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Comment

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This issue captures portions of two winter 2019 events: the inauguration of Mary K. Surridge as tenth president of North Park University and the Covenant Midwinter Conference held in Denver, Colorado.

Among the many events marking President Surridge's inauguration was an academic symposium, held February 13, 2019. The symposium lecture was offered by Kathryn J. Edin, professor of sociology and public affairs at the Woodrow Wilson School of Princeton University—as well as North Park alumna and current trustee. In "Enlightened Hearts, Warmed Intellects: City Challenges and Opportunities and North Park Possibilities," Edin surveys the triumphs and tragedies of the city, noting that by 2050, two-thirds of the world population will likely live in urban areas. Drawing on her extensive research on the effects of hypersegregation and benefits of its mitigation, Edin notes the opportunity before North Park University, given its location in the most ethnically diverse neighborhood in Chicago. As she concludes, "in one of the most segregated cities in the nation, in the most economically segregated time in our history as a nation this, in itself, is the kingdom of God, the New Jerusalem, breaking through."

Three respondents offered comments on Edin's lecture, two of which provided their responses for publication here: Michelle A. Clifton-Soderstrom, professor of theology and ethics at North Park Seminary, and Rich Kohng, director of civic engagement for the University's Catalyst Hub. (All three responses, along with Edin's lecture and concluding discussion, can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=WZ_nn4wgQWg.)

The inauguration symposium proceedings are followed by two ser-

mons from the 2019 Covenant Midwinter Conference. "Recentering Justice" is the call of Liz Mosbo VerHage, pastor of global and local ministries at Quest Church (Seattle) and current president of the Covenant Ministerium. VerHage underscores the inseparability of spiritual health and justice ministry, drawing from 1 Samuel's example of Hannah and anti-example of Eli and his sons. "An Ecclesiology of Shalom," is sketched by José Humphreys, lead pastor of Metro Hope Covenant Church (East Harlem), and Adam Gustine, project lead for CovEnterprises (South Bend, Indiana). Humphreys and Gustine propose shalom as a guiding framework for the church's communal life and reconciling ministry in the world.

The diverse voices of this issue together call for active Christian engagement in social transformation that is rooted in spiritual formation and ordered to the kingdom of God. We are glad to extend this call in print form.

Enlightened Hearts, Warmed Intellects: City Challenges and Opportunities and North Park Possibilities[1]

Kathryn J. Edin, professor of sociology and public affairs, Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University, Princeton, New Jersey

In 1950, 30 percent—about one-third—of the world's population was urban. By around 2008, that figure surpassed 50 percent. Last year, 55 percent of the world's population lived in cities, and by 2050 about two-thirds of all citizens across the globe will live in cities. The twentieth century has been called "the Urban Century." What then of the twenty-first century? It is an age in which everywhere, all across the globe the influence of the city will be felt.

In his book *Triumph of the City*, Harvard economist Edward Glaeser heralds the city as our species' greatest invention.[2] He shows how the city lifted human achievements to heights that would not have been possible without urbanization. This is believable. Cities are our seats of government. Cities are the locations of our great cultural institutions. Most institutions of higher learning are in cities, and many of the marvels of modern architecture are in cities as well. Industrialization was key in the history of cities because it transformed them from edifices of protection, safety, and controlling routes of transportation and trade to places that concentrated capital and labor in amazing ways that allowed for unparalleled opportunities for economic growth.

[1] Symposium lecture marking the inauguration of Mary K. Surridge as North Park University president. Delivered February 13, 2019.

[2] Edward Glaeser, *Triumph of the City: How Our Greatest Invention Makes Us Richer, Smarter, Greener, Healthier, and Happier* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011).

But the industrializing city was also was also a magnet for poor immigrants from Europe and migrants from other parts of the United States. Some of these immigrants were pushed by crop failures and poor harvests, such as my ancestors from Sweden. Others by untenable social conditions, which prompted scores of African American migrants to move north during the Great Migration to what was thought of as "the promised land." Still others by revolution and the pull of industrial jobs, as was the case for scores of Mexicans and, later, Mexican Americans, as Chicago drew them east.

Early twentieth-century sociologist Ernest Burgess observed this massive influx of immigrants coming into the city of Chicago at the turn of the century.[3] He described how the city metabolized cascades of newcomers, perniciously and persistently segregating them by race and ethnicity—the Italians to Little Italy, the Germans to Deutschland, the Chinese to Chinatown, and the African Americans increasingly to the corridor along State Street that became known as the "Black Belt."

The city also segregated newcomers and old-timers by income. Closest to the city center were the poorest citizens, who were relegated to what Burgess called the "ghetto," the "underworld," or the "roomers" districts. Those a little bit better off moved outward to claim the "two-flats," and those who were even better off the bungalows and single-family homes. As Harvey Zorbaugh, one of the founders of the Chicago School of Sociology, observed in 1929 in his book *The Gold Coast and the Slum*,[4] the Loop contained the central business district but also the most affluent residents of the city, hence the name the "Gold Coast." But this gold coast lay cheek to jowl with the slum.

What the work of all of these early twentieth-century sociologists hinted at was a deep tragedy that, despite Edward Glaeser's prose, has proven to be as endemic to cities as the triumphs Glaeser describes. Industrial cities and now post-industrial cities, which by their nature attract unparalleled diversity, are often deeply segregated by ethnicity, by race, and by class. Chicago has been a poster child for these trends. Early industrialized cities often oppressed their workers and relegated

[3] Ernest W. Burgess, "The Growth of the City: An Introduction to a Research Project," in Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess, and Roderick D. McKenzie, *The City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925).

[4] Harvey Warren Zorbaugh, *The Gold Coast and the Slum: A Sociological Study of Chicago's Near North Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1929).

them to squalid living conditions. Thus, one feature of industrialized cities is that they are often the scenes of intense class conflict, such as the 1886 Chicago Haymarket Riot, one of the most important riots in labor history, nationally and globally, all starting when a few marchers coalesced in support of workers who were striking for, among other things, an eight-hour work day.

Racial conflict has also been endemic to cities, such as the Chicago race riot of 1919, the worst of the "red summer" riots that erupted across the country that year. In Chicago, thirty-eight people died and more than 500 were injured. What started this riot? An African American boy was swimming in Lake Michigan, and he accidentally drifted down the lake into an area that was informally designated whites only. White youth began lobbing rocks at the swimmer until he drowned. The riot resulted from African Americans rising up in protest against this violent act. Student-led protest movements are also features of industrialized cities, such as the student movements opposing the Vietnam War that disrupted the 1968 Democratic National Convention, held in Chicago.

Thus, by the mid-twentieth century, the work of urbanists reflected both the triumph and tragedy of growing industrial cities. Perhaps the best-known, Jane Jacobs, author of *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, found real hope in the diversity of the cities.[5] But on the other hand, Lewis Mumford believed that cities were doomed if they did not begin to find a way to organize themselves around the needs of people rather than machines.[6] Our provost's new book, *Market Cities, People Cities*, tells the story of cities that have organized themselves around human needs. To quote Emerson, "'Market cities' end up with higher social inequality and more segregation and higher crime than 'people cities.'…People cities have higher trust among their people and more civic participation than market cities."[7]

When I was a graduate student, I became captivated by the work of French sociologist and sometime theologian Jacques Ellul. One of Ellul's master works, *The Meaning of the City*, not only captured this tension—the triumph and tragedy of the city—better than any other,

[5] Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

[6] Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* (New York: Harcourt Brace and World, 1961).

[7] Michael Oluf Emerson and Kevin T. Smiley, *Market Cities, People Cities: The Shape of Our Urban Future* (New York: New York University Press, 2018), 158.

but it also offered a biblical diagnosis of the problem and a prophetic cure. The book has what is perhaps the best first sentence of any work of urban sociology I've read: "The first builder of a city was Cain. The circumstances were these…."[8]

What were these circumstances? According to Scripture, recounts Ellul, Cain built the first city after he murdered his brother and was cast out, cursed to wander. But he was marked with the symbol of God's protection, and he was promised that God would offer him safety and security. But Cain chose to go his own way, and instead of relying on God's promise of security, he created his own by building the first city. The city was a sign of Cain's rebellion. In keeping with this, Ellul reminds us that the famous early cities—Babel, Babylon, Nineveh—were all known for their rebellion.

I felt the tragedy of the city viscerally when I first came to Chicago in 1980, as a North Park freshman. North Park had just decided to stay in the city. Imagine what its president and board members must have felt when, in March 1981, there was a series of violent incidents on the North Side of Chicago in the Cabrini Green area (the very area many Swedes had first settled in Chicago in the nineteenth century). The violence was so severe that thirty-seven people had been shot and eleven had died. Jane Byrne, the first woman mayor of a major US city, made international headlines when she moved into the Chicago's most notorious public housing project, Cabrini Green, with her husband. She lasted only three weeks.

The 1980 census had just been administered prior to my freshman year, and it revealed something extraordinary. It showed that there was an historically high and rapidly growing trend in the city that posed a pernicious and unique threat. That was the growth of concentrated poverty, defined as neighborhoods in which at least 40 percent of one's neighbors are poor. The work of sociologist William J. Wilson showed a dramatic increase from the 1970s in the number of neighborhoods that were extremely poor. In just a decade's time, one's probability of being poor and living in a hyper-segregated neighborhood had increased dramatically. Importantly, Wilson argued that it was the rise of this extreme segregation in cities by income, layered on to the historical pattern of

[8] Jacques Ellul, *The Meaning of the City* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 1.

racial segregation, that explained why the War on Poverty had not been won.[9]

These hyper-segregated neighborhoods did not arise by accident. The Chicago Housing Authority had sited massive public housing high-rises inside the historic Black Belt, closed off from the rest of the city by the Dan Ryan expressway and other barriers, physical and legal, such as restrictive housing covenants. To cross these boundaries meant that one risked one's life. On the South Side, the Robert Taylor Homes was the largest cluster of public housing in the world. Although they looked shiny and new when construction finished in 1962, they quickly became corridors of poverty and despair.

In 1982, facilitated by North Park sociology professor David Claerbaut, I began an internship in the neighborhood surrounding Cabrini Green, just after Jane Byrne's historic tenancy there. While I was there, I met April, an elementary-school student who was tutored after school by North Park students. April introduced me to her mother, Sonja, and it was amazing to me how instantly I felt an affinity with Sonja. She was a small-town gal from Mississippi; I was a small-town kid from Minnesota. Neither one of us had more than one stoplight in our hometowns, and we both felt the city to be a somewhat alienating and strange place. Though I didn't know it then, that relationship marked a turning point in my life and charted my career.

Soon after, while I was a graduate student at Northwestern, I took on a part-time teaching job with a North Park program that provided college classes in some of the city's most disadvantaged neighborhoods. I found myself spending afternoons teaching sociology courses in North Lawndale, another hyper-segregated neighborhood—the poorest neighborhood in the city at the time. My very first assignment was to teach Minority Cultures (ironically, I was the only non-minority in the class). There I met wonderful North Park students, including Shirlee, Rita, and Valerie, who taught me much more than I taught them—more about what it was like to live in places of hyper-segregation and try to raise a family, what it was like trying to subsist on welfare while raising their families and attempting to improve their educational prospects and their human capital. It was these relationships that undergirded my first major

[9] See William J. Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

book, with Laura Lein, *Making Ends Meet*.[10]

Later, as a professor, I received several research grants to follow a group of families that had managed to escape these vertical ghettos, due to a landmark Supreme Court decision, *Gautreaux et al. v. Chicago Housing Authority*, the nation's first major public housing desegregation lawsuit. Dorothy Gautreaux, the main plaintiff, had been a resident of Altgeld Gardens. This suit charged that by concentrating more than 100,000 almost completely African American public housing residents in segregated black neighborhoods, the Chicago Housing Authority and HUD had violated both the US Constitution and 1964 Civil Rights Act. The court found both CHA and HUD guilty of discriminatory housing practices.

