UR601 Final Paper

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What is "Urban Ministry?"

Ronald E. Peters defines "urban ministry" as "a way of understanding God based upon the dynamics of the city and involves a theological praxis that seeks to enhance the quality of life for all creation."[1] In creating my own definition of urban ministry, I first seek to define what is "urban." Tim Keller defines the city as a "social form in which people physically live in close proximity to one another."[2] Bakke defines cities as "places where size, density, and heterogeneity are measured."[3] Moreover, the city acts as a "center of power" and "culture" as well as an "amplifier," "magnifier," and "engine."[4] In other words, cities "turn up the volume," have a magnetic pull or "attract," and "drive the world."[5] The city as a center of power indicates its "centripetal and a centrifugal force, drawing regions and systems into its orbit."[6]

Defining the "City"

Clearly, the definitions of what constitutes a city are many and varied. Are "cities" primarily people, places, or both? Are cities defined by "close proximity" as Keller suggests, or otherwise their more compelling force as "centers of power"? In defining the city, I agree with Conn and Ortiz that ultimately such qualifications as population or geographic size, density, and heterogeneity are helpful but insufficient, as cities throughout history have largely varied according to the above criteria—most were defined by "a concentration of one place," yet considered relatively "small by modern standards."[7] Furthermore, while Seoul, South Korea is most definitely considered a city for all intents and purposes, it remains one of the most

1 Ronald E. Peters, *Urban Ministry: An Introduction* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 8.
2 Dr. Charles Galbreath, "Biblical and Theological Foundations of the Church in the Urban World 1.1," UR601: The Church in the Urban World (class lecture, Alliance Theological Seminary, New York, NY, September 8, 2022).
3 Raymond J. Bakke, *A Theology as Big as the City* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 12.
4 Bakke 12, 157, 168-169. Harvie M. Conn and Manuel Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City, & the People of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 35.
5 Galbreath, "Biblical and Theological Foundations 1.1."
6 Conn and Ortiz, *Urban Ministry: The Kingdom, the City, & the People of God*, 205.
7 Conn and Ortiz, *Urban Ministry*, 34.

homogenous cities in the world with less than a 5 percent population of foreigners living in the city.[8] As such, I focus on the emphasis of cities as primarily centers of political power, culture, and economy, while simultaneously maintaining that demographic measurements such as geographic size and population density continue to provide standard metrics for evaluating the qualifications of urban areas, or cities. In short, my definition of the city is as follows: a relatively large, densely populated center of power, culture, and economy.[9]

Defining "Ministry"

Now, turning to the second part of the definition, that is "ministry," the Greek counterpart for this word—*diakonia*—translates as "service," often associated with slavery. This naturally begs the question, then, to whom are we a slave to, or serving? I believe the answer lies in Christ. Whenever we serve the poor and needy, whether spiritually or physically, we are indeed serving Christ.[10] While I believe that ministry is in part the meeting and serving of needs—in this sense, service—I still believe this ultimately falls short of a biblical definition of ministry, and specifically, *shalom*. The Hebrew word *shalom* (meaning "peace") is the "quality of wholeness, harmony, and flourishing in God's creation," of which the violation, by extension, is "sin."[11] Bakke refers to this as the "corporate personality" in which man's "whole being is inextricably bound with the life of the entire individual."[12] As José Humphreys writes in his book, *Seeing Jesus in East Harlem*, the Hebrew worldview did not consider the well-being of each individual as separate from the well-being of the whole, that is society at large, but rather inextricably

8 "Seoul Population 2022," World Population Review, accessed December 5, 2022, https://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/seoul-population.
9 Conn and Ortiz, 205.
10 Matt. 25:40; Col. 3:23 NIV.
11 José Humphreys, *Seeing Jesus in East Harlem: What Happens When Churches Show up and Stay Put* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 18.
12 Bakke, *A Theology as Big as the City*, 61.

