep what we already have, improve upon it where possible, with efforts to reach out to the young people and those now called the millennials, through various attractive forms of church. In other words, maintaining the status quo of what used to be or what has always been. Too many of our church leaders and workers have still not accepted nor grasped the fact that Jesus has called the church

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\(^3\) Hull, *Prophetic Church*, 232.
\(^4\) Ibid., 233.
\(^5\) Ibid., 233-4.
to “actively work to ‘make’ shalom, not simply maintain a remembrance of it.” Linthicum declares:

The church is both a relational body and an institution. . . . Its institutionality will continually overwhelm its relationality, unless it is checked. That is, the institutional concerns (raising money, maintaining the building, bringing more members into the church, paying bills, operating programs, and chairing committees) will always take precedence over the fostering of both private and public relationships.

Yet it is the building of significant public relationships that empowers any church. Its impact upon the world or upon its members is not really built through its programs and projects. What makes a program appear successful are the relationships that have been engendered by working in or participating in that program.

Since Jamaica’s independence in 1962, far too many of the Jamaican people have been subjected to oppressive systems of government and non-government entities. Persons and communities have been marginalized and left without a voice amongst the systems of power and control. Over time these systems of oppression have given rise to a great deal of anger, resentment and frustration which becomes very acute and more and more manifest themselves through the use of the internet, telecommunications, social media, and public demonstrations of civil unrest of various forms. Our churches, including the Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, have been slow in being pastorally aware of, and responsive to the significance, power, and the right and strategic use of these avenues of communication (particularly for advocacy and raising the awareness of, and support for, relevant issues). Too many Anglican churches continue to sit on the ceremonious pews of our Sunday eucharistic worship and remain satisfied with that, too often missing the missional emphasis of the Eucharist and its demands upon our lives to carry out transformational work of the missio Dei. And so Linthicum challenges the church when he says,

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362 Linthicum, People of Power, 114.
363 Ibid., 306.
If the church is called to make a difference in its city, seeking to build a relational culture of justice, stewardship of the earth’s resources, and equitable distribution of wealth, it will not accomplish this by pontificating on the same from lofty pulpits or by passing resolutions at denominational gatherings. It will make a difference—and will be respected by the political, economic, and values-creating systems and leaders of a city—only as the church uses power intelligently.

And what does it mean to use power? It means a willingness to work together in a city as one single disciplined body, rather than each church “doing its own thing” and seeking to grab all the credit. It means being direct, confrontive, and specific in its demands upon the systems. It means a willingness to set the agenda rather than reacting to the city’s agenda, being proactive in working for the city’s social righteousness.364

Churches must seek to build relational power throughout their congregations, motivating and training leaders and potential leaders to conduct relational meetings with each other and members of the congregation. As Linthicum argues, it is only by building and sustaining such intentional relationships that a church will be able to transform itself into a more effective and purpose driven community of individuals and organizations. It is imperative that the church recognize its own need to equip and encourage its members to know their own powers that arise by engaging in such public relationships and so strengthen itself prior to going into, or while engaging, the community in public life. Subsequently by conducting these encounters with persons throughout the community and with other organizations in the community, the church will be better able to work with its community to bring about the transformation of that community by enabling that church and community to act powerfully. Such committed relationships can transform churches and change communities.365

Consequently we must ask and seek to clarify, what kind of transformation ought the church to be seeking? What is it that God’s transfigured people primarily should be trying to do? Within the community or city where we are placed or sent by God, should we be seeking to evangelize, plant or build a new church, provide some form of social services? Should we be

364 Ibid., 107.
365 Ibid., 125.
seeking to help people change their situations in such a way as to empower themselves to carrying out such changes? Linthicum asserts that wisely answering such questions is of paramount importance and he suggests that there are three distinct responses that a church can make to its community in seeking to answer these questions and so determine the nature of the transformation that that church is endeavoring to accomplish. Linthicum summarizes the possible responses of a church in this way:

- First, it can ignore the city and the needs of the people around it as it concentrates on preserving its own life. It can view itself as a fortress.
- Second, it can provide evangelism and social services and do good works for and to the people in the city. It can view itself as the savior of the community.
- Third, it can provide leadership for and participate in the community’s struggle to determine for itself what kind of community it wants to become, a community with shalom and justice for all its people. The church can view itself as a partner with the community.

He categorizes these responses by saying these are churches which are: In the community; To the community and; With the community, respectively.

Appendix A recounts one of Linthicum’s testimonials concerning the power and effectiveness of relational (individual) meetings upon a congregation. He concludes with the following statement: “Your church’s effectiveness in building the shalom of your community will be directly proportional to the amount of time you and your church’s leaders invest in building relationships.”