One remedy the CHA was required to implement was to offer a portion of its residents the chance to move to a less segregated neighborhood through a voucher. The early results of this program were so successful that soon HUD followed suit with a similar national program, called Moving to Opportunity. I was able to follow these families, and when I first interviewed them, I asked each of them what it had been like to live in these hyper-segregated areas. One told me,

> I felt like it was a mistake—somebody dropped me off and didn't come back and pick me up. It was torture. It was sometimes like a [bad] dream.…The elevators was always broke. You had to walk thirteen flights of steps. My kids couldn't go downstairs all the time to the playground with the other kids when the elevator was broke [because] people would get to shooting down there, and I [couldn't] come running down thirteen flights of steps to save 'em.

Another told me,

> That was the worst experience that I ever experienced, living in an environment which made you feel trapped, caged, and worthless, just stuck into the atmosphere of absolutely no progress. It was a whole little community of pure dissatisfaction in everything. No one encouraged no one.…I became

[10] Kathryn Edin and Laura Lein, *Making Ends Meet: How Single Mothers Survive Welfare and Low-Wage Work* (New York: Russell Sage Foundations, 1997).

> stabilized in my depression….I knew I could not do anything as long as I was trapped in that situation.[11]

In *The Meaning of the City*, Ellul conceded that the city was indeed the most significant creation of humankind. Yet he insisted that it still carried with it a tragic legacy. For Ellul the city remained Babel, a site of rebellion against God. But that is not where his exegesis ended.

In the New Testament, "Jerusalem represents both the city's persistent distress and the city's eventual restoration," according to Ellul scholar Noah Toly.[12] Despite the fact that it was born out of rebellion, God still promises to eventually redeem the city—all cities. This promise will only be fully realized in the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city. In the meantime, we as Christians find ourselves in the uncomfortable but familiar position of being in the "now but not yet."

Does this mean we should flee the city, turn our back on its despair? To this question Ellul says a resounding no. While we wait, in this period of now but not yet, we are without question called to live and work in the city. In fact, it is vital that we do so. Because Christians in the city "represent the presence of God in the midst of the self-assertion, self-realization, and self-sufficiency of human beings."[13] Our presence in the city is vital because we must, through our lives and our actions, symbolize what the kingdom of God is like. Ellul warns that the kingdom will not come without suffering. We may fail. But there will still be miracles along the way as we try to represent the kingdom by seeking justice and mercy for the city.

A century of census data from the city of Chicago reveals something interesting, even miraculous. That data shows an evolving portrait of the growing racial and ethnic divides in the city—but with some notable exceptions. In 1910 the city was overwhelmingly white, save for the emerging non-white populations in the Near South Side, Armor Square, Douglas, and Fuller Park neighborhoods—neighborhoods that

[11] Kristin Turney, Rebecca Kissane, and Kathryn Edin, "After Moving to Opportunity: How Moving to a Low-poverty Neighborhood Improves Mental Health among African American Women," *Society and Mental Health* 3, no. 1 (2013): 1–21.

[12] Noah Toly, "The Meaning of the Global City: Jacques Ellul's Continued Relevance to Twenty-first Century Urbanism," *Bulletin of Science, Technology, and Society* 32, no. 3 (2012): 235.

[13] Ibid., 236.

still remained over 60 percent white. In 1920 we see the consolidation and spread of this area, moving southward, as the city's historic Black Belt began to form. The years 1930 and 1940 show the consolidation of the city's Black Belt. By 1930, Douglas, Grant Boulevard, and Washington Park were about 80 percent African American—a dramatic change from just a decade before—and by 1940, that figure was 90 percent or more in the latter two neighborhoods.

By 1950, we see the Black Belt bursting at its seams with overpopulation. The Great Migration had brought scores African Americans to the city, a number that would reach half a million by 1970. But these migrants were restricted to this little bit of land hugging a thirty-block corridor of South State Street, hemmed in by social custom, restrictive covenants, and physical barriers, with violent repercussions for those who dared to try to move outside of its confines. In 1960, for the first time, we see the emergence of multiple neighborhoods with no majority population. During this time period, these would all prove to be neighborhoods in the midst of rapid racial turnover, as those of European descent were replaced by African American, Mexican, and Chinese newcomers. By 1970s, the city was divided, nonwhites segregated into corridors stretching South and West, while whites held the North and Southwest sides. By this point racial turnover was in full force, as whites fled the city. By 1980, Latino-majority districts had emerged. Pilsen and South Lawndale were by that time 80 percent or more Latino. By 1990, Logan Square and its neighbors had also become majority Latino neighborhoods.

These patterns of segregation continued into 2000, but then there was a marked increase in the number of neighborhoods with no majority population, including Albany Park, North Park's neighborhood. Since it began to diversify, Albany Park has largely resisted the segregating impulse of the city and the process of rapid racial turnover. As a result, Albany Park looks…a lot like Chicago. It is a little less white than the city on average, more Hispanic, less black, and more Asian, but all the major racial and ethnic groups are represented here in this neighborhood. Entering into the twenty-first century, Albany Park stands as one of the five most diverse—using a multi-factor index of diversity, both by race and by class—and it is the most ethnically diverse neighborhood in the city. According to a 2008 DePaul University report, about half of its residents are foreign born, hailing from five countries, with children speaking forty different languages. I ask you, what are the chances?

What are the chances that a university built on farmland in 1894 on

the outskirts of a burgeoning city would find itself, more than a century later, at ground zero—in a place where people from such varied backgrounds are living together, brushing shoulders, sometimes bridging cultural divides? Is this an accident, or is it divine providence? Does this smell, feel, taste a little like the kingdom?

Lest you think that neighborhoods that resist segregation are unimportant, let me take you back to those families I spent a decade and a half following, those who had the rare opportunity to move from the corridors of poverty and despair I showed you earlier—the hyper-segregated neighborhoods of the South and West Sides. I was one of a team of researchers who followed these families for fifteen years to find out how they fared. We learned that while initial moves were varied, many ended up settling in neighborhoods that were about average for the city as a whole—neighborhoods like Albany Park. We started interviews in the mid-1990s but went back to interview some of these parents and their children in 2002 and then again in 2007 and 2010, following some through 2013, when the children were entering late adolescence and early adulthood.[14] After us, a team of economists used IRS data to follow the children into their mid-twenties.

What did injecting just a little justice into the lives of these families accomplish—families who, due to their sharply segregated lives, had seen more of the tragedy of the city than its triumphs? Our study showed that the youth in these families were about two and a half times more likely to graduate high school than their parents, and roughly four times more likely to enroll in college or trade school. Furthermore, 82 percent of the 150 youth we followed into early adulthood were "on track" by the study's end—either working or in school. Less than 20 percent had ever been involved in the drug trade or other serious criminal activity. What we witnessed was a huge intergenerational leap forward.

We found that the key factor distinguishing who flourished and who stumbled was if, during adolescence, a youth found an "identity project," something to be "about," a sustaining passion that formed a bridge between the challenges of the present and future aspirations. The most effective of these identity projects were those that were facilitated by adult mentors. North Park's Urban Outreach program provides such mentors,

[14] Stefanie DeLuca, Susan Clampet-Lundquist, and Kathryn Edin, *Coming of Age in the Other America* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2016).

by participating in after-school tutoring programs in elementary schools all over the city of Chicago and volunteering at Young Life at Lane Tech High School.

When the team of economists followed these young people even further, into their mid-twenties, they found that those offered the opportunity to move from public housing with the voucher, relative to those who weren't, saw about a third more income, a third more college going, higher college quality, and a sharp reduction (27 percent) in single motherhood.[15] Just a little bit of justice, a merciful relief from hyper-segregation meant so much to these young people. And I believe this is powerful evidence that efforts to bring justice and mercy to the city can bear fruit.

Earlier I reminded you of the miracle of North Park ending up at ground zero—the archetypal neighborhood for diversity in the city. But I often smell, feel, and taste the kingdom of God in this place for another reason. I want you to imagine this scene. I'm sitting in the Johnson Center's Bickner Bistro in October 2018, waiting for the board of trustees meeting to start. Outside the window is the crossroads of campus, that brick circle anchored by a brass plaque embedded in the center where the sidewalks come together. Bounding the circle are low walls bowing outward, lettered with the words, "Seek justice, love mercy, walk with God." If the author of these words, the prophet Micah, were here with us today, *just maybe* he would have added "in the city."

I lift my eyes to the foot traffic traversing the circle. I see women and men. I see a cornucopia of diversity by ethnicity and race. I see future pastors, nurses, physicians, educators, historians, business people, engineers, musicians, artists, public servants, and maybe even some future sociologists. They're all together. They're rubbing shoulders. They are nodding and laughing. You may think this is normal if you hang around this place a lot, but it's not. These students learn together. They live together. They compete together, perform together, serve together. They travel to the city every Wednesday to that vital living laboratory, Chicago, together. They pray and worship together. And now, thanks to visionary leadership at the seminary, our students include both incarcerated and free.

We don't do it perfectly. Those of us on the board know that not all

[15] Raj Chetty, Nathaniel Hendren, and Lawrence Katz, "The Effects of Exposure to Better Neighborhoods on Children: New Evidence from the Moving to Opportunity Project," *American Economic Review* 106, no. 4 (2016): 855–902.

of our students experience North Park in the same way—not by a long shot. We have urgent work to do. But in one of the most segregated cities in the nation, in the most economically segregated time in our history as a nation, *this*, in itself, is the kingdom of God, the New Jerusalem breaking through.

Response

Michelle A. Clifton-Soderstrom, professor of theology and ethics, North Park Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois

Thank you Dr. Edin for the gift of your scholarship, for your investment in North Park, and most importantly your passion for the kingdom. My remarks are directed to the work Dr. Edin is calling us to—a work that challenges North Park University's core values of being Christian, city-centered, and intercultural.

At this time in our history, I challenge us to greater maturity in our core value of being intercultural and to examine in depth what it means for North Park to be intercultural. Angela Davis argues that there is a significant difference between multiculturalism and justice, especially racial justice.[16] It would be easy for us to believe that because we are diverse we have overcome or at least come to terms with racism.

But multiculturalism at its core is not simply diverse representation or a "bouquet of flowers" or a "beautiful mosaic" or even hitting the tipping point of over 50 percent non-majority culture students on our campus. Multiculturalism is not a metaphor. Nor is it a number. At its best, multiculturalism is the creation of spaces where the cross-cultural community names oppression, fights for justice, and addresses structural inequalities together. It is the space to resist something and build something, and I believe this is deeply Christian and city-centered.

[16] Angela Y. Davis, *Abolition Democracy: Beyond Prison, Torture, and Empire* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005), 31.

Edin's work calls us specifically to resist segregation, because segregation is not good for the city, and more accurately, to recall Provost Emerson's language, it is not good for the *people* in the city.[17] The descriptions of hyper-segregation that Edin relayed from those who lived in Chicago housing projects tell in vivid terms why segregation is not good: "It was torture," "like a bad dream," "living in an environment that made you feel trapped, caged, worthless," "it was pure dissatisfaction in everything," and finally, "I knew I could not do anything as long as I was trapped in that situation."