intertwined. In other words, *tov*, or "goodness" in Hebrew, was understood as existing "between things," that is in relationship.[13] As such, I present a definition of urban ministry as restoring the *shalom* of the city by reconciling man to right relationship with God, each other, and all creation.[14]

Missio Dei *and God's Loving Initiative, or* Chesed

It is worth noting here that while ministry may be predicated on the basis of needs, or service, it is not solely, or even primarily defined by said needs. Ultimately, missions exists because worship does not.[15] Urban ministry is to be an extension of the *missio dei*, that is God's redemption plan to restore all creation unto Himself. In short, true urban ministry begins and ends with God. In other words, just as the Godhead "always experienced loving relationships amongst themselves and created the world out of this overflow—the desire to share their grace with Adam and the rest of creation," so too we are called to serve not primarily to meet needs, but rather as a result of God's "work of grace in [our] li[ves] that compels [us] to share."[16] This is an entirely "different motive for God's creation" than a "nee[d] to create Adam to meet his own needs," leading to a selfish manipulation of sorts, rather than a self-giving love extending from God's free initiative and *chesed*, or loving-kindness.[17] Thus, I present the following definition of "urban ministry": seeking the shalom of relatively large, densely populated centers of political power, culture, and economy by first and foremost reconciling man to God, then to each other,

13 Humphreys, *Seeing Jesus in East Harlem*, 19.
14 Dr. Charles Galbreath, "Sociological Analysis of the Urban Context 2.3," UR601: The Church in the Urban World (class lecture at Alliance Theological Seminary, New York, NY, November 3, 2022). Dr. Charles Galbreath, "Ecclesiastical Praxis for Urban Transformation 3.1," UR601: The Church in the Urban World (class lecture at Alliance Theological Seminary, New York, NY, November 10, 2022).
15 Conn and Ortiz, 41.
16 Bakke, 36.
17 Ibid. Conn and Ortiz, 96-99.

and by extension all creation in partnership with the Holy Spirit via the *missio dei* and response to God's loving initiative.[18]

Ir *and* Polis: *Cities in the Old and New Testament*

We shall here turn to finding a scriptural basis for urban ministry. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, cities are referred to as *ir* and *polis*, respectively. *Ir* occurs in the Old Testament over a thousand times.[19] *Polis* occurs comparably less in the New Testament, totaling over 160 times, yet this may be in part due to the NT's shorter breadth both in terms of time and space, as well as the structure of the Roman empire in which cities shifted from primarily acting as city-states, as in the OT, to instead centralized colonies and military forts.[20] As mentioned earlier, however, it is important to note here that cities in biblical times do not necessarily carry the same connotation and understanding as cities today, particularly regarding such criteria as geographic size, population density, and social heterogeneity. For instance, the capital of the Roman Empire, namely Rome, boasted of a population of 650,000 by 100 AD, perhaps reaching even as high as 1 million, which was "gargantuan by all previous urban standards" and yet would hardly make the list of top 10, or even 100, largest cities in the world today.[21] Moreover, unlike the rural-urban dichotomy which exists in the mind of the modern reader today, the Hebrew worldview had no such concept or terminology which separated "town" from "city." Hence, Nineveh was referred to as the "great" city so as to place emphasis on its great size and population density, although this too could have been used to indicate "strength and power,"

18 I emphasize that such a definition is a constant work-in-progress, as cities themselves are ever evolving due to changing political, social, technological, and economic factors, amongst others.
19 "Strong's Concordance: 5892b. Ir or Ar or Ayar," Bible Hub, accessed December 5, 2022, https://biblehub.com/hebrew/5892b.htm.
20 Conn and Ortiz, 37. "Strong's Concordance: 4172. Polis," Bible Hub, accessed December 5, 2022, https://biblehub.com/greek/4172.htm.
21 Conn and Ortiz, 37-38. "Seoul Population 2022," World Population Review, accessed December 5, 2022, https://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/seoul-population.

rather than merely "size."[22] Last but not least, cities, particularly in the Old Testament but even in the New Testament, were "intimate[ly] link[ed]" with religion in the very ancient world," and acted as "shrine[s]," of sorts.[23] Namely, each city had its own primary god, to whom built a shrine and around which they organized their lives.[24] In other words, "the temple was central to the life of these cities."[25]

The So-Called "Anti-Urban" Debate: Does God Love the City?