He cautions us, however, saying that people who act together with relational power operate in significantly different ways to people who don’t know how to use power. The very way you respond to the system in a mutual encounter with them informs them whether or not you and the people possess power (and, therefore whether they need to pay attention to you or dismiss you).
For example, people who have built strong relational power with each other will be direct with the leaders of the systems they have targeted for action; they will be confrontive in their statement of the issues (but not necessarily nasty) and specific in what they demand of the systems. People who don’t feel powerful, on the other hand, will be vague and abstract, and will preach lofty principles but not specific concrete action. . . . Thus people with power will seek a win-win resolution of the issue . . . people without power will seek to destroy the opposition (“win-lose”).

. . . people with power will be extremely realistic in what they are seeking to accomplish, willing to build on little victory after little victory after little victory. People without power, on the other hand, will be idealists who will demand “the whole loaf or none of it.” . . . people with power are flexible while people without power are rigid. Finally people with power will always be accountable for their actions, while those without power will refuse to be accountable to anyone but themselves.  

This thesis asserts that the church’s theology and practice of the Holy Eucharist, its primary act of worship, demands that God’s people enact and carry out the mission of God. Additionally the mission of God entails and embraces the transformation of people, congregations and communities in order to establish the shalom of God—“communities of peace, caring, support, prosperity, abundance, and oneness with God and humanity,” where the “economic, political and social/spiritual systems . . . provide the structure and means for us to live in . . . shalom, thus bringing glory to God.”  

This transformation includes but goes beyond the traditional activities of how church is usually done or carried out. These traditional activities of the church normally entail: evangelism—the winning of souls for Jesus Christ through the knowledge of and belief in his redemptive acts (which in and of itself is transformational); the establishment of social services; the engagement of advocacy on behalf of others; and community development for or within a community. They all call for the church’s ministry to be “doing something to or for the community” or “just being in” a community but not “being with a community.” As Linthicum would point out, the first two characteristics do not actually help or

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370 Ibid., 106-107.
371 Ibid., 297.
assist the people to become a people of power nor do they engage the systems of power that oppress or subjugate the people. (As a note, community development at its best does involve some engagement of the systems of power and some degree of transforming the lives of the community; however, it often falls short of building and giving the people being helped, power to continue their transformation).\(^{372}\) Relational power builds the power of a people so they can use that power to transform their congregation or community. This thesis focuses on and limits itself to the use of relational power within a congregation, building their own power in order that they may go and engage the communities where they are as church. The church working with other likeminded groups and organizations may then, through community organizing, work together to bring about the transformation of their community by engaging the systems of power—the economic, political and religious(values-creating) systems—thereby establishing the shalom and justice of said communities. As Linthicum puts it, “It is community organizing that leads to transformation of a community, because it results in people’s attitude toward themselves being changed . . . people building respect for themselves and the systems developing respect for them as well. That is truly transformational. . . . Ministry ‘with’ a community, never ‘to’ or ‘in’ a community.”\(^{373}\)

Consequently, while recognizing that the worship and the work of God’s people are not separate unrelated activities, God’s people should not be satisfied nor get comfortable with our activities of evangelism, carrying out the “handout” mission of providing social services (also called mercy ministries), defending the weak and powerless without equipping them to stand and defend themselves. These activities in and by themselves fall short of transforming the life of the worshipping community, fall short of helping people in the community where the church is

\(^{372}\) Ibid., 282-287.

\(^{373}\) Ibid., 291-2.
located to take control of their lives and the nature of their communities. This is done by doing what Jesus did. He defeated the ultimate source of the human problem—sin—through his own redemptive acts. The manifestation of systemic (communal) sin is experienced through the unequal distribution and misuse of power throughout societies, which in turn has made the world as it is. Jesus calls the church to join him by coming “alongside the poor and join them in their struggle to deal with the forces that are exploiting their community. Society will never be changed if we do not take the battle to the powerful and demand of them responsible redistribution of wealth and power. . . . That’s what Jesus did.”

EPILOGUE

There is much more to the idea, concept and execution of relational power and the organizing and training that go with it, in order to effectively carry out community organizing for the building of shalom within, and the transformation of, our communities and cities, elaboration of which goes far beyond the scope of this thesis. It requires in most cases the work of an experienced community organizer, usually external to the community, training of community persons and so on. Notwithstanding, the further understanding, training and use of relational power should become a deliberate, intentional and integral part of the requirements of theological training. The effective equipping of lay and clergy leaders should form a part of the curriculum of study and practicum in areas such as church management, practical theology, missiology or other similarly titled program, in our churches, seminaries and perhaps dovetailing with programs like the Education for Ministry (EfM) program at the School of Theology in Sewanee, Tennessee, the Lay Readers and Supplementary (non-stipendiary) Ministers’ training programs of the Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands.