Social psychologist Thomas Pettigrew argues that hyper-segregation in America's housing is "the structural linchpin of today's patterns of institutional racism."[18] Rising poverty over the last forty years in black neighborhoods in particular corresponds with harsh and disadvantaged social environments. These spatially concentrated areas of disadvantage in our city of Chicago show us that our intercultural work toward racial justice is ahead of us.

I offer an example. Chicago is often described as a city of neighborhoods. In all the studies I have read on our neighborhoods and in looking at the maps marking the various districts and wards, *none* includes Stateville Correctional Center. Stateville is a maximum-security prison in Crest Hill. You may be thinking, rightly, that Stateville is not located in the city proper, so that is why it is not on the map of Chicago neighborhoods.

Yet a bit of background about Stateville may convince you otherwise. Approximately 60 percent of those at Stateville are black, even though only 14 percent of the Illinois population is black. By contrast, 30 percent are white, whereas whites comprise approximately 70 percent of the state population. Further, the prison population in the state of Illinois has grown from 6,000 in the mid-1970s to 49,000 today in 2019. Finally, the majority of persons incarcerated at Stateville are from Chicago's South and West Sides.

At a time in history when we are experiencing a marked increase in integrated neighborhoods in our city, we have relocated people from Chicago's Black Belt to Stateville. Stateville is, then, arguably one of Chicago's most segregated neighborhoods.

[17] Emerson and Smiley, *Market Cities, People Cities.*

[18] Thomas Pettigrew, *The Sociology of Race Relations: Reflection and Reform* (Washington, DC: Free Press), 242.

As "ground zero" in Edin's words, North Park is strategically situated to resist things such as segregation. We are not only strategically positioned to resist, however. We are positioned to *build* something. After all, that's what cities are all about, and here is why this is good news for us. The kingdom of God allows us to do something that good intentions in the city alone cannot—the kingdom of God allows us to transcend the spatial limitations of Albany Park and even the city.

We are resisting segregation in Stateville by building educational programming in prison with outside North Parkers. As you know, the seminary enrolled thirty-eight incarcerated degree-seeking MA students at Stateville last fall, and we have fifteen or so "visiting" incarcerated students.

And what is happening on our Stateville campus is not just a seminary program. Undergraduate students take courses inside. There is significant Writing Center peer support (our director is there today training fifteen new writing assistants who will work from Stateville under the direction of the Writing Center), and the undergraduate Gospel Choir has regularly performed joint concerts with the Stateville Choir for over four years. In total, over the last few years, we have had more than 300 free North Parkers—from students to board members to Evangelical Covenant representatives to major donors—go to the Stateville campus. By blurring the lines between the Albany Park neighborhood and the Stateville neighborhood, North Park is actively resisting segregation in this city.

If we are going to build education in a truly Christian, city-centered, intercultural way, we must embrace our interculturalism as the space to live the struggle of inequalities together, and I believe the faith/learning community is the most significant place for this to happen.

Edin's research in *Coming of Age in the Other America* and *$2 Dollars a Day: Living on Almost Nothing in America* shows definitively that young people's finding an "identity project"—something to be about or a sustaining passion that forms a bridge between the challenges of the present and future aspirations—has "the power to interrupt the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage."[19] And when it does, people's trajectories change dramatically for the better.

Building through education means that everybody—not only those

[19] DeLuca, Clampet-Lundquist, and Edin, *Coming of Age in the Other America*, 2.

who have experienced more "tragedy than triumph"—finds their identity project. For those of us who have "experienced more triumph than tragedy," our identity project looks different. When I frame the work North Park is doing at Stateville, I am clear that it is not "charity" or "free education." It is North Park doing what it does best—Christian higher education in the city—in a form of creative, Christ-like reparations, a "healing balm" to use Minnehaha Academy's president Donna Harris's image from chapel this morning.

I believe that under the leadership of President Surridge and the work of colleagues such as Michael Emerson (provost), David Kersten (seminary dean), and Shena Keith (acting vice-president for advancement), North Park is strategically situated to do the "urgent work" that Dr. Edin call us into.

President Surridge prayed these words as part of her closing prayer at the seminary convocation last fall:

> On this day, we lift to you, the hearts, minds, bodies, and labors of *all* students of North Park this year. Before us today we have the precious students who will seek your wisdom, guidance, and grace as seminarians studying on our local campus. And joining them in places distant from this sacred chapel, but deeply held to our hearts—in places of freedom and in places of restraint—we seek your hand of safety and your gift of grace. For we know that education may grant us freedom and knows *no* restraint. You have called these students, and you will likewise equip them.

President Surridge did not simply pray a prayer at convocation in North Park/Albany Park. She also blurred neighborhood lines and took this prayer into the Stateville neighborhood last September.

While we have remained true to our Albany Park heritage of resisting segregation, we still have urgent work to do in the city, and we will know our work of integration is behind us when *all* of our brothers and sisters may, in the words of Kathryn Edin, "Learn together. Live together. Compete on the same teams. Perform together. Serve together. Travel the city together…and pray and worship together."

Response

Rich Kohng, director of civic engagement, Catalyst Hub, North Park University, Chicago, Illinois

In invoking Ellul, Dr. Edin offered a theological template for how one can understand and view the city. As we live between the now and not yet, Jesus's model prayer, "let your kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10), implores God to bring glimpses of the eschatological heaven to infiltrate the earth and our cities. What should this look like?

While we can look to the other-wordly, glimmering descriptions of the New Jerusalem given in the book of Revelation, it is clear that Scripture itself not only foreshadows the end of the age but also looks backwards to the very beginning of it all, the Garden of Eden. As Ellul himself highlights, Eden symbolized perfect and complete security with God and among others.[20] Just as significantly, the author of Genesis highlights that the river that supplied Eden also branched off into four tributaries, two of which are known to us as the Tigris and the Euphrates (Genesis 2:14). Given the stature of the Tigris and Euphrates to ancient listeners in an oral tradition, perhaps the natural association they would have made is to the burgeoning and flourishing civilizations cradled along its banks.

In other words, the waters that supplied the garden were always meant to flow beyond paradise to extend its flourishing to all of humanity. The river that flowed from Eden was never meant to be an unsustainable Evian in a bottle. Eden had no boundaries, and the world would flourish in the same way. The boundaries only come after the fall, when Adam and Eve are told to leave (Genesis 3:23–24).

While the first inhabitants of the garden were told to vacate for their own good, we see that modern-day manifestations of boundaries are quite different. Dr. Edin compellingly described the detrimental effects of segregated public housing units in Chicago and Baltimore and how residents' outcomes improved when they found new homes in neighborhoods

[20] Ellul, *The Meaning of the City*, 2.

like Albany Park. While the demolition of the projects is championed as a victory today, many are wary. Could the mechanisms that led to the rise of the high rises in the first place be the same mechanisms at work in other manifestations, impacting the very communities to which they are relocated? It is possible these mechanisms are as old as Eden itself.

There was a third river that branched out from the waters of Eden, the Pishon, which flowed into a region called Havilah known for its gold deposits (Genesis 2:11). Could this have been a subtle allusion to what would take place later in human history? In a patriarchal world of conquest and domination, the tributaries that carry pristine waters from paradise can quickly become choked off and turned into a brackish swamp by greedy prospectors panning for gold.

Today Chicago shares a metaphorical parallel. As the city continued its rapid expansion through the late 1800s, Chicago faced an emerging public health crisis. The branches of the Chicago River flowed through the city out into Lake Michigan. The same river that enabled the city's rise as an economic powerhouse spewed toxic human and industrial waste out into Lake Michigan, Chicago's main water source. The city literally choked on its own byproducts of economic growth and prosperity.

The challenges of our city, from urban violence to food deserts to segregated housing, can be traced to a common phenomenon. The flow of our city's investments and resources continues to follow this same flow of the Chicago River down to the Loop, where it is redirected at the whims of the movers and shakers on LaSalle Street and Wacker Drive, like the flow from Eden to Havilah: $55 million in TIF funds used for a hotel and university stadium near McCormick Place[21] and the $6 billion redevelopment of Lincoln Yards into more office space and luxury apartments within steps of an already gentrified Lincoln Park.[22] Outsiders and residents alike lament we have gone from a "City on the Make" to a "City on the Take."[23] We are unabashedly a city of the market, and

[21] Ben Joravsky, "Rahm's Latest Plan: Close the Schools, Build an Arena," *Chicago Reader* (May 23, 2013), available at https://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/mayor-spends-tax-dollars-on-sports-arena/Content?oid=9769374.

[22] Patrick Sisson, "Can Megadevelopments Serve the Whole City?" *Curbed* (February 5, 2019), available at https://www.curbed.com/2019/2/5/18211070/chicago-lincoln-yards-development-real-estate.

[23] Nelson Algren, *Chicago: City on the Make* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951).

Eden is far upstream. While market cities can potentially bring more investment and jobs, our own Michael Emerson writes in his latest work contrasting "market cities" and "people cities," "Market Cities are the bigger polluters, have more inequality, more crime, less trust, extensive sprawl, and a host of other seemingly clear negatives."[24] These include gentrification. As real estate values continue to rise in the city, spurred on by development in the Loop, South Loop, and West Loop, low-income residents who lived as renters in neighborhoods trending upwards economically, like the historic African American community of Bronzeville or the Mexican American community of Pilsen, are being forced out. This is all the more disheartening because Edin's research reminds us that strong neighborhoods can serve as buffers for at-risk youth.

Between 1995 and 2008, the city tore down the Henry Horner homes on Lake Avenue, west of Ashland. Purchasers of market rate units, predominantly white, were supposed to live next to those with Section 8 vouchers. Unfortunately, one resident I heard about described his current experience as "Henry Horner flipped on its side. Just a lot less of us here now." In Chicago, what are the implications if Section 8 or now Housing Choice vouchers are simply the new restrictive housing covenants?

Following the third tributary from Eden to the land of gold is not just apparent in American market cities like Chicago. The same currents are at work in higher education. It is expected that we must compete with other institutions to build the poshest dorms and buildings with the most modern amenities to meet consumers' (a.k.a. students') needs. Indeed, even in higher education we can see how the flow travels down to the Loop and meanders through the collaborative university venture in South Loop, where several universities partnered to build high-rise dorms that rival their neighbors to the tune of $201 million, recently sold to a real estate investment firm.[25] The costs are predictably being passed down to students, culminating in the "gentrification of education," as Lee Bessette once coined.[26] According to the Federal Reserve, for the second quarter

[24] Emerson and Smiley, *Market Cities, People Cities*, 179.

[25] Alby Gallun, "Big South Loop Dorm Sale Sets a Record," *Crain's Chicago Business* (August 3, 2017), available at https://www.chicagobusiness.com/article/20170803/CRED03/170809931/chicago-south-loop-dorm-university-center-sells-to-blue-vista.

[26] Lee Bessette, "Gentrification in Higher Education," *Inside Higher Ed* (October 9, 2012), available at https://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/college-ready-writing/gentrification-higher-education.

of 2018, outstanding student loans hit $1.53 trillion.[27]

According to Edin's research, one of the greatest barriers for upward mobility is the short-term calculus under-resourced young people must do under duress. Dollars *in hand* working a minimum wage job feel much more tangible than pursuing a four-year diploma that promises the *possibility* of a job. For these potential students, it certainly can't help if the calculus doesn't compute. As institutions tout increased diversity numbers from both a race and economic standpoint, higher education in the United States must now bear the same guilt of the developers who pushed the original inhabitants out. The rents are rising, and only those who can pay can stay. Lydia Dishman writes, "According to a new survey from CareerBuilder, 27% [of American companies] are recruiting those who hold master's degrees for positions that used to only require four-year degrees."[28] Can many students from a low socio-economic status afford to move on to graduate school to compete for the same jobs that now require a master's degree when they are $25,000 in debt from obtaining their bachelor's?