This understanding of "shrine cities" to be found in both the Old and New Testaments, most notably the Tower of Babel myth, coupled with narratives concerning cities such as Sodom and Gomorrah, have led some to argue that the Bible contains a so-called "anti-urban bias."[26] This anti-urban bias can be traced as far back as Gen. 4:16-17 in which Cain leaves Eden to build the city Enoch, named after his son. It is here that such symbols of civilization as the arts, technology and other cultural elements traditionally associated with "human achievement" are introduced.[27] Yet, what this account fails to take into consideration is that Eden, often referred to simply as a "garden" and thereby attributing to the romanticist notion of rural or pastoral imagery, was itself a city in its own right. That is to say, when God commanded Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it," He was essentially giving them the "cultural mandate," or "urban mandate."[28] The rivers which flowed through the "garden" of Eden are later pictured in the Psalms as watering "the city of God."[29] Finally, the rivers of Eden appear in the book of Revelations, the ultimate shrine city, except there is no

22 Conn and Ortiz, 83. Jonah 3:2 NIV.
23 Conn and Ortiz, 84.
24 Conn and Ortiz, 34-35, 84.
25 Conn and Ortiz, 35.
26 Conn and Ortiz, 84-85. Gen. 11:1-9; 19:24 NIV.
27 Conn and Ortiz, 224.
28 Conn and Ortiz, 87.
29 Gen. 2:10; Ps. 46:5 NIV.

temple other than the presence of the "Lord God Almighty and the Lamb" themselves.[30] The River is lined with "the tree of life," whose leaves offer "healing for the nations," which is apt here considering our previous definition of urban ministry, that is seeking the shalom of the city by restoring them to wholeness in their relationships with God, each other, and the rest of creation.

Cities As Symbols of Common Grace

Others will point to passages such as Gen. 11:31-12:3 or Gen. 19:24 as evidence of the alleged anti-urban bias within the scriptural texts. Yet again, these individuals fail to recognize the reason Abraham made his "home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country…" was the fact that they were "looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God."[31] Similarly, those who argue that Lot's "pitch[ing] his tents near Sodom" led to his and ultimately the city's demise overlook Abraham's pleas, even begging on behalf of the city, namely Sodom.[32] Notably, the divine promise that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through" Abraham is directly linked to God's "willingness to hear Abraham's…plea[s]" and thus, fulfilled through the patriarch's "intercession *for* the city, not against it."[33] Secondly, "all peoples" inherently includes those in cities—yes, even including Sodom and Gomorrah.[34] Returning to the first known city built by man, that is Cain, the reader is reminded that even "despite sin's radical distortion of God's urban purposes, the city remains a mark of grace as well as rebellion, a mark of preserving, conserving grace shared with all under the shadow of the common curse."[35] This is elsewhere described as God's common, or prevenient, grace to man,

30 Rev. 21:22 NIV.
31 Heb. 11:10 NIV.
32 Gen. 13:12; 18:18 NIV.
33 Conn and Ortiz, 88.
34 Ibid.
35 Conn and Ortiz, 87.

that is provided through cities, including infrastructure such as government, education, health care, information, trade, business, and culture, among other things.[36]

