

Emory University

**A Light in the Electric City:  
Toward a Contextual Ecclesiology at  
First Baptist Church of Anderson, South Carolina**

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by

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A LIGHT IN THE ELECTRIC CITY:  
TOWARD A CONTEXTUAL ECCLESIOLOGY  
AT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF ANDERSON, SOUTH CAROLINA

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## ABSTRACT

Both First Baptist Church of Anderson, South Carolina, and the community in which the church exists have changed over the years, but the changes have been largely independent of one another. This has resulted in a church and community that do not understand each other and are not integral to the life of the other. This project undertakes an in-depth congregational analysis to understand how and why the disconnect between the church and the community developed. A congregational analysis that pays careful attention to the history, demographics, congregational self-understanding, and denominational polity of a congregation leads to a clearer articulation of contextual ecclesiology. Such an ecclesiology provides the theological rationale for developing programs to address the disconnect between church and community.



## PART I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Pastoral Vignette<sup>1</sup>**

*Residents of the neighborhood around First Baptist Church come to my office without appointments to present their needs—to make their case for help—at what I consider to be inconvenient times, like in the midst of negotiations with a painting contractor, at the conclusion of a committee meeting to plan for church bicentennial celebrations, or during a Bible study I was teaching on the biblical mandate to help the poor. I feel separated from them by my pressing commitments to do other things related to my work, things that by every indication the congregation values as priorities. I feel separated from them by an anxious secretary concerned for her safety, by my understanding of “toxic charity”<sup>2</sup> and the need for mutuality in church-community relationships, and by my desire not to be taken advantage of. Increasingly, I feel separated from them by the very institution I serve, an institution that ostensibly values welcoming strangers, being loving, gracious, and generous to the point of sacrifice.*

While individual members of First Baptist Church, Anderson, would not be likely to say that paint is more important than people, the church’s budget allocations, passion, and conversations between laypersons reveal a more immediate focus on the concerns of the congregation rather than on engagement with the world. At times, it appears that some in the congregation view faithful service to the institutional church as being in tension with the practice of hospitality, generosity, and Christian charity toward the people who live in the largely poor and largely black neighborhood around the church campus. As I indicate in the vignette above, I have discovered that these attitudes of suspicion towards our neighbors have affected my own

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<sup>1</sup> This pastoral vignette represents a compilation of actual experiences I have had in my time as Associate Pastor of First Baptist Church.

<sup>2</sup> Robert D. Lupton, *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help (And How to Reverse It)* (New York, NY: HarperOne, 2011).

attitudes and actions. I have determined that something must change in order for the church and for me to be in faithful ministry.

If change is to be meaningful or lasting, I need to more fully understand how and why the disconnect between church and community developed and what forces maintain it. In order to develop this deeper understanding, I engaged in a congregational analysis that paid careful attention to the history, demographics, congregational self-understanding, and denominational polity of First Baptist Church. My goal was to discover the embedded ecclesiology that shapes the practices of the church in relation to its neighbors. If this ecclesiology serves as a barrier to neighbor love, it must be challenged. The goal, therefore, is to develop a contextual ecclesiology that redefines it means to be church in this particular place and leads to greater neighbor love. Such an ecclesiology provides the rationale for developing next steps in addressing the division between this congregation and its surrounding community.

### **The Dilemma: Church and Community Disconnect**

It is both difficult and important to be sensitive to the fact that First Baptist is a wealthy, white church in a poor, black neighborhood. First Baptist made the decision decades ago to stay in its downtown home while other predominantly Caucasian churches moved to suburban, residential neighborhoods in Anderson. Downtown revitalizations made possible through both private and government investment have made great strides in improving property around the church and making downtown a destination for shopping, lodging, and dining, but the commercial area that borders one side of First Baptist's campus has become an island of resources in an ocean of deep need. First Baptist sits at the intersection of efforts toward

revitalization of commercially important areas and the neglect of a poor, predominantly black neighborhood.