So back up the river to North Park. What is our place in all of this? Do we feed into the same current? Or do we push towards something even more dramatic? In Chicago, we did the impossible and unthinkable: we reversed the river.

Donald Miller notes that in 1885, after torrential downpours caused sewage to overflow and contaminate the city's water supply, there were "deadly outbreaks of…waterborne diseases that killed an estimated twelve percent of Chicago's population."[29] It was not until practically every Chicagoan was touched by this public health crisis that people took to the streets. Public outrage moved legislators to action, and immigrants, including those from Sweden, were the ones who accepted the enormous

[27] Michelle Singletary, "US Student Loan Debt Reaches a Staggering $1.53 Trillion," *Washington Post* (October 3, 2018), available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2018/10/04/us-student-loan-debt-reaches-staggering-trillion/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.69e45748bc1b.

[28] Lydia Dishman, "How the Master's Degree Became the New Bachelor's in the Hiring World," *Fast Company* (March 17, 2016), available at https://www.fastcompany.com/3057941/how-the-masters-degree-became-the-new-bachelors-in-the-hiring-world.

[29] Donald Miller, *City of the Century: The Epic of Chicago and the Making of America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 423.

challenge of drudging up a new canal, inch by inch.[30] The ecological impacts notwithstanding, and purely for the sake of analogy, perhaps it's time we help reverse the flow.

In some ways we are already helping to reverse the flow. With a diverse student body across the socio-economic spectrum, we offer a relatively affordable private education. Our students will leave with degrees obtained by studying under accomplished faculty in classrooms with small faculty-to-student ratios. We are making progress in helping them achieve their academic goals. Our first-generation college students who come to North Park can participate in the Lighthouse program, run by the Office of Student Success, which can translate much of the inside vernacular of higher education their parents never had the opportunity to navigate.

Pedagogically, we are strategically poised to help students discern the flow of the river or to step foot into the waters, through a dynamic core curriculum, our robust degree programs, and through Catalyst 606_ _, which features our Wednesday afternoon experiential learning and civic engagement block.

Just this past week, our experiential learning cohort, the Catalyst Semester, visited Cabrini Green. Our cohort had the opportunity to connect with a young African American man named Shaq who grew up there. Shaq guided our students to a closed down section of the housing project, with windows long shuttered. He spoke to our students about how the city made empty promises to residents and lamented that there are 100,000 people on the waitlist for the affordable housing units the city said it would build in its place. As Shaq spoke, current residents of what is left of Cabrini walked by our group, smiling and bantering with him. They stopped to say hello to our students, offering hospitality and a different window into what once stood there. When Shaq greeted the more recent transplants to the area walking by, the ones who occupied the million-dollar condos down the street, *not a single one responded* or even looked at him. Our students knew exactly what was happening.

At one point, Shaq stopped and asked our students: "Do you feel safe?" The students laughed at his question; of course they did. They

[30] Anita Olson Gustafson, "Swedes," *The Electronic Encyclopedia of Chicago* (Chicago Historical Society, 2005), available at http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/1222.html.

did as much laughing as learning. Then he said something that stopped the current for a moment: "A bunch of us are running a 'just say hello' campaign. We meet with our new neighbors to let them know what we're all about. We're not all thugs or gang bangers."

At that moment, our students knew it was Shaq who wasn't safe. In his perspective, the new settlers have come in to remove people like him. They no longer use cannons, guns, or disease, but dollars and cents. Or eminent domain.

Afterwards, as we debriefed our time with Shaq, I realized something profound happened in our students, and it spoke to me as I sat in my frustration. Although they suspected the waters were bound for lands of gold, as they stepped into the waters, they were still able to find traces of Eden in the river too. Traces of Eden like Shaq who remind us to say "hello" in a polarized world where we simply look down and walk past each other—the same dehumanization that can often justify faster currents or polluting the waters instead of reversing them.

As we begin a new journey under the leadership of President Surridge, until the currents change, or no matter how quickly the river flows, as Edin has reminded us, may we be reminded that the waters of Eden still run through our campus. They are embodied in our own students who inspire us with their sense of the way things should be, pointing us to the headwaters of Eden. May their vision and optimism buoy us as we head upstream. As we know, changing the currents will require innovation, and the challenging of our natural risk-aversion. Heaven, the New Jerusalem, is counting on it.

Recentering Justice[1]

Liz Mosbo VerHage, president of Covenant Ministerium and pastor of global and local ministries, Quest Church, Seattle, Washington

The word I have for us is titled "Recentering Justice"—not *centering* justice, as if for the first time, but *re*centering it, putting it back in the place God always intended in our lives, as disciples and as leaders in particular.[2] I am going to begin by sharing the heart of my message right up front: recentering justice means that *biblically, justice ministry and spiritual health function together and depend on one another*. This is important for any of us who want to following Jesus faithfully, and especially important for those of us called to leadership. Our spiritual health—our right relationship with God, drawing our identity from Christ and living out of our belovedness in God—is always necessary for doing justice. And this spiritual health then bears the fruit of healthy justice ministry. The second part of the summary is this: *this*

[1] This sermon was originally preached at the Midwinter Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church in Denver, Colorado, January 22, 2019. It is lightly edited for publication. Thanks to Dawn Holt Lauber for the transcription.

[2] I'd like to thank a few people. Cecelia Williams asked me to consider preaching, and I need to thank and honor her leadership as well as the entire Love Mercy and Do Justice staff. I also want to thank my predecessor as president of the Ministerium. It is because of the leadership of Catherine Gilliard that I am here tonight, so I thank and honor her. Learning from and watching other women superintendents, like Tammy Swanson-Draheim and Evelyn Johnson, is also part of why I can be on a stage like this. Thank you. I also want to thank the pastors and staff of Quest Church. Quest is a church that honors God, and our staff does this in a way that brings people back to the church. I meet people every week who say, "I gave up on church till I found you," or "I didn't think I could fit anywhere and bring all of who I was until I came here." I am grateful to serve with these people who shape me and shape the world. On behalf of Quest, I also want to thank those who reached out after we had a serious vandalism incident the Sunday before Christmas Eve. Thank you for your support.

truth always flows both ways. Our embodiment of biblical justice—having right relationships with others, both personally and systemically, caring for the vulnerable, the marginalized, fighting injustices in our world around race, gender, economics, immigration status, abilities, and many more—is always necessary for our spiritual health. Justice ministry, in turn, bears the fruit of a healthier relationship with God.

What this means practically is that if we have a rich prayer life, we will see injustices better. If we engage in advocating for the vulnerable, in dismantling racism and feeding the hungry and housing the homeless, we will see the Holy Spirit come alive in us. When we worship, lament, and confess, the closer we get to understanding our need for God, and we then understand our need for each other. Church, I'm convinced of this. It has been true in my own life. I have seen it in pastors I teach and coach. I've seen it in our congregation. I've seen it in your congregations. There is truth to look at here: that our spiritual health and justice ministries are always meant to go hand in hand. Recentering justice.

First I will briefly unpack the larger concept of what biblical justice is, looking at the rich biblical narrative that describes this. I'll then focus on the story of Hannah, comparing her to the priest Eli and his sons, because I think this story tells us something profound about whether or not we keep justice and spirituality together, especially as leaders. Throughout Scripture justice means a right relationship with both God and others; this concept is at the center of our faith. Keep this in mind, as you read the first section of our passage from 1 Samuel 2:

> Hannah prayed and said, "My heart exults in the LORD; my strength is exalted in my God. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in my victory. There is no Holy One like the LORD, no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God. Talk no more so very proudly, let not arrogance come from your mouth; for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty are broken, but the feeble gird on strength. Those who were full have hired themselves out for bread, but those who were hungry are fat with spoil. The barren has borne seven, but she who has many children is forlorn.…He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor….The LORD! His adversaries shall be shattered; the Most High will thunder in

heaven. The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; he will give strength to his king, and exalt the power of his anointed." (1 Samuel 2:1–5, 8, 10)

This is the word of God for the people of God.

Our Biblical Witness: Centering Justice

Recentering justice: spiritual health and justice ministry, always together. I wonder if we really see this connection? I think too often we split our personal spiritual health from the social systemic realties that we refer to as "justice ministry."

I grew up in a small church in southeast Minnesota, Salem Road Covenant Church. A church plant, it held worship services in a multi-purpose gym. It was not a church that talked about justice ministries, but it loved me well. It was like my second family. This church taught me that the Bible mattered for everything in my life, and this church taught me that Jesus loves me. So even though this church would not have used the words "justice ministry," I want to go back and thank them—and blame them—because the reason that I did all of this school, all of this study, all of this pastoral ministry, all this community development, is because I learned about doing this from the word they taught me to value.

Did you know that justice is everywhere in the Bible? Because of the way I was formed in my church, I have to take biblical justice seriously. If we are people of the book who ask the question, "Where is it written?" we must acknowledge how central justice always has been in our Bible. Justice needs to be "recentered" because somehow in the development of our church, nation, and world it has become too common for us to imagine justice can be separated from the biblical narrative. Think about this connection every time you see the cross: the vertical direction stands for being in right relationship with God; the horizontal direction of the cross stands for being in right relationship with others. That is what justice is. That is how God intended all our relationships to be.

Many of you probably know the literally hundreds of verses that talk about justice and righteousness in the Bible. We know that Scripture often refers to the poor, the widow, the orphan, the immigrant—those most vulnerable groups without systemic power in their social settings, and those people groups who were always tied to God's narrative of justice. You probably know that the Old Testament uses many words to teach us about this concept, *mishpat*, *tzedakah*, and others. You likely know

that Scripture often pairs "justice" and "righteousness" as well as "justice" and "mercy." I love that the same Spanish word, *justicia*, is used for both "justice" and "righteousness." By contrast, the concept of "righteousness" sometimes seems different than "justice ministry" in English. We need to recenter these words and their meanings.

Part of recentering justice is this right alignment with God—what we tend to think of as righteousness perhaps, that vertical connection of the cross. When we can say, "I am who you say that I am, God," that is justice. Justice is knowing that I am in need of a God who is different from me—that God is God, and I am not—so I need to submit to God who knows all and sees all, who is holy, just, merciful, and compassionate. *This* God wants to line up with humanity, even with me. It is out of this freedom that I can fully be who God made me to be for others. Knowing who I am in Christ, my identity in the vertical aspect of the cross, fuels the horizontal aspect. The overflow of God's lovingkindness and forgiveness in me, the freedom of knowing that I'm forgiven, chosen, and enough, enables me to see that kindness, freedom, and chosenness in others. After I've received life from God it overflows to my neighbor. I want life for my neighbor. I might even fight for life for my neighbor. I might interrupt personal or systemic realities that take life away from my neighbor.

Some of the most well-known verses on justice connect these two aspects clearly. In Micah 6:8 justice is connected to our spiritual health: "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?" Right before Amos exhorts, "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24), the prophet tells the people of God, "I hate, I despise your festivals. Take away from me the noise of your songs. I don't want your worship. I don't want your offerings. I don't want you to do the things that would right your relationship with me. What is it that I want? Justice" (cf. Amos 5:21–24). Our spiritual health and our justice are connected biblically. They're so connected that God doesn't even want our worship without justice. I had read "let justice roll down" many times, but only as I read and studied more did I notice the section before. It blew me away how strong Amos's language was in calling God's people to justice. Has that ever happened to you that as you read a biblical text more deeply you realize that the whole story is more complex?