Paul and Jesus' Urban Mission in Luke–Acts

Turning to the New Testament, Paul himself strategically positioned his missionary route along major cities such as Athens, Corinth, Ephesus and last but not least, Rome. As Bakke asserts, "the seven churches of Revelation were more than mere symbols. They may also have served as "postal centers for the region as a whole, in which case the book of Revelation would have been intended not only for them, but also for others" around them.[37] Finally, Jesus himself possessed an urban ministry. While some scholars maintain that Jesus largely ministered in the villages and Galilean countryside, only skirting around major cities such as Caesarea Philippi and the Decapolis, this is to ignore both the "anachronistic assumptions imposed on [cities] by [modern] standards," namely the sharp rural-urban divide in the modern mind, as well as the interchangeable use of polis to refer to both "town/village" or "city."[38] For instance, lower Galilee itself spanned only between fifteen to twenty-five miles, yet was "one of the most densely populated regions of the entire Roman Empire."[39] Furthermore, through this area ran major Roman road systems, which were in turn connected to "regional centers of Roman power, culture, and influence—Capernaum; the walled city of Magdala; Scythopolis or Beth Shean, the largest city of the Decapolis; Tiberias, and Sepphoris, the seat of the Sanhedrin and the capital and 'ornament,' of Galilee."[40] In particular, the gospel of Luke highlights the role of the city in Jesus' mission, pinpointing Jerusalem as his end goal, namely the city of God.

36 Dr. Charles Galbreath, "Sociological Analysis of the Urban Context 2.1," UR601: The Church in the Urban World (class lecture at Alliance Theological Seminary, New York, NY, October 20, 2022).
37 Bakke, 181-182.
38 Conn and Ortiz, 120.
39 Ibid.
40 Conn and Ortiz, 120-121.

Pastoral Circle: Experience, Social Analysis, Theological Reflection, and Action

In order to develop strategies on how the church can foster impact in the city, I would adopt the pastoral circle—namely, experience, social analysis, theological reflection, and action. Also known as the hermeneutical circle, the above model seeks to address "new questions continually raised to challenge older theories by the force of new situations."[41] To begin with, one's lived experience acts as the starting point for any sort of cultural and sociological analysis. It is extremely difficult to gain an understanding of a particular context or social issue without having any direct experience relevant to the issue at hand. Then, one can begin to ask the question of "why" via social analysis.[42] Why are these issues occurring either repeatedly on a widespread scale? What are the root causes, beyond surface-level observation?

For instance, take the issue of poverty. At first glance, many readily attribute the poor's status to being "lazy," "addicts," "mentally deficient," originating from an inferior "culture," or possessing "poor work habits."[43] Yet this discounts the numerous factors and dynamics at play in determining wealth and class, including privilege and the "very social, political, and economic powers that are oppressing others and making them poor."[44] More often than not, the poor are not merely "sinners," but rather those who are "sinned against."[45] This brings up the question of systemic injustices and looking at the bigger picture rather than fixating on individual weaknesses and flaws. In conducting social analysis, I will pursue a combination of ethnographic study, demographic research, and community analysis, which will be explored in further detail in the next section.

41 Dr. Charles Galbreath, "Sociological Analysis of the Urban Context 2.2.1," UR601: The Church in the Urban World (class lecture, Alliance Theological Seminary, New York, NY, October 27, 2022).
42 Ibid.
43 Conn and Ortiz, 327.
44 Ibid.
45 Bakke, 42-43.

Then, I will move onto theological reflection where "one makes judgments about the issue and its causes based on the biblical and theological tradition as you have appropriated it."[46] Naturally, such reflection ought to "call forth not just an intellectual assent to faith, but a commitment to incorporate it within one's life," which naturally leads to the next step, namely action. Action on the part of the church can manifest in various ways, but in keeping with our social analysis, action signifies "helping people survive their present crisis or need and addressing the root causes of the problems."[47] That said, in addition to "direct service," we also need to engage in "legislative advocacy, community organizing, and working with organizations that are changing the structures that promote injustice."[48] After all, faith without works is dead.[49] Finally, it must be noted here that the pastoral circle is not a linear model, but rather a continuous cycle in which all four elements, that is theological reflection, action, experience, and social analysis, coalesce to present new problems and by extension, solutions.