This difference between congregation and neighborhood represents a significant obstacle to meaningful community engagement. I see evidence of this jarring dichotomy in the body language of the residents of the neighborhood who come to me for help: the bowed head, the downcast eyes, the clasped hands. A person coming to me to request financial assistance does not come as a brother or sister, but with shame, subserviently. If I am able to find resources to address the presenting need, the person expresses happiness and gratitude, but always with a persistent shame. Even if I find a way to give them what they are asking for, I suspect that neither of us feel very positively about this encounter.

My own leadership within the community surrounding First Baptist Church has been primarily through the church's efforts to respond to immediate needs and through the administration of the church's local missions budget. These funds have been used in different ways in my five years at the church, including: an emergency clothing ministry, an emergency food ministry, and payment for things such as utility bills and medical bills. It also includes financial support of local nonprofits that deliver meals to seniors, provide housing for homeless families, dispense prescription medication for free or at deeply discounted costs, renovate housing, and provide weekend meals for children who might not eat apart from school feeding programs, among other things.

In my role as administrator of this budget, I consistently encounter persons who have had doors systematically slammed in their faces for decades, the people whose stories are not part of the prevailing narrative of this town. I preach to and teach persons who live east of the church campus while I coordinate emergency response funding for people who live to the west. Both

groups of people come to the church to find what they're looking for, but they come at different times searching for very different things. First Baptist, one of many nonprofit organizations in this part of town, is a destination for people who are seeking financial assistance, a characterization that is not necessarily shared with churches in affluent or primarily residential areas.

First Baptist's challenge and opportunity is to respond to every person with the love of Christ, but the operational narratives at work in this congregation must be named before the church can move toward substantively addressing that challenge and opportunity within its own neighborhood context. What is First Baptist Church? What is First Baptist's community? How did the church's major priorities come to be separate from the community in which the church exists and more focused instead on the work within the church facility? Supposing that such a separation between church and community is neither biblical nor Christian, how can the congregation rethink its priorities as church vis-à-vis its context?

## PART II

### AN IN-DEPTH COMMUNITY AND CONGREGATIONAL ANALYSIS

The answers to those questions, which will most assuredly shape the future of First Baptist Church, Anderson, South Carolina, involved my study of the church's context in terms of geography, community history and demographics, life of the community, and church history. All these resources will be drawn together in an effort to develop a way of thinking about what First Baptist Church is and should be that appropriately values people who are not within the church, but live in its shadow. Community studied should become community valued. Community

valued should become community served. I understand that these values, which I see as integral to the Christian life, are hewn from a healthy contextual ecclesiology.<sup>3</sup>

### **Research Methods**

I engaged in an analysis of the immediate community that surrounds First Baptist Church using a variety of written histories, demographic data, and my own observations about the community as it now exists. These observations emerged through my own work within the community, my conversations with community leaders over the past five years, and through intentional additional exploration of the community during my five years at First Baptist Church.

I engaged in analysis of First Baptist Church through a study of the church's written history, conversations that allowed me to engage in the oral history of the church, a study of congregants' descriptions of the components of the church's ministry they most value and would most like to see more fully developed, and a study of the ways in which Baptist identity informs First Baptist's operational ecclesiology, which is the way First Baptist understands what it means to be church.

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<sup>3</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 126. I first encountered the term "contextual ecclesiology" in this book in a chapter addressing Jürgen Moltmann's ecclesiology. More than any term I had encountered or devised previously, it characterized what I hoped to help develop in my congregation.

## Exploration of Context

While the development of ministries, programs, and opportunities for the church and community to get to know each other are crucial, such development should take into account the complex context in which church and community mutually dwell. Ministry programs have varying levels of success in different contexts, but intentional contextual awareness can happen in every kind of congregation and can involve congregants, regardless of gifts and abilities. Contextual ecclesiology is an important means towards the end of a different kind of community engagement and is a prerequisite to healthy ministry where congregation and community meet. Contextual ecclesiology begins with contextual exploration.