Another frequently quoted verse is Isaiah 58:6, "Is not this the fast

that I choose?" At Quest Church we begin each year with a fast. Fasting is one of the best ways to get in alignment with God. But here the prophet Isaiah tells the people of God, "I don't want that fast you were doing. What is the fast that I want? I want you to unloose chains of injustice. Those who are tied, set them free. I want you to feed the hungry." And then what does the prophet say will be the fruits of their justice? "Your light will shine. You'll be refreshed. You'll be watered." This is a spiritual growth metaphor. The text is literally saying, don't do spiritual growth practices without justice. And after you do justice, it is justice that will fuel and grow your spiritual life. Recentering justice ministry means that justice ministry and spiritual health belong together. They are not meant to be separated.

Just as there's a whole lot in the Old Testament about centering justice, there is a whole lot in the New Testament. The one key text I want to weave in is the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:34–40; Luke 10:25–27). Here Jesus is asked what the greatest commandment is, and he turns the question on its head. The scribe who asks the question thinks Jesus will have to pick one of the Ten Commandments; he thinks his question will trick Jesus. What does Jesus answer? The greatest commandment on which hangs all the laws and all the prophets, all of the ways of spiritually lining up with God, is this: first love God. Be in right relationship with God with all of who you are—your mind, your body, your spirit. And then the second is like it: love your neighbor as yourself. First the vertical, love God, and then the horizontal, love your neighbor; they're always connected. Jesus continues to be pressed in this story—well, how much do I have to love my neighbor?—and he answers with the example of an ethnic outsider. Jesus juxtaposes the "good Samaritan" with a Levite and a priest, those whom everyone would think of as the "good guys," the religious insiders and leaders (Luke 10:29–37). Jesus's very example of how to love God and love neighbor is doing justice work, crossing ethnic and privilege lines.

Our Work as Leaders: Spiritual Health and Justice Ministry

This is our work to do, church, and it includes two aspects. It's likely we would all agree that our relationship to God is critical to our spiritual health. Yet I suspect that too often we don't prioritize our spiritual health. And too often we see justice ministry as a peripheral or an add-on. Have you ever heard something like, "Well, justice ministry is just for those people who are called to it," or for progressives, or maybe people of color,

or those in diverse neighborhoods? The connotation is that each of us can choose whether or not to engage in right relationships with others. But we need to recenter justice, my sisters and my brothers. This is not optional if we are people of the Book.

This is part of what I've been praying for you, leaders and people serving in our churches, whether you are part of the Covenant Ministerium or a leader outside of that formal body. All of us, as beloved in Christ, as disciples and leaders, know that ministry can be exhausting. It can be isolating. Ministry can even be deceptive, because in our near-constant press to give to others, we can forget that we need to receive first. Justice, remember, means being in right relationship with our God. We cannot do healthy, sustainable ministry unless we are first aware of our need for God and are receiving from God. Part of the beauty of tonight's worship songs is the truth that God sees us and knows us and has already called us. Right now, wherever you are, whatever season of ministry, whatever pain or challenges or high points, know that you are chosen. You are set free. You are already healed. You are already loved. You are a child of God. Do we as ministers need to hear that and receive it first before we preach it to others?

I confess I've had seasons in my life where I didn't believe I needed God in the way I now know I do. At times I even felt I was not encouraged to need God, where I was affirmed for doing more, where I even thought God might need me. I could help God because I had gifts and strengths. I was called, and people said I could do stuff, so I was going to help God by doing all these good things. But when you do that for too long, you can run out of gas because your fuel is not coming from the right place. It is dangerous too because in our churches and ministries, others are rarely going to tell you, "Stop doing a lot of things," or "You should go take some time off," or "You should go do stuff that we don't see the fruit of right away like aligning with God." It's a challenge.

It can also be difficult for our pride. It is a reminder to me that God does not need me. Leadership is a privilege. It is an invitation for me to walk with God, to be called by God, to live out the strengths and the gifts God has given me. That is a deep joy, but God does not *need* me; God invites me. This is good news: God does not need you! God is healing you and inviting you into what God is already doing in our world. God is already bringing justice across creation! God is already centering you in what God is doing in our world! God's already healing and calling people, and the Holy Spirit is doing things bigger than your or I could

ever ask or imagine! So why would we make such a small God where we think we're helping God when we do justice ministry? We need to recenter justice, church.

I had the honor of being in ordination interviews this past week, and I asked every candidate I interviewed these two questions: how do you intentionally steward growing your spiritual health, and how do you intentionally pursue justice ministry? I noticed their answers were connected, and I think that's true for all of us. I want us to think about what God is doing in our lives. How is it that God is reframing and reshaping and renaming us? How does that vertical identity work of our spiritual health propel us, demand of us, and encourage us to do our horizontal work, to do justice ministry?

Another thing I am praying for our church right now is that we would see and believe that justice ministries are not an add-on, not optional. They are not for some Christians to engage in. Church, hear this: justice is not a project. Justice is not a political affiliation. Justice is certainly not a resume-builder, something to enhance our image. Justice is not a three-step plan. Justice is not something we tweet, or where we say, "I'm not this, I'm not that." Justice, biblical justice, is an ongoing way of life. It is something followers of Jesus Christ are called to; it is central to our discipleship. When we engage in justice ministry it feeds back into our spiritual health, our relationship with God. The biblical witness tells us that we can't even worship God rightly without justice.

Recentering justice means that we allow God's justice—a right relationship with God and a right relationship with others—to reshape us. It has to rename and recenter us—maybe first as ministers, maybe first as leaders, maybe first as those who are trying to give and love and call others into ministry. Recentering justice.

Hannah's Example: A Leader Centered in Biblical Justice

I want to turn to 1 Samuel and Hannah's song, a beautiful and pivotal story, and look at how we see her as a leader. Hannah is an example of somebody centered in justice. She doesn't have to recenter it, because her life story, her obedience, and her faithfulness show that she is rightly lined up with God and with others.[3] Hannah is the second wife of a faithful, God-following Israelite. Hannah is unable to have children, and she's

[3] I want to thank Pastor Inés Velásquez-McBryde for helping me think about Hannah in this way.

actually bullied and tormented by another one of the wives because of this. But Hannah still faithfully worships. She follows the law, visits the priest, and makes sacrifices at the shrine at Shiloh. In deep lament, she throws herself in front of God, praying for a child. And God hears her. God answers, and Hannah promises to return the son she births to God. God hears Hannah and answers, and the possibility for new birth, which had been closed off, was opened.

I want to acknowledge that anytime we talk about the realities of pregnancy, infertility, or child loss, these verses can be painful for some, or reminders of difficult spaces in our own lives. I also want to say that Hannah's story does speak to the ways that God works in women through literal, miraculous physical childbirth, but it also communicates how God can see, hear, and deliver any of us who at times have felt forgotten, unseen, or unworthy. Both men and women are being called today, through this text, to birth new things and to bring new life to our world. How many of us are tempted to think that something that has been closed in our lives can never reopen? Hannah teaches us something about that kind of birth, too. Whether this is a literal or figurative word for you, I want you to hear that God sees your pain and your places of barrenness. And God's justice and God's right relationship with us informs the truth that we know, that God is still with us and still bringing new life.

In our story it is Hannah's spiritual health—her fasting, her worship, her dependence on God, even her desperation for God—that we learn about first. She didn't go home to wait, follow a ten-step plan, or ask somebody else to fix her need. She was so desperate for a connection with God that this fueled everything that she did. And out of this depth of her worship, God responded to Hannah's healthy spiritual dependence and gave her a son, Samuel. Hannah teaches us that God has new things to bring us if we keep praying and crying out. I know it is not easy to wait for the miraculous; I've been there, and I know that the waiting can be painful. But Hannah's story reminds us that God is birthing new things even in places where we never thought it could happen. Hannah even gives up the son God birthed in her. That is leadership. And it is only possible through right relationship with God.

Hannah's song of praise also shows clearly that she sees injustices. She sees the differences between systems and power. She names all of those broken relationships between people. She herself is in a category of vulnerability, so she understands injustice. And as soon as God's promise is fulfilled in her, what is her response? She is overwhelmed by praise.

She stops, she turns back, she acknowledges God. *The response to justice in our midst is praise, church!* Hannah's song says, "Thank you, I know that this was you, God. I know you're the one who is going to turn these systems over and bring those who were low, high." Then she names, "I will remember that this was you, God; this was not by my own strength or by my own hand." She knows she wasn't helping God. She has a right relationship with her place in relation to God.

And notice that Hannah is not even a formal leader. She's just a woman. She's a woman being oppressed and bullied. She's on the outside. She does not have power or means. She's a woman in her time and culture as well, so she hardly has a voice. But even in that space, with whatever she could do, she maintained a right relationship with God. She also saw the systems oppressing others and had a right relationship with them. This woman likely felt forgotten, abused, unseen, with nowhere to turn, but she knew to go to God. And God saw her.

Hannah's story reminds me of many men and women in our midst, people who have this kind of sacrificial leadership and whose spiritual health is so strong, whose connection with God and with others shapes their life and their witness. And their witness has shaped me. I think of people like Pastor Karen Brewer who will be ordained this summer. Spending decades in a difficult neighborhood and going through her own pain, her own suffering, she's still been witnessing to people for years. She's been changing her neighborhood not because she had a central place of power but out of a right relationship with God and others. I'm so thankful for her witness.

I think of people like Superintendent Curtis Ivanoff and other indigenous leaders who are so close to the pain of displacement, the pain of loss of land, and even the invisibility of a people group. Being close to that pain does something rich in their spiritual health and their relational justice health. I'm so thankful for that witness.

I think of Pastor Dany Flores who I've gotten to know over the last ten years or so. Because of the pain of immigration and different policies, she's been separated from family all over the place, and yet she's been serving and leading and connected to God throughout. I am so thankful for her witness.

I think of Quest Church's founding pastor, Eugene Cho, and his wife Minhee Samonim. She is someone who is always behind the scenes, praying, delivering food, making jokes, dropping off gifts, seeing children with special needs whom others don't see. She sacrifices for others consistently.

She does this because she prays constantly, and she sees people around her who need justice and who need God. I'm so thankful for her witness.

And I think of Professor Richard Carlson. He was my seminary adviser, and he is part of the reason I stayed in seminary and in the church when I was so discouraged. I saw a lack of witness and a lack of justice, and I asked him, "If people love Jesus and read the Bible, why don't they act like it?" And Richard answered my questions with understanding and with his own stories of doubt and pain. He was a student organizer in the civil rights movement, a pastor and a professor in many contexts. He'd done church ministry decades longer than I had when I met him in my early twenties. I thought, if he had persevered, I could probably be a little more patient and keep doing this longer. I am so thankful for his witness.

There are so many more; many of you are here in this room. I couldn't name all of you who have witnessed centering justice and who have shaped our church and shaped me. I'm so thankful for your witness. Because when we are people of the Book and we are lined up with God and others, our life speaks of that. Others can feel it in your presence, your words, and your witness. And when it's missing, we feel that too.

Eli and His Sons: Leaders without Biblical Justice

After 1 Samuel tells the story of Hannah, the narrative turns to Eli and his sons, the priests at the shrine. In contrast to Hannah, they offer a powerful example of what happens when we are not rightly lined up and centered in justice.