The Flagship Model

As for the urban church model, I lean in favor of the flagship church, which "serves as a launching pad for new church plants."[50] In fact, my own church context can similarly be described as a flagship model, of sorts. As of early last year, I have transitioned out of my first-generation Korean immigrant church to New Mercy, which is a completely independent second-generation church model. While NM itself is still largely composed of Korean-Americans, we are slowly becoming multiethnic as language is no longer our primary defining factor, or in the case of the first-generation church, a barrier. To date, we have already launched one church

46 Galbreath, "Sociological Analysis 2.2.1."
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 James 2:14 NKJV.
50 Conn and Ortiz, 248.

plant, another second-generation church model which is similarly composed of mainly Korean-Americans, albeit slowly becoming more multi-ethnic. Our hope is to launch one more church plant within the next several years, during which time we also hope to purchase our own church building. As such, I suggest we move towards the direction of becoming an intentionally multicultural and intergenerational model. In so doing, I believe we can effectively become a flagship model, creating church plants either outside of our own congregation or otherwise using the integrative model put forth by Conn and Ortiz, to which I shall later return.

Holistic Urban Church

As regards the question of what a holistic urban church looks like, I suggest one which has a solid biblical grounding for urban ministry; Spirit-empowered congregation equipped with the Word and prayer; employ the various sociological analyses referred to earlier such as ethnographic study, demographic information, and community analysis; develop partnerships both with other church leaders and secular community leaders, particularly those with political, economic, and/or social power; and promoting both "bottom-up" theology and indigenous leadership development and empowerment. Bakke notes that amongst the various challenges he faced in urban ministry both as a practitioner and scholar was not primarily financial, political, or sociological, but "theological."[51] In other words, the urban minister lacked a theology which "addressed the world [he] was experiencing."[52] The apparent schism between urban and rural ministries, or distinction between evangelism and social change, has led to most Christians still "read[ing] the Bible through rural lenses."[53] Therefore, in order for an urban church to provide effective ministry, it must first grasp a theological understanding of what is "urban ministry," to

51 Bakke, 14.
52 Bakke, 22.
53 Bakke, 14.

which much of this paper is dedicated. Practical means of implementing this within the church context is to regularly preach on the church in the city and build a theological framework of urban ministry, drawing from both the Old and New Testaments.

Next, no church model is complete without prayer, reliance on the Word, and filling of the Holy Spirit. In fact, Conn and Ortiz mention that the church in community is not only "the best vehicle for holistic community transformation," "it is also the most effective."[54] After all, the church alone is able to assess accurately the spiritual nature of things and thereby demolish demonic strongholds, and restore *shalom* unto the city by reconciling man first and foremost to God, each other, and by extension, all creation. As such, I am a fervent advocate of prayer walks and mapping, which enables the believer to not only identify potential spiritual strongholds and attacks as well as familiarize themselves with demonic tactics, but also realize "the authority the church has [been given] over demons and Satan."[55]

Furthermore, prayer walks naturally present an opportunity for the church to get to know their neighbors and either pray for them, and interact with them on a regular basis. During such walks, it may be helpful to arrange such activities as grocery runs or other forms of community outreach, which may help the congregants not only get to know their neighbors better, but also assess their needs, both spiritual and physical. Perhaps, the best way to get to know one's neighbors, however, is to move into their neighborhood. As Bakke writes, "Is Jesus just our message, or is he also our model?"[56] In order to walk as Jesus did, we must adopt a "bottom up" theological framework and embody his incarnational model of ministry.[57] In other words, we are

54 Bakke, 45. Conn and Ortiz, 350.
55 Conn and Ortiz, 372.
56 Bakke, 28, 135.
57 Conn and Ortiz, 335.

called to seek the *shalom* of the city by planting ourselves there and getting our hands dirty, or "in the mud" so to speak, and simply being the "salt and light" in those places.[58]