## Geography as Context

“You be sure to lock your car doors,” Beatrice<sup>4</sup> told the new Associate Pastor when he was moving into the office in July 2012. Her voice bore the full authority of her status not as the twelve-year Ministry Assistant and Receptionist at First Baptist Church’s office but rather as an African-American grandmother concerned about me, her newest colleague. “We’ve got a really bad neighborhood just across the street from here.” Beatrice not only locked her doors, she also kept a can of Raid insect spray at arm’s length under the receptionist desk next to her feet. “This stuff sprays twenty feet. I’d just aim for their face if they come in here and threaten me.” She was considerate enough to leave the unused can on the floor for her successor when she retired two years later.

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<sup>4</sup> Name changed.

Gesturing toward the same neighborhood, Alan,<sup>5</sup> First Baptist's youth minister, kindly offered that there had recently been a murder "over there." "They never found a body, either—just a piece here and a piece there." Having shared what he knew of the neighborhood, he concluded dispensing his cautionary tale by saying, "It's crazy, man."

That concluded my unofficial orientation with the neighborhood surrounding First Baptist Church. I never heard anything else about the area across Fant Street. No one else in the hallways, classrooms, offices, or sanctuary of First Baptist talked with me further about this apparently violent community. It turned out that there was much more to the story of the church's surroundings.

The church's immediate neighborhood is bordered by Fant Street and First Baptist Church's campus to the west; Calhoun Street and AnMed Health (Anderson's hospital) to the northwest; Williamston Road and Anderson University to the northeast; Rocky River to the east; and River Street to the south. A large portion of the area within these boundaries is the site of the former mill villages for Toxaway and Riverside textile mills. Though the mills themselves have been demolished, their footprints still mark the landscape as industrial brown sites that must be cleaned before any redevelopment occurs.<sup>6</sup> Many of the century-old houses that made up the textile mill village are still in use by area residents today.

Some signs of revitalization are evident on the east side of the FBC campus. Both Anderson University and AnMed Health are located on borders of the church's immediate community. Both institutions are growing and are expanding their footprints by buying houses to convert to office space or to demolish so new construction can begin on the newly vacant land.

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<sup>5</sup> Name changed.

<sup>6</sup> Mike Ellis, "Riverside-Toxaway Mills Getting Environmental Check-Up," *The Anderson Independent-Mail*, July 8, 2009.

Anderson's revived downtown area—complete with a boutique hotel, fine dining, and specialty shops—is just two short blocks away from the front doors of First Baptist's sanctuary. After years of suffering from blight itself, downtown—flush with support from City Council, money from private investors, and excitement from citizens—is becoming a destination again.

Meanwhile, less than one mile away, businesses located behind the church tend to be service-based corporations like plumbing or electrical shops. Employees gather at these businesses and disperse across the area for their on-site work, but the business locations within First Baptist's neighborhood do not attract customer traffic to the area. The area has experienced growth, decline, rapid changes, and cultural shifts over the years since First Baptist enjoyed strong interdependence with it.

### Demographics as Context

According to the United States Census Bureau's 2010 Demographic Profile Data, 39,101 people live in Anderson, 46.5% of them male and 53.5% female. Within the broader context of Anderson County, 2010 Census Data reveals a 2% increase in population since the 2000 Census. Persons aged 15 to 19 receive the designation as the largest age demographic in the town, representing 7.3% of the population. The median age of Andersonians is 39 years. People who name "white" as their only race make up slightly more than three-quarters of the population. African-Americans compose the second largest demographic behind that, representing nearly 20% of the population.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> "Anderson, South Carolina," *United States Census*, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/45/45007.html> (Accessed April 20, 2015).