> Eli's sons were scoundrels; they had no regard for the LORD. Now it was the practice of the priests that, whenever any of the people offered a sacrifice, the priest's servant would come with a three-pronged fork in his hand while the meat was being boiled and would plunge the fork into the pan or kettle or caldron or pot. Whatever the fork brought up the priest would take for himself.…If the person said to him, "Let the fat be burned first, and then take whatever you want," the servant would answer, "No, hand it over now; if you don't, I'll take it by force." This sin of the young men was very great in the LORD's sight, they were treating the LORD's offering with contempt. But Samuel was ministering before the LORD—a boy wearing a linen ephod. Each year his mother made him

> a little robe and took it to him when she went up with her husband to offer the annual sacrifice.…Now Eli, who was very old, heard about everything his sons were doing to all of Israel and how they slept with the women who served at the entrance to the tent of meeting. So he said to them, "Why do you do such things? I hear from all the people about these wicked deeds of yours.…If one person sins against another, God may mediate for the offender; but if anybody sins against the LORD, who will intercede for them?" His sons, however, did not listen to their father's rebuke, for it was the LORD's will to put them to death. And the boy Samuel continued to grow in stature and in favor with the LORD and with people. (1 Samuel 2:12–14, 16–19, 22–23, 25–26, NIV)

This kind of leadership is evidence of what happens when we do not hold spiritual health and justice ministry together. Eli is at the end of his ministry, and he is literally and figuratively losing his sight. He's asleep at his post. He is not stewarding his role as a priest or as a father of his sons. He doesn't even hear from God anymore, 1 Samuel 1 tells us. He also did not recognize Hannah in his midst. He missed her giftedness, her connection with God, her faithfulness. He doesn't see God or intervene with his sons. He seems to watch injustice go by.

Do you think in our own time a leader like Eli would speak out when injustice happens? When things happen to embarrass Native American elders, when sentencing comes down that's not just, when immigration policies still separate families? Do you think a faith leader like Eli would have the courage to speak out for women being abused? Do you think someone who can't see would be able to act faithfully if his relationship with God and others was so broken? I think Eli represents passive injustice in leaders, a sleepy, blinded sense of, "Well, that's not my problem," or, "I'm not sure what I could do anyway." Men and women of God, if we find ourselves tempted to this posture or among others who are, we need to be reminded to start with confession, with lament, and with aligning ourselves with God and with others. Otherwise, listen to what happens from this not-centered-on-justice kind of leadership.

Eli's sons are the outgrowth, the progeny that thrives and grows out of a passive disengagement from God's justice and justice for others. His sons literally take for themselves the gifts that were offered to God. They assume they can take what they want. They have no regard for others.

They even take advantage of women who came to worship God. They use gifts given to God for their own enjoyment. They do not care about justice for others, and they clearly do not care about being lined up with God. This unbridled sense of power, even in the center of a religious place, leads to oppressive, unjust, and evil leadership. Eli's sons literally stick forks in the sacrifices made to God in order to self-satiate. They say, "If you don't give me what I want, even though that's meant to be unto God, I will take it by force!"

This is entitlement! This lack of the capacity to wait and listen for God, to steward their position as faith leaders, did you recognize that? These were not people who did not know better. These were leaders placed in the center of power who knew. Yet they used their unbridled power for themselves and harmed others along the way.

This example might sound harsh. It might sound far removed from us. But I suspect, sisters and brothers, we all have these tendencies. How do we pay attention if as leaders we are taking by force things we feel entitled to? How do we stop and ask God, is this right? How do we stop and look around and ask, am I paying attention to systems and injustice, to those who are not being seen? Do you realize Eli and his sons did not recognize what God was birthing in Hannah? The evil they committed in the center of worship blinded them to God's work right in front of them. Yet, when grown, Samuel will change the line of judges that ends with the leadership of King Saul; Samuel will be the one faithful leader as other leaders fall. We don't have Samuel unless we have Hannah.[4] It is because of Hannah that Samuel will change the structure of religious power. We would not have the new thing God birthed for the people of God were it not for the faithfulness, pain, and obedience of this woman, Hannah.

The people in the center of the story didn't even notice this little boy. And isn't this what God does? Samuel came as this little boy on the side; all we read was that he was wearing a linen ephod, and his mom faithfully visited him and cared for him. He's a footnote in this story of power and blindness and lack of centered justice. And yet, Samuel will become the main event. How often, church, is God doing a new thing, birthing new life, bringing what we and the kingdom and the world most need, not in the center of attention, not in the centers of power, not in the place with the three-pronged fork to take what we want, but on the side, in the

[4] On this point, too, I'm indebted to Pastor Inés.

faithfulness of a woman or a man who is obedient, even in pain, to say yes and to birth something new from God? Recentering justice, church. This right relationship with God and with others is at the core of our good news. And it's good news for us as leaders first.

Closing: Good News

Being filled, being known, being chosen, being enough in the sight of God, that is our fuel, our food. That is what satisfies and satiates, not food we take by force. When we are filled up and know who we are in Christ, this overflows in the ability to see and do justice and call others to it. None of us has to do all of justice, but all of us have to do justice—because justice and spiritual health, because right relationship with God and with others is at the core of the Bible. And my church taught me that the Bible matters. This is good news for us, church. Whether we feel unseen or are out of alignment with our God, it's never too late. The moment we ask for forgiveness and confess, the moment we turn and say, "God I want to be lined up with you and with others rightly; show me what I have to do," that is where God meets us.

The good news for leaders, for ministers, and for all those you love and minister to is that God is always standing ready for us, saying, "You are my child. You are already chosen. You are already loved. You are already enough. Be in alignment with me. It could be costly. I will ask you to change things and give things up. I will not let unbridled power or entitlement or injustice flow. But I am a God who sees you, and I am a God of justice." It's not by strength that we prevail. Remember from Hannah's song, those who oppose the Lord will be broken. The Most High will thunder from heaven. The Lord will bring justice to the ends of the earth. He will give strength to his king. He will exalt the horn of his anointed. God will always be a God of justice! Thanks be to God.

An Ecclesiology of Shalom[1]

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José Humphreys[2]: Imagine a world of shalom—God's wholeness, God's intention—where some say nothing is missing, and nothing is broken. The story of Scripture is the story of God's shalom, from God to creation, from sin to redemption, to the new heavens and the new earth. Shalom is the thread that ties it all together. So what is shalom? How does it help us bring the Scripture together, and how does it inform mission? What does it mean to be the church in light of God's mission of restoring shalom through Christ?

Back in 2007, our church was formed when a group of diverse people began to discern how the church could be a public witness and a sign of the kingdom in our community. We were a quirky kind of group, racially diverse and ecumenical. Among us were evangelicals and a couple of Presbyterians. There were three Pentecostals who were recovering from burn out. There was also a Bapticostal—that's what you get when you cross a Baptist and a Pentecostal. There was a young woman who was

[1] This article originated in a plenary session at the Midwinter Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church in Denver, Colorado, January 24, 2019. It is lightly edited for publication. Thanks to Dawn Holt Lauber for her work transcribing the recoded talk.

[2] I am thankful for Cecilia Williams, executive minister of Love Mercy and Do Justice, who made this opportunity possible. Not enough can be said about Cecilia's leadership. I am also grateful for other Covenant leaders—Catherine Gilliard, Jerome Nelson, Robert Owens, and all those whose shoulders I stand on—who have paved a path for the rest of us.

between Islam and Christianity. There were a couple of agnostics who weren't quite sure whether God existed; they just knew that something was out there. There was an Irish Catholic and two Christian anarchists. We sounded like the beginning of a good joke that takes place in a bar, except it was about the church.

One of our anchor verses was Jeremiah 29:7, "Also, seek the peace [shalom] and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (Jeremiah 29:7, NIV). Discerning this text in context was the challenge of our day. Our context in East Harlem is a gentrifying neighborhood. We can look around and witness our fair share of cupcake shop invasions. One of our challenges has been to respond to the economic shifts that seem to be on turbo drive. Manhattan can seem more like a port of call than a destination for rootedness. People come, and people go. They're hurried; they're scattered. It can be tough to cultivate a sense of community and tetheredness.

I remember a pastor lamenting over café con leche (the original latte), what kind of transformation or public witness can we truly expect if the typical Manhattan church attender comes to church thirty Sundays per year for one and a half hours each week (or three if you're Pentecostal)? How does one live an integrated vision of shalom under these circumstances, in this ecology? Like this pastor, I've lamented the diminished role of the church in our society, in North America for that matter. Yet I also find there are many churches reimagining their togetherness in God's shalom with God's Spirit, while living out God's purposes at the intersection of the world's breaches and God's gospel of peace.

Adam Gustine: I come at this topic a little bit differently than José, because shalom is not my native language. In fact, in some ways I'm a liability in the work of pursuing God's shalom. As a white male American, I carry a way of seeing and engaging the world that has serious blind spots for the work of seeking God's shalom. I've come to see that injustice—the shattering of God's shalom—is not easily understandable to someone who has not experienced the backside of privilege. Growing up, I had no awareness of systemic injustice or structural inequality, which meant I had no sense of how central justice is to the heart of God. This meant that I could embrace a theological frame that focused almost entirely on questions of personal security and salvation. The idea that God's kingdom intentions might include a renewal of the deep brokenness of

the world was not part of my theological imagination. Shalom and the intersection of church and justice felt ancillary to the real work of the gospel. My last decade or so of ministry has been both the hardest and most sacred of my life, as God has allowed sisters and brothers from a wide array of stories different than my own to very graciously help me see what I was so sure I saw fully long ago.

My doctoral cohort leader was Manny Ortiz. The first day of class Dr. Ortiz introduced what he called the "hermeneutics of repentance." He said that many of us see the work of hermeneutics as coming to the text for answers. But in an increasingly globalizing and urbanizing world where issues of injustice are coming to the fore in ever-increasing ways, he was concerned that our quest for answers would make us arrogant. He drew a descending spiral on the white board and said, "I come to the text, and I invite you to come to the text, not in search of a better answer but in search of a deeper question. The search for a deeper question is posture of repentance. It's a way of saying, I'm so blind that I don't even know the right question to ask."

Ortiz's point was that hermeneutics ought to be an exercise of discipleship, of becoming a different kind of person, and this requires repentance. This lesson was huge for me and has stuck with me all of these years. I believe that without a hermeneutic of repentance, I and those who look like me will always be a hopeless liability in the work of seeking God's shalom. Through embracing a hermeneutic of repentance, I believe it is possible to mitigate this liability, just a bit, so that the shalom of God might be expressed more fully in and through me in the world. I want to invite us all, but particularly my white and majority culture sisters and brothers, to lean into this idea of a hermeneutic of repentance, because there's too much at stake to pretend that we already have the answers, that we already see everything that needs to be seen.

JH: What is at stake here, then? If we have been raised evangelical in America, chances are we have been formed in either an over-personalized gospel or a fragmented one that sees justices as the latter part of a sequence. In such a fragmented view, justice can be reduced to one of many checkboxes on the ministry menu, an implication of the gospel, or even an addendum to it. A more integrated view of the gospel challenges us, the church, into a larger story that takes personal, interpersonal, and even political dimensions as integral parts of the larger gospel story. Because the gospel message, the story we tell every Sunday shapes us.

And it's about shaping us to become more and more like Christ.

As evangelicals it behooves us, then, to revisit our language of faith and ask what it means to be Christ-like. If you put five Christians in a room and ask them, "What's the gospel of Jesus Christ?" you may get five different responses. Our words can signify different things. For example, a 2016 Barna study concluded that church people's view of being Christ-like in North America can entail "using the way of Jesus as a means of pursuing the way of the self."[3] If we are really trying to shape disciples to become more Christ-like, we need to revisit our language.

In contrast to the Barna study, Christ's life demonstrates how the way of shalom is at the heart of Christian maturity and that we're all connected to a greater ecology of both beauty and brokenness. When I think about beauty and brokenness, I think about the question Howard Thurman posed in his seminal book *Jesus and the Disinherited*: What does your gospel say to those whose backs are against the wall?[4] When Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he's anointed me to preach the good news" (cf. Luke 4:18), he demonstrates that concern for others is central to the culture of the kingdom, not just an implication. The gospel is for the poor, for the incarcerated, for the oppressed within the context of empire, and those seeking a reset through Jubilee.