Ethnography, Demographics, and Community Analysis

Contrary to popular belief, the "use of social sciences can make Christian Mission activities both more effective and more fluid."[59] Put another way, "demographics helps us discover the shalom of God in community or the lack of it."[60] As mentioned earlier during the prayer walks and community outreach, we must first gather information regarding our urban context via the people there. This is referred to as ethnography, namely the "work of describing the culture."[61] Often, this involves field work which is the "process of describing the culture from the point of view of the indigenous person."[62] In so keeping, the person conducting research is the "student" and the indigenous community, or people, are the "teachers."[63] Thus, it is not the researcher that defines need, but "the person walking in the community."[64] This was a lesson I had to learn the hard way for PSALT NK, the non-profit organization I had the privilege of partnering with for my field work requirement. PSALT seeks to raise awareness of the ongoing crisis in North Korea and mobilize people to pray, give resources, and take action on behalf of the North Korean people. Specifically, I was in charge of coordinating the newly developed RISE, or Resource Initiative to Support Education.

However, I quickly learned through a series of measurably unsuccessful events in terms of interest and turnout that I needed to first build relationships with the community I sought to

58 Bakke, 37, 40.
59 Conn and Ortiz, 256.
60 Conn and Ortiz, 289. Galbreath, "Sociological Analysis 2.3."
61 Conn and Ortiz, 273.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.

serve. In so doing, I could then gauge their interest and needs, rather than projecting my own well-intentioned, albeit mistaken agenda. Another learning curve was varying concepts of time, that is “event-based” versus “time-based,” and unfamiliarity with modern technology. After incorporating this newly gained knowledge via my field work and interactions with the community, I switched gears to instead hosting open roundtable discussions, rather than formal educational webinars, in which members of the refugee community could freely come and go, and discuss topics of interest and areas of need, which we could then seek to address and modify our RISE programming, accordingly. To date, we have been experiencing markedly more success in terms of meeting the community where they are at and increasing engagement, by which we are better able to assess and address acute needs.

Another step I would like to take upon taking this course and especially reading the section on “Community Analysis” in Conn and Ortiz’ work is reaching out to other community leaders within the NK-based non-profit community, which seeks to serve refugees in the US and elsewhere with a particular focus on education. In so doing, I believe our non-profit and RISE, specifically, can benefit by learning from and partnering with others so as to avoid potential conflicts of interest while also identifying loopholes, or missing “gaps” within the education sector for the NK refugee community.

Reaching the Nations in the City: New Mercy Hackensack

As stated earlier, New Mercy is currently located in Hackensack, NJ, which is located approximately 12 miles from Manhattan and 7 miles from the George Washington Bridge. Moreover, Hackensack is the most populous city in Bergen County with a population of 46,030—a number not to be taken lightly, granted that Bergen County is the most populous county in

New Jersey with a population of 9,288,994.[65] Approximately 80.9% of the Hackensack resident population are citizens. As of 2020, 38.6% of residents were born outside of the country, totalling more than 17,100 people.[66] This presents a tremendous ministry opportunity for NM. Properly examined and responded to, outreach work and urban ministry amongst the refugee and immigrant communities have the potential to "spread like wildfire and produce the greatest harvest [the world] has ever seen."[67] Furthermore, as cities act as "hubs" or "worldwide webs," of sorts, which "link" migrants to their communities of origin, these newfound believers may in turn evangelize their communities of origin, thereby producing indigenous leaders.[68]

Furthermore, NM is currently renting a space at Fairleigh Dickinson University's Metropolitan campus, which currently is home to approximately 396 international students, 187 of whom are undergraduates. The ratio of international students to total student population is approximately 1:20, reflective of the national percentage. The greatest number of international students originate from India (276), China (36), and Saudi Arabia (24). Other countries of origin include South Korea (7), Canada (4), Taiwan (4), Colombia (3), Spain (2), Peru (2), Brazil (2), Kuwait, and Japan.[69] Notably, India, China, Saudi Arabia, Colombia and Kuwait can be found on the Open Doors USA's World Watch List.[70] As Bakke suggests, "what we call foreign mission is nothing more or less than the urban mission of God's church in a world where the nations have