Educationally, nearly 82% of residents have graduated high school; 19% have earned a Bachelor's degree or higher. Countywide, median household income (2009-13) is \$41,579, which represents \$3200 less than the statewide figure and nearly \$12,000 less than the national figure for the same time period. Nearly 17% of county residents live below the poverty level, 2% more than the national statistic.<sup>8</sup>

Over the past eight years, South Carolina's unemployment rate has been consistently one to two percentage points higher than that of the national statistics, with the exception of a brief time in 2014. According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, South Carolina has a 6.6% unemployment rate, exactly one percentage point higher than the national statistic. Recent trends show multiple and dramatic dips and spikes in Anderson's quarterly unemployment rate. Over the past 25 years, the city's unemployment rate hit a high point at 15.5% in February 2010 and a low point of 3.3% in April 1998. The current city-wide unemployment rate stands at 6.5%. Statistics suggest that 15% of South Carolinians are underemployed, with underemployment defined by the federal government as the addition of two groups: marginally attached workers "who are discouraged but not looking for work because they believe there are no jobs available or there are none for which they would qualify" and workers on part-time schedules for economic reasons.<sup>9</sup>

Regarding crime, South Carolina has received the unenviable distinction of being ranked second in the nation in the rate of female victims murdered by males in single victim/single offender incidents. In 2012, 50 women were killed by men in the state, 2.06 homicide victims per 100,000 women in the population. The national average is 1.16 per 100,000 females. Of the

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<sup>8</sup> "U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-Year Estimates. Updated Every Year." The United States Census Bureau. <http://www.factfinder2.census.gov> (Accessed April 20, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> "Underemployment in America," *New Geography*, <http://www.newgeography.com/content/004016-underemployment-america> (Accessed April 10, 2015).

50 female homicide victims, 86% knew their killer. 68% of the victims were their killers' wives, common-law wives, ex-wives, or girlfriends. 77% of the victims were killed with guns, and 75% of the victims killed with guns were killed with handguns.<sup>10</sup> Even in a state with that unfortunate notoriety, Anderson County has earned a negative reputation regarding violence against women.

“Anderson County consistently ranked among the top eight worst counties in the state for the number of women victims of violence... The total number of the women victims of violence in Anderson County is 31% higher than the average number of victims per county for the four-year time period documented in the study. Anderson County's population accounts for only 4% of the total population of South Carolina.”<sup>11</sup>

Beyond violence against women, crime is a growing issue in the City of Anderson. The municipality was recently number 73 in a delineation of the 100 most dangerous cities in the United States, one of four South Carolina towns appearing on the list.<sup>12</sup> A person in Anderson has a 1 in 11 chance of being the victim of a property crime, compared with a 1 in 28 chance in the state overall. There are 184 crimes per square mile in Anderson, compared with 37 per square mile in the state and 27.9 in the country. In a graphical breakdown of frequency of crime within the city, the neighborhood around the church was only one of two areas given the “high” frequency designation.<sup>13</sup>

Within the same study area, statistics reflect significant economic disparity. Rent is lower in Anderson than in 88% of South Carolina neighborhoods. The real estate vacancy rate (23.5%) is higher than 89% of all other American neighborhoods. The neighborhood has a per capita income that is lower than 98.3% of all neighborhoods in the country. There is a greater

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<sup>10</sup> “City of Anderson Police Department Violent Crimes against Women Investigator 2nd Year Grant Proposal Problem Definition,” *Anderson Police Department*, <http://www.cityofandersonsc.com/police/grants/FY10-Violent-Crimes-against-Women-Investigator-Year-2-Problem-Statement.pdf> (Accessed December 7, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> “Top 100 Most Dangerous Places to Live in the USA,” *NeighborhoodScout*, <http://www.neighborhoodscout.com/neighborhoods/crime-rates/top100dangerous/> (Accessed April 14, 2015).

<sup>13</sup> “Toxaway 29624,” *NeighborhoodScout*, <http://www.neighborhoodscout.com/sc/anderson/toxaway/#overview> (Accessed April 15, 2015).

percentage of children living in poverty (71%) than in 97.9% of all American neighborhoods. One in five households are run by single mothers, higher than 96% of neighborhoods across the country.<sup>14</sup> Tax records indicate trends toward lower tax assessments, less home ownership, and more rental within the church's neighborhood.