In all this talk about the gospel and its social dimensions, it's important to make salient that I am evangelical. Or, I'm *still* evangelical. I still believe in personal salvation. I still believe in repentance—the need to change our allegiances so that we can be aligned with the kingdom of God. But I also recognize that there's a fuller gospel that many of us are yearning for. We look around the world, and we see that the world is seeking a more expansive story than we've been giving them—one that brings together the personal dimension but is not overly personalized, one that harmonizes this with public works. That's what the gospel of peace is about. Jesus's redeeming love does this. It draws us back to God, and it turns us outward to the world with the face of the church. Shalom will continuously be outward facing, beginning in the family of faith and flowing out into the world. Heralding and embodying this good news will then be the church's performance, because we desperately need a theology that is as big as our gospel.

[3] *The State of the Church and Family Report* (Barna Group, 2016).
[4] Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).

AG: The first time José said to me, "We don't have a theology big enough for the whole gospel," I just about fell out of my chair. "We don't have a theology big enough for the whole gospel." That is a big claim, and it's one we don't make lightly. In all the ways we've experienced church—being trained to be pastors within congregations—for all the ways we searched to put our Bibles together, to make decisions about our theological convictions and our missional priorities, we always find ourselves holding on to a shadow of the big story of what God is doing in the world through Jesus.

On the one hand, we recognize that we're always going to fall short of capturing the fullness of God's good news, that we'll always fail to grasp the entirety of God's missional intent. Even so, we need a way of framing the gospel story that doesn't just bring together the variety of theological commitments represented in this room. We need a way of framing the gospel story that pulls all of us—conservative or progressive, old school or new school, missional or attractional, urban, suburban, town and country—into the deeper story of God's great work of redemption.

If you'll permit us to offer a suggestion, we believe a commitment to a serious and embodied theology of God's shalom provides the framework needed to stitch the story of Scripture together in a stunning and sacred way as well as a pathway for living out the gospel in real ways in the communities God has placed us. Shalom is not abstract. It is not ethereal or otherworldly. Shalom is concrete, or maybe we should say that shalom is embodied because the natural habitat of God's shalom is and has always been a community of persons. That's why we can't ignore the implications of God's shalom for our churches. It's why our theological convictions surrounding God's shalom have to find their way into lived reality of congregational life, because shalom bears its fruit in community. It has always been that way.

The entire story of Scripture is the story of shalom being expressed in a community and then extended to the world through that community. And that begins with God. The Trinity is the original community of shalom. "In the beginning God." Before the creation of the world, before the destruction caused by sin, before the need ever arose for salvation and the work of justice, God. And God is, in God's very essence, a people. Now that may seem a little strange to say that God has always existed throughout eternity in a peopled form, but central to what makes God God is the fact that God exists in community. The Scripture reveals this Triune God to us as a community of three that make up the one true God

of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The reality that God has always existed in community is important because it is the baseline for our understanding of shalom. Because God exists in perfect harmony between Father, Son, and Spirit. God is an expression of shalom, because in God "nothing is missing, and nothing is broken."[5] In God there is no oppression or evil or injustice or marginalization. Each person of the Trinity exists in loving, dynamic mutuality with the other persons of the Trinity, and each, in their specific way, contributes to and also submits to the community of the others.

This community that God enjoys is the highest and greatest expression of God's shalom. And it is also this God who exists as shalom community who acts in the world in creation in the opening chapters of Genesis. If God exists as the perfect expression of shalom, then it is possible to see creation as the original extension of shalom. The reality of creation itself suggests that it would not do for God to stop at being simply an expression of shalom. Shalom had to extend out. So when God creates Adam and Eve, and by extension all of humanity, we witness a widening of the circle of persons who live within the relational borders of shalom. What was originally experienced in God by God alone is now an ever-widening circle of those persons who participate in that community of God's shalom. God's mandate to Adam and Eve aligns with this idea of expression and extension, because Adam and Eve become participants in the extension of shalom to the rest of creation, to care for the earth, to be fruitful and multiply. These are tangible ways in which Adam and Eve demonstrate shalom community where nothing is missing, and nothing is broken.

JH: This picture of God's partnership with Adam and Eve began with creation and God's good intention. For five days God created, and at the end of each, God looked at creation and said, "It is good." But something deeper happens at the end of the sixth day. God sees the woman and the man God created. God sees the totality of everything that God has done and doesn't just say "good" but "very good." In essence, emphatically good and forcefully good; in the Hebrew it's *tov m'od*, very good in its totality and wholeness. Things were in right relationship with one another. In her book, *The Very Good Gospel*, Lisa Sharon Harper writes this:

[5] I first heard this phrase from John Perkins, one of the pioneers of the Christian Community Development Association.

> In the Hebrew conception of the world, all of creation is connected. The well-being of the whole depends on the well-being of each individual part. The Hebrew conception of goodness was different than the Greeks. The Greeks located perfection within the object itself. A thing or a person strove toward perfection. But the Hebrews understood goodness to be located between things. As a result the original hearers would have understood *tov* to refer to the ties of relationship between things in creation.[6]

Harper is emphasizing how shalom is the connective tissue of right relationship between persons, places, or even things in Hebrew thought. It can help us look at creation as an ecology, an ecosystem that is woven together through God's goodness with everything interconnected. In light of this we can witness just how egregious sin's impact is. Not many verses after God calls creation very good, Adam and Eve eat the fruit, leading to an unraveling of shalom, a disconnection not only from interpersonal relationship but also a disconnection from the land, from the Garden of Eden. With shalom unraveled, God's great ecology was impacted and, as a result, the intended wholeness of creation undone.

When I ponder the image of something becoming undone, I envision my mother-in-law, who loves to knit. There were times when my son, her grandson, would look at the intricate knitting of her sweaters or scarves, and, doing what kids sometimes do, he would pull on the loose thread, causing part of her work to unravel. If creation is God's intricate knitting together, sin causes the integrity of relationships to break down.

Sin is far more multi-dimensional than then we perhaps suspect. If we have a thin view of sin, we will have an equally thin view of the gospel. Just as the word became flesh (John 1:14), sin will incarnate itself becoming an embodied reality in our world as well. This is what we call powers and principalities. We see this in the sin of racism. Racism is partly the categorizing of darker bodies as a lesser value. It's a curse imputed on bodies, wherein darker bodies are seen as imaging less of God or, in US history, as three-fifths human.

We also witness the unraveling of sin in generational trauma. Studies show that trauma gets trapped in people's bodies, in the body's tissue.

[6] Lisa Sharon Harper, *The Very Good Gospel: How Everything Wrong Can Be Made Right* (New York: Waterbrook, 2016), 31.

Trauma rewires the brain, causing genetic changes. There's a whole field dedicated to this called epigenetics. The impact of sin is not just a spiritual reality but a deeply embodied one. The church needs to consider the breakdown of shalom in these many dimensions of life. What does our gospel have to say to those whose backs are against the wall, especially in a world where fragmented people create fragmented worlds and divided realities? Hurt people *hurt* people, but healed people, with the good news of the gospel, begin to *heal* people as wounded healers.[7]

AG: The entrance of sin into the world fractures the shalom community. Within the people of God, a fissure appears. This fissure is caused by the rejection of dynamic, loving community in favor of individualistic, self-centered existence. Tragically, sin not only destroys our capacity to express God's shalom, but it undercuts our capacity to extend shalom as well. Within one generation of creation, we witness the gravest of all injustices—murder. Seeing sin through this lens of shalom helps me see the ways in which my view of sin is rather thin. Sin is not mere error; sin is not mere missing the mark. Sin is more than that. Sin is a breakdown of the community of shalom. Sin is a kind of infidelity, not only before God, although certainly before God, but also among the people of God's shalom community. Sin pulls away the fabric holding together the human family who bear the image of the God who purposed to see us all in loving community. And that lens of shalom also gives us a way to think of sin that holds together the personal and systemic. The effects of sin are cosmic in that they have structural, social, and political expressions, but they are also cardiological: they infect the heart. If shalom means wholeness, then sin creates a deep breech, a brokenness, an incapacitation of our personal and communal will and ability to live in fidelity to God and to one another. We're not able to do what God made us to do, and it's here that something must be done.

JH: Shalom can provide us with a language for spiritual formation, a language that connects our gospel to both the personal and the public dimensions of life at its breakdowns. If sin is about division and relational breakdown, then the gospel we proclaim is about re-tethering and the unity of the Spirit. As shalom-makers, we work toward the mending of

[7] Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1972).

the world across differences. Our individual and collective vocation is to bring healing justice. Justice has many dimensions, and if we look at it through a gospel prism we'll see that justice is about healing. The church is called to work toward the healing of the world with Jesus.

Paul claims that Jesus is our shalom, our peace, and that Jesus, in his bodily sacrifice, brought together two races of Gentile and Jew and has torn down the wall of hostility (cf. Ephesians 2:11–16). Healing the divide between Jew and Gentile is a holy tethering. This healing justice was seen continually throughout the life and ministry of Jesus even before the cross. Each of Christ's miracles pointed to a whole gospel for the whole world, even as each made the gospel particular in a local context at a specific unraveling point. No miracle was the same; each was distinct, addressing the multiple ways tears in the fabric of shalom can label, dehumanize, and separate people. We see in Jesus's miracles an integrative character. In Luke 8, Jesus frees a demon-possessed man and sends him home to testify. The man returned home and shared personal shalom, but he also brought neighborhood shalom, or a political shalom depending on one's reading of that text.

In Luke 17:11–19, Jesus demonstrates this restorative and integrating approach on the road to Jerusalem. When he encounters ten lepers on the way, Jesus says, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." This was not only for the purpose of testimony. This testimony would also ensure the men were reintegrated into society as a form of social shalom. They say, "I now have a story to share with the rest of the world. Look at what the Lord has done." Like we used to say in the old church, "He touched my body, / He touched my mind, / He saved me just in time, / And I'm gonna praise his name."

In Luke 19:1–10, Jesus encounters Zacchaeus, the despised tax collector, a predatory lender. After salvation comes to his house, Zacchaeus says he will return four times what he stole, an act of restorative justice within his own 'hood in Jericho. Zacchaeus wouldn't need to go with Jesus on the itinerant path, but he went back to his own ecosystem and made a just impact. Notice Jesus says this, "Today salvation has come into this home" (Luke 19:9). The "sinner's prayer" is not in the text; repentance came through Zacchaeus's act of economic shalom, his righting of wrongs. This was part of the mission and the message of Jesus. Every miracle Jesus performed pointed to the kingdom and a greater wholeness to come.

AG: When I was a kid, I was into puzzles. I was constantly putting them together, then I would glue them together to hang in my room. I was addicted to the idea of a bigger picture emerging from so many little pieces. I found that incredibly satisfying. I've often thought how different the process would be without the picture on the puzzle box. Can you imagine trying to make sense of the picture from the little fragments alone? You would be fumbling along, trying to figure out how the pieces go together. I'm an Enneagram One, so I'm always looking for ways to demonstrate that I'm achieving more. There were times I tried to put a puzzle together without looking at the picture on the box, as though this would be a greater accomplishment. But if we do that, we're unnecessarily limiting ourselves, rejecting a resource that's available to us, a picture of the end product. In a puzzle, they give you the picture for a reason; puzzling is all about seeing the end product and working toward it.