65 "QuickFacts: Hackensack city, New Jersey," United States Census Bureau, accessed December 5, 2022, https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/hackensackcitynewjersey/PST04522.
"New Jersey: 2020 Census," United States Census Bureau, last modified November 25, 2022, https://www.census.gov/library/stories/state-by-state/new-jersey-population-change-between-census-decade.html.
66 https://datausa.io/profile/geo/hackensack-nj/
67 Bakke, 170.
68 Ibid.
69 "Fairleigh Dickinson University—Metropolitan Campus: International Student Report," College Factual, accessed November 28, 2022, https://www.collegefactual.com/colleges/fairleigh-dickinson-university-metropolitan-campus/student-life/international/.
70 "World Watch List 2022," Open Doors, USA, accessed December 15, 2022, https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/

come to live in the cities, and where the mission frontiers are no longer geographically distant but rather culturally distant."[71]

In order to reach these students and the diverse population of Hackensack and the surrounding area at large, we must follow the pastoral circle outlined earlier. Furthermore, we must employ the ethnographic studies, demographic research, and community analysis described above. Preliminary steps would be receiving the contact of the International Students Office as well as any on-campus ministries or parachurches which deal with the students directly. Secondly, we must build trust and relationships with the students as well as an "insider" figure who best understands the community and can act as a bridge, of sorts, on our behalf. In speaking and doing life with students, naturally we will identify their needs and be able to then think theologically about the issues at hand and develop a framework of action in response to their needs.

As mentioned earlier, I believe the way forward for our church regarding our current context, mission, and demographics is to become an increasingly multi-ethnic and inter-generational church. As such, we need to ensure that those in ministry leadership positions "increasingly match the ethnicity, class, and culture" of the congregation.[72] Currently, my church —New Mercy Hackensack—consists of a "roundtable leadership" model in which there is no "senior pastor," so to speak, but rather an equally distributed power structure shared by three full-time pastors alongside a staff of part-time pastors.[73] All three lead pastors are Korean and male, albeit second-generation, whereas the other pastors are largely female, but also Korean. One of our lead pastors recently transitioned to his newly appointed position as Vice President of

71 Bakke, 147.
72 Bakke, 146.
73 "Church Model," New Mercy Community Church, accessed November 1, 2022, http://www.newmercy.cc/church-model.

Princeton Theological Seminary, meaning his former position remains vacant. This is a prime opportunity for our church to either appoint a female and/or non-Asian leader to the table, so as to model the sort of diverse representation we wish to see reflected within our congregation.

In addition, we have been seeing an incremental increase in non-Korean and Asian members within our congregation, including Black and Latinx. In fact, one of the ministries I am a part of, that is Justice and Mercy, currently consists of five females and one male; three of the females are Korean, the other two are Colombian, and the male is Filipino. It is interesting to note that this particular ministry is composed of three of the comparatively small percentage of non-Koreans represented in our congregation. This gives me hopeful anticipation for the future of our ministry and by extension, church in reaching a wider range of racial and ethnic groups, including within our local vicinity, which currently consists of 24.3% Non-Latinx White, 36.4% Latinx, 24.8% Black, 13.2% Asian and 8.2% biracial or multiracial.[74]

I believe the three models for immigrant churches put forward by Conn and Ortiz in Chapter 17: “Reachable People Groups & the City” provides a starting point: (1) renting model, (2) celebrative model, and (3) integrative model. We are currently praying and vision-casting for a church home base within the next several years, in which case we may temporarily begin with the renting model, and eventually transition to the celebrative–and God willing–integrative models. Conn and Ortiz state that as those who rent other spaces are often “first-generation immigrant churches,” the integrative model could easily lead to a “multiethnic church” in which “the second and third generations from all the groups” merge into one “English-speaking congregation.”[75] This would need to begin, however, with further ethnographic study and

74 United States Census Bureau, "QuickFacts: Hackensack city, New Jersey," https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/hackensackcitynewjersey.
75 Conn and Ortiz 332.

community analysis via absorbing the life of the community, gathering community information, demographic material, formulating and interpreting said information, and most importantly, gaining God's perspective towards the community.[76]

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