Statistics, however, only give a composite picture. Unemployment and crime rates are not equally distributed among neighborhoods in Anderson. For example, there are no grocery stores—and only a few convenience stores—within easy walking distance of First Baptist Church. The public schools that serve the community are outside the immediate neighborhood, but they represent one of the vehicles through which the broader community is attempting to affect this neighborhood. Non-profit and governmental agencies are just beyond the borders of the residential area surrounding the church and are accessible to residents via public transportation. There are a few older, traditional churches and several storefront churches within the study area. No one within the area lives very far from a church.

### History as Context

History is characterized by the moment the historian chooses to begin telling the story, which is a privilege afforded the historian. The first paragraph of one Anderson County history book reads like this: “The county is located in the South Carolina Upcountry, land of the Cherokee Indians until the Revolutionary War. This territory, which was South Carolina’s last frontier, was ceded to the state in a treaty signed by the Cherokees in 1777 during the war.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Beth Ann Klosky, *Six Miles That Changed the Course of the South: The Story of the Electric City, Anderson, South Carolina*. (Anderson, SC: The Electric City Centennial Committee, 1995), 13.

My research into this small pocket of Anderson as the context for First Baptist Church has served as a reminder that the prevailing narrative written by the prevailing people is not always complete or even accurate. There is another history that a careful student must learn by reading between the lines of published text. It is the story of the displaced Cherokee in 1776. It is the story of the slave in 1860. It is the story of the underpaid mill worker in 1915. It is the story of the poor African-American family in 2017.

### *Early Settlers*

The Cherokee ended up on the losing side of the American Revolution, having been forced to side with the British. Ninety-nine British militia and more than 2,000 Cherokee died in the fighting and “a questionable peace was at hand. A peace treaty was established with the Cherokee on March 20, 1777, under which the Cherokees ceded to South Carolina their claim to the 749 square miles of land that would soon be known as the Pendleton District, and known today as Anderson, Oconee, and Pickens Counties.”<sup>16</sup> Just a few decades later, Robert Mills, the famed architect of the Washington Monument and so many other important buildings, wrote in his book, *Statistics of South Carolina*, about the state of the Cherokee in terms of the land they had called home for so long:

“A few years only have elapsed since these mountains and valleys were the property and abode of the Indians...the Indians have retired to the other side of the mountains. They occasionally visit the district in little bands, to dig up pink root, which grows in great abundance in these mountains. They carry with them a small hoe fit for the purpose, encamp in the woods under mean hovels made of bark, subsisting upon the casual produce of the chase, and the pittance they beg amongst the settlers.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 22.

Early settlers on the former Cherokee land were primarily of Scots-Irish descent and many came from Pennsylvania. Small bands of the settlers worshiped, worked, intermarried, and settled together.<sup>18</sup> The Scots-Irish settlers brought their faith with them and established the first Christian churches in the area. The Presbyterians established Broadway in 1788, Hopewell in 1789, and Varennes in 1813. The Baptists established Big Creek in 1789, Neals Creek in 1800, and Mt. Tabor in 1821. Mt. Tabor changed its name to First Baptist Church in 1834, shortly after the town of Anderson was founded. Methodists established Sandy Springs in 1828. Charlestonians who summered in Anderson County established St. Paul's Episcopal Church in 1822.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Antebellum Establishment and Economic Growth***

Three independent factors altered the economy in Anderson County in the early Nineteenth Century and would influence the area for the next 150 years. First, settlers armed with an astute understanding of land had arrived to the area and were searching for a crop that would move them from subsistence farming to commercial agriculture. Early records indicate that settlers found Upstate soil well suited for wheat, Indian corn, rice, barley, oats, hemp, flax, indigo, Irish and sweet potatoes, and cotton.<sup>20</sup>

Second, Eli Whitney invented the Cotton Gin in Savannah in 1793. The device would eventually make cotton a profitable crop and a powerful commodity. Though cotton would not

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<sup>18</sup> Klosky, 13.

<sup>19</sup> Badders, 23.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Mills, *Statistics of South Carolina: Including a View of Its Natural, Civil, and Military History, General and Particular*. (Charleston: Hurlbut and Lloyd), 674.

become a principal crop in Anderson County for many years, its later influence came about because of the 1793 invention.