Theology should be similar. Theology should be the work of seeing the end and working toward this vision. Yet in many of the churches I've experienced, it seems like we do theology the way I tried to do the puzzle, without attending to the picture at the end. Maybe we think it's a better accomplishment to assemble our theological convictions without a deep understanding of the end of the story, or maybe we forget that God never intended us to train our theological imaginations without a clear and compelling picture of that ultimate end. We contend that the end of the story ought to help us make sense of all the pieces that we put together along the way. The telos of the story of God should so thoroughly saturate our imagination that it gives renewed meaning and life to the rest of the text and the work of living it out in the world.

If the theological frame of shalom has merit for how we stitch together the entire story of Scripture, we should expect the end of the story—the "picture on the puzzle box"—not only to reflect that but to justify and inform those conclusions. It should tell us about that greater wholeness to come that Jesus inaugurated and pointed us toward. We ought to be able to see the imagery of shalom community being expressed, taking root, and extending out to the entire created order. We should expect to find evidence of a people gathered in dynamic relationship with one another and with God, the community marked by total shalom and flourishing. In the pages of Revelation, that's exactly what we find:

> After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe,

> people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." (Revelation 7:9–10, NIV)

Nation, tribe, people, and language—the fault lines of division in our world—become the evidence of renewed shalom in community where, instead of division, people say, "our God." God has made it right. And in Revelation 21:

> Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth has passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." (Revelation 21:1–5, NIV)

I love that. "I'm making everything new. Write it down." We have a new heaven and a new earth. Renewed restoration of God's intentions. Wholeness fully expressed and indeed extended to the ends of the earth. The evidence of all of the brokenness of shalom. The fruits of sin and death have been done away with. Finally, on the last page of the Bible we have words from Revelation 22:

> Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his

face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever. (Revelation 22:1–5, NIV)

The leaves of the trees and the tree of life is for the healing of the nations, and there will no longer be any curse. God's dwelling place is among the people. God will dwell. They will be God's people. God will be their God. God's tomorrow is an eternal shalom community where everything wrong has been made right. And what started with God in a trinitarian community of shalom has now become fully restored—a global, even cosmic community of shalom, fully expressed and fully extended.

So what do we do with all this? Our hope is that spending time teasing out a biblical theology of shalom might give us a deeper capacity to actually embody it in our congregational life. That's our prayer—for all of us in our churches to have a lived ecclesiology of shalom, because shalom bears its fruit in community. In the remaining pages we want to point to a couple of practices to help us lean into shalom as an orienting way of life in our congregations.

JH: When we consider our work in the world as a church, we begin to consider our stories or our testimony at the breaches. Our gospel says nothing to those at the breaches if we are not there ourselves. What will our gospel say to those whose backs are against the wall? I believe we can begin to reclaim some of the tools of the church's trade, such as the practice of testimony at the breaches and fissures of life. We testify while we are going through trials and challenges, not just at the end of them. The Bible affirms that we shall overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the power of our testimonies. That reality is the convergence between God's good news and our places of unraveling. That's where we find the basis of our testimony in lived practice. Lived testimonies that proclaim God's good news in personal, public, and political dimensions are practices for seeing more of Jesus in more places. We get to witness snapshots of the kingdom through people's lives, in real-time. All we really have are snapshots, a facsimile; we only see in part. But we see more clearly when God graces us with signs and wonders.

When we think about the practice of testimonies, we're simply reclaiming the tools of our trade as a church. Unfortunately, our Sunday services are not always set up for this kind of intimacy. At times even our small

groups are shaped more like spaces for heady intellectual exercises. In contrast, with testimony I've seen the breakdown of educational barriers and class barriers in the church, as even someone with a third-grade education can stand with the authority of God and say, "Thus sayeth the Lord, I've seen God's good hand at the breaches." I've witnessed testimonies in the old church, and it was the most beautiful thing. We would testify to God's intervention in our educational endeavors, in our work, even in picking a ripe mango and attributing that gratitude to God. God was even there when I was picking that ripe fruit.

People at our churches can begin to testify at the intersection of faith and work, sharing how God is using their vocation to bring love and light into a specific industry. As pastors, instead of only asking, "What can you do for our church?" we can also ask our people, "How can I get on God's agenda for what God is doing in your life? What is God doing on Wall Street or Main Street? What might God be doing in that classroom in the South Bronx? How is God beginning to do exceedingly above what you could have ever asked or imagined because you have begun to see a bigger gospel?"

What about testimonies of the body? Do we still believe God heals in our day? I recently had a parishioner whose seventy-year-old father had a brain hemorrhage, and the prognosis wasn't promising. In pure millennial fashion, we got everybody praying via text through Whatsapp. Many of us prayed, and after two days we received news he had a miraculous recovery, confounding the nurses and doctors. This moment was a snapshot, a facsimile, an image of what God's wholeness and shalom look like in our world, right here, right now. We see God's hand bringing shalom into the world's ecology.

I believe we all desire a bigger gospel. A gospel that begins with personal salvation, springs forth into new allegiances, shapes and creates new cultures, creates harmony, and reaches out to the poor, the disenfranchised, and those who have been forgotten by the world. We see God's hand bringing shalom into the world's ecology. In 2 Corinthians 3:2, Paul reminds us that the greatest testimonies are not made of brick and mortar but of people's lives for the world to see. As leaders we get to curate these snapshots of a greater wholeness to come.

AG: I love José's image of the church locating itself in the breaches, of situating ourselves in the fissures where sin has corrupted our capacity to participate in the shalom community of God, finding ourselves in

places where the broken remains of God's shalom lie on the ground of our own lives, our neighborhoods, our cities, and our world. And I love that because when we intentionally put ourselves in the places of deepest brokenness, we have an opportunity to enact a parable of something different, a parable of God's tomorrow. The historian Justo González very helpfully calls the church "a *mañana* people," a people who live out of God's tomorrow today.[8] Just as the future kingdom of God breaks into the present in Jesus Christ, so we as the body of Christ are a people who give expression to God's future in the present. We are the people who enact the vision that John had in Revelation. We give people that first taste, that snapshot of the intentions God has for the whole world.

I grew up in a family that had a fair share of farmers, so I spent a lot of my younger years around fields, listening to people talk about crops and yields and harvests. Maybe that makes me particularly drawn to the image of the demonstration plot. A demonstration plot is the small sectioned-off part of a field where a farmer can experiment with a new seed or a new cultivation method. These are clearly marked areas so that others can observe the new fruit that is being produced. The demonstration plot gives expression to something new. It gives expression to something that is now possible.

The church is a demonstration plot of God's tomorrow. The church is an embodied picture of the new fruit made possible by the person and work of Jesus. In this sense the church is deeply eschatological. If God going to restore shalom in every nook and cranny of creation, how does this impact the mission and vision of our community? How does our strategic planning process begin with the picture on the box, the ultimate telos of the story of God in Christ, and attempt to work back from there to the concrete ways we live out our faith in our neighborhoods?

If God in Christ is tearing down the dividing wall of hostility and creating one new humanity, what does that mean for our churches and our local communities to act, as Paul wrote, as ambassadors of that reconciliation (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:20)? Is it possible to be a church that intentionally stands in the breaches of broken human relationships and the broken systems and cultures they produce and demonstrates a compelling alternative to the world's status quo? If God in Christ is healing the wounds of suffering and brokenness, do our churches reflect that same

[8] Justo L. González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Loyola Press, 1997).

commitment to binding up the brokenhearted and locating ourselves in and alongside the places of deepest suffering in our world—not just going to the point where it makes us uncomfortable, but going to the extreme place?

To say that the church is eschatological is simply to say that the church embodies in ever-increasing ways the reality of God's future new creation in our day-to-day life together. People ought to be able to get a sense of what God is up to cosmically by looking at our concrete life and community. The world is desperate for an eschatological church. They might not know it, but they are desperate for a church that dares to live out God's tomorrow today. As Paul says, all of creation is groaning. All of creation is waiting for the children of God to show up (cf. Romans 8:19, 22).

JH: I love Adam's illustration of becoming God's demonstration plot. I also think about the church as God's experiment in staying together. Multi-ethnic ministry can be messy. So I want to explore another practice: showing up at the breaches as an embodied form of liturgy. One of the tools of the church's trade is liturgy. Liturgy literally means the work of the people. When liturgy is connected to our current social reality, it positions the church to become a more accurate interpreter of the times, especially during moments of suffering and pain.

I remember July 4 and 5, 2016, when Philando Castile, an African American man, was shot and killed by the police. He was pulled over by a police officer, and, while trying to show the officer his carrier's permit, the officer shot him four times, in plain sight of his wife and four-year-old child who were in the vehicle. Not one day later, another African American man, Alton Sterling, was killed by police in Louisiana. Social media was flooded with video images, and many of us were retraumatized, headline after headline. Not one day later, five cops were shot in Dallas at a protest rally. The trauma we experienced as black and brown people, as cops, and as partners was compounded. That week, a diverse group of East Coast Conference churches showed up at New York Covenant Church. Showing up together is a way of infusing our liturgy with a sense of incarnation and God's presence. In other words, it was important for our white sisters and brothers to show up, lament, and grieve with us.

This gathering included poignant prayers, words of hope, and singing. A powerful healing moment took place when Peter Ahn, a Korean American Covenant pastor, began to read from Ephesians, where it says we are one body with many parts. In a mostly black and brown space,

Peter began to make confessions that took us all by surprise. He confessed how, in his experience, Korean Americans could take a more active in role in being allies for black and brown sisters and brothers. Many of us were in tears hearing this confession, as it proved healing not only for many black brothers but also black sisters represented in that room. Peter recognized how the church, as sacred ground for healing, can also be infused with moments of racial justice, honoring real-time pain and disinheritance. But he was also addressing larger divides in our community between African Americans and Asian Americans. And that could be extended to tensions between black and brown as well.

Or it could even be extended to many of us men confessing our machismo and beginning to bridge the gender divide. We can become allies. Recently someone pushed me further on this concept, saying, "I don't want you to just be an ally; I want you to be an accomplice as well." At first I expressed trepidation, because being an accomplice meant something else where I grew up. What she was encouraging was that I not only show up but that I get in the trenches as well. Because it's in that proximity that our eyes begin to see things from another vantage point—the vantage point of those whose backs are against the wall. It is in that proximity God begins to do a work. It's in that proximity we are transformed, and we begin to see others beyond a single narrative into a generous place of dimensionality in Christ and in Christ's image. This embodied fellowship and solidarity will mean becoming a student of other people's struggles so that we can serve others with nuance and distinction. What if the church could take more leaps into faith this way? Justice and healing wouldn't be mutually exclusive but would go hand in hand.

AG: Liz Mosbo VerHage gave us a great reminder of the way that justice is discipleship. Formation that fails to integrate the shalom of God is going to fail at discipleship, because we're going to leave people to deal with the cracks and the fissures on their own. When we frame justice or pursuing God's shalom as outreach, we fail biblical interpretation 101. Scripture's call to pursue justice is not framed as an issue of outreach or as mission in a narrowly defined sense. The call to justice and the pursuit of God's shalom is always an issue of fidelity to God and God's people. If sin is infidelity, then justice is about fidelity—discipleship. God's mission is the restoration of a shalom community, and discipleship is the way we learn to live in that community. God's shalom then becomes a matter of

the character of our lives and the character of our life together.

The demonstration plot doesn't actually change the fields that surround it. The only way it results in change is when people see what is being produced there and find it compelling enough to try it in their own fields. So it is with us. Our way of life is the compelling alternative. That means our presence in the world is not primarily didactic nor is it primarily accusational. It is embodied in a way that demonstrates the shalom intentions of God.

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