374 Ibid., 294.
Michael Gecan offers some tools and guidelines aimed toward congregational development and organizing. The power of effective organizing, he suggests can be facilitated through the use of these four tools:

- **Individual meetings**[^375], which are by far the most important, effective, and least used organizational tool in congregational life today.
- **Power (Relational) Analysis** – both of the institution and the broader community in which congregations find themselves.
- **Teaching and training** – which is used sometimes and somewhat in some congregations, but too narrowly and ineffectively [e.g. by not intentionally identifying and training leaders].
- **Action and Evaluation** – which is also used in congregations, for example in liturgy training, but again too narrowly and without a commitment to the development of congregational leaders.^[376]

Without the right and proper training of willing and strategically positioned persons to understand the nature of power and how to use it effectively to bring about sustainable, effective transformation, no real positive power would have been exercised by the church. The world (and the church) will continue as it is, and the church would be failing to carry out its mandate fully, initiated by the redemptive life, work and actions of Jesus Christ, in seeking the shalom of the community, the city in which she has been sent and positioned.

To explore more of these ideas, the writings and study of the work of community organizers like Michael Gecan, Robert Linthicum, Saul Alinsky, Ed Chambers and many others, and the work and examples of the Industrial Areas Foundation[^377] and other organizations like it, are highly recommended. Hull concludes,

> “The fulfillment of God’s mission will be a renewed creation, when liberty of the children of God will reach its glorious realization, along with the renewal of the created order (Romans 8:21). This lies in the future. The God who originated the mission from the past is also the God who calls from the future (John 14:18; Rev. 1:8).”[^378]

[^375]: Alternately called one to one or relational meetings.
[^377]: See http://www.industrialareasfoundation.org/
APPENDIX A

How Individual Meetings Changed One Church 379

When I was installed as the senior pastor of Edgewater Presbyterian Church in Chicago in 1969, I not only inherited a church in trouble, I found myself pastoring a church in the midst of a great depression. Over the previous ten years, the church had declined from its high of 1500 members to a little over 500. Without its sizable endowment, the congregation could no longer have occupied their own building. The former pastor had left them in disgust in less than a year. The result was a massive inferiority complex on the part of the church.

By 1975, the church had experienced a major transformation. Sunday worship attendance had doubled, the decline in membership had been reversed, including 47 percent of new members being converts to Christianity, income had increased by 56 percent, 30 percent of the congregation was involved in adult education, the church staff had increased from three to ten people, and the church was carrying out twenty-two community ministries. It was selected by the National Council of Churches as one of eighteen Protestant churches in the United States having “most outstanding ministry in a rapidly changing community.” What had happened?

When I began my pastorate at Edgewater church, I committed myself to one day each week to conducting individual meetings with people in the community and another day to calling on church members. I quickly realized that the church leaders were thoroughly out of touch with what was happening in the community. So I challenged the elders of our church to join me in holding individual meetings with the people of our congregation and community.

The elders hesitated, but they did not want to disappoint their new pastor. So they said they would do it if the deacons would do it (thinking I would never get the deacons to agree). So I asked the deacons, and they said they’d do it if I got the leaders of the women’s association.

379 Linthicum, People of Power, 143-144.
The ladies thought it was a terrific idea. So within a month, four months after I had arrived at the church, we set up calling-teams of 52 people, each committed to making at least two visits weekly throughout our congregation and the community.

Within six months, these teams had called on over one thousand people in our inner-city community and almost all the members of our congregation. Twice a month, we callers all gathered together for dinner, to study Scripture regarding the nature and mission of the church, and to share and reflect about what we have been learning as a result of our visiting within the congregation and community. Out of that visiting and our regular reflection together, our leaders created a mission design for our church that set the future for our ministry, both for my tenure there and for several decades afterward.

What had the calling done for my church leaders? By the end of our visiting and twice monthly reflection, those leaders knew both the congregation and its community. They knew the community’s issues and problems. They knew its history and aspirations. My people knew the real leaders of that community, not simply by reputation but face-to-face, for they had met with each leader personally. And that knowledge informed our ministry together. It created the foundation for Edgewater Church’s ministry in that community, its commitment to the self-determination of that slum’s poor and powerless, and the development of the interior programming and life of that congregation. I never had to argue for the necessity of that church’s involvement in community organizing-no matter how confrontational or controversial the organization’s actions became—simply because the congregation had identified the community’s issues for itself, and in the process of became committed to the people. Edgewater Church had become a church of and for that community, working with people on the people’s issues. And
their transformation had occurred solely because all the church’s leadership had become involved in conducting individual meetings.

This is the power of individual meetings, and how such meetings change those who are doing the calling as well as those who are called upon.
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