Third, early settlers had successfully harnessed the power of area streams to drive machinery. By 1820, there were fifteen mills located in what is now Anderson County.<sup>21</sup> Some of these were grist or saw mills that served the immediate neighborhood. Others employed waterpower to drive a small industrial complex. Anderson's "Electric City" nickname was borne of the fact that it was the first city in the United States to have a continuous supply of electric power, which was supplied by a water mill located on the Rocky River, which forms one of the boundaries of First Baptist's neighborhood. Mr. Whitney's invention reached new capabilities locally through the use of this novel resource. The first cotton gin in the world to be operated by electricity was built in Anderson County in 1897.<sup>22</sup>

Cotton became the county's first industry. One author notes what he considers to be the three criteria by which an industry has historical value:

"[I]t must pay wages for the support of persons who contribute labor but no capital, by which wages they and their family are fed, clothed and housed; it must add value to raw materials, giving them a market value in excess of the raw material cost; and the finished product must, at least in part, be marketed and converted to money outside the local market, creating the ability to buy and bring into the community items or services not otherwise available there."<sup>23</sup>

Cotton pushed along the Anderson economy as an historically-viable industry for the next forty years. Businessmen ran mills to process crops. Anderson's family farms and large plantations grew cotton. Records indicate that at least twenty-one Anderson County plantations

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<sup>21</sup> Robert Mills, *Atlas of the State of South Carolina, Made under the Authority of the Legislature; Prefaced with a Geographical, Statistical, and Historical Map of the State.* (Baltimore: F. Lucas, Jr. 1825), 207-219.

<sup>22</sup> Dave Tabler, "The South Carolina Man Who Put the Electric in 'The Electric City'," *Appalachian History: Stories, Quotes and Anecdotes*, <http://www.appalachianhistory.net/2012/08/south-carolina-man-who-put-electric-in.html> (accessed April 10, 2015).

<sup>23</sup> Watkins, 31.

had ten or more slaves prior to 1866.<sup>24</sup> Detailed slavery records proved to be elusive in my research, but census data provides a general overview of how many enslaved people were in Anderson County. Census data indicates that 22,873 people lived in Anderson County in 1860. Though the slave population of the county is significantly less than that of other South Carolina counties, it is still significant at roughly 8,500 people or 37.1% of the entire population. Statewide, owing significantly to the rice plantations of the Low Country, South Carolina's slave population greatly exceeded its free population in 1860. Of the 703,812 people in South Carolina, 402,541 of them were slaves, 57.2% of the overall population of the state. South Carolina was one of two states where the number of slaves exceeded the number of free persons. Mississippi was the other one at 55.1%.<sup>25</sup>

Written history indicates that as the county's economy flourished, First Baptist grew – and for much the same reason.<sup>26</sup> The church's membership rolls were populated by farmers whose farms were realizing increased profits through the combined use of legal slave labor and new technology that made crop processing more efficient.

### ***Civil War and Reconstruction***

The county was completely and fully involved in the Civil War. Though no county statistics of Civil War veterans exist, history does show that 735 Andersonians were killed in

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<sup>24</sup> Paul M. Kankula, "Slavery, Bondage, Serf, and Servitude," *The USGenWeb Project, The SCGenWeb Project*, <http://rootsweb.ancestry.com/~scoconee/slavery.html> (accessed April 15, 2015).

<sup>25</sup> "Map showing the distribution of the slave population of the southern states of the United States. Compiled from the census of 1860," The Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/resource/g3861e.cw0013200/> (accessed May 5, 2015).

<sup>26</sup> Georgia Hamlet, *A History of The First Baptist Church, Anderson, South Carolina 1821-1979*. (Anderson, SC: Georgia Hamlet, 1979), 4.

action or died of wounds or illness while fighting during the Civil War,<sup>27</sup> and many of these Confederate veterans are buried in places of honor in First Baptist's cemetery. The white population of Anderson County in 1860 was 14,286. Assuming roughly half the citizens were male, one in ten of all of Anderson County's white males died fighting the Union Army during the Civil War.

There does not seem to have been a military objective that would've involved the march of Union soldiers through Anderson during the war. Consequently, many residents who normally lived in more highly-targeted areas like Charleston sought refuge in the town they deemed to be safer. There's no record of a house or barn being burnt in Anderson County during the war. In one noteworthy incident, however, 3,700 Union troops came through Anderson in the first few days of May 1865 in pursuit of Jefferson Davis, three weeks after Lee's surrender to Grant in Appomattox, Virginia. Anderson's history says that three local men were tortured by the pursuing troops and one man was fatally shot, earning him the Citadel's unfortunate designation as the last Confederate fatality of the Civil War.<sup>28</sup>

South Carolina experienced sweeping changes during Reconstruction. Congress ended civilian government and instituted marshal law from 1867 to 1877. Locals felt as though a decade of the indignity of an enemy army occupation followed the grievous defeat in the war. The emancipation of slaves entailed an eviscerated South Carolina economy and the state remained one of the poorest in the Union for the next century. Cotton was still a major crop, but without slave labor, landowners relied on sharecroppers to work their land. The end of Reconstruction gave way to the beginning of Jim Crow as the pendulum swung back on policies

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<sup>27</sup> Badders, 23.

<sup>28</sup> Abe Hardesty, "Anderson's Main Street was violent spot 150 years ago," *Anderson Independent-Mail*, May 1, 2015.

that had been adopted after the war ended. Beginning in 1899 and for the next eight years, corporations were chartered in Anderson, local capital was raised, and twelve local mills were put into operation.<sup>29</sup>

### ***The Mill Period***

The explosive growth in industry included the founding of the Anderson Yarn and Knitting Company (later the Riverside Mill) in 1900 and the Toxaway Mill in 1903. The establishment of these two mills on land adjacent to Rocky River was not coincidental. “Practically all cotton mills built in the late 80s and early 1900s were situated in a low, swampy area. This was because the cotton fibers worked more efficiently in this semi-dampness and produced better cloth.”<sup>30</sup>

Anderson County’s population rose from 43,000 in 1890 to 70,000 in 1910.<sup>31</sup> A brochure published in 1907 by the Anderson Chamber of Commerce and the City of Anderson lists 17 cotton mills employing a total of 10,145 people countywide.<sup>32</sup> Local officials had taken note of the decline in agriculture and hedged their bets on the textile industry. The gamble paid off for many, including some in First Baptist Church, which was experiencing its own boom in those years. The church membership grew from 600 in 1908 to 1400 in 1915.<sup>33</sup> Contributions rose from \$9,000 to \$22,000, or almost \$526,000 in 2017 dollars,<sup>34</sup> over the same time period.<sup>35</sup> The

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<sup>29</sup> Badders, 24.

<sup>30</sup> White, 1.

<sup>31</sup> Badders, 25.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Hamlet, 101.

<sup>34</sup> H Brothers, “Inflation Calculator,” Dollar Times, accessed April 29, 2017, <http://www.dollartimes.com/inflation/inflation.php?amount=100&year=1915>.

<sup>35</sup> Hamlet, 101.

mill industry in Anderson became a source of pride in the Upstate and a draw for thousands of people struggling to find work in a rapidly changing economy.

Textile mills helped Anderson solidify its economy after agriculture. Collectively, the mills served as the county's top employer for most of the Twentieth Century. The model facilitated in the development of the Toxaway/Riverside site was commonly used. The self-sustained community included the mill itself, stores, churches, offices for management, recreation facilities, and housing for employees—all purposefully constructed by the textile company.

“The textile companies dominated life in the communities that developed in their shadows through paternalistic management practices. The mill village was a necessary and prominent element of mill operations and the paternalistic management of employees because mills were often isolated; no housing existed *in situ*; cheap rent was used to supplement low wages; and ownership of employees' housing gave mill owners added leverage and control over behavior at work and at home.”<sup>36</sup>

Two local churches—Riverside Baptist and Toxaway United Methodist—were constructed by the mill companies, which also seem to have had a hand in which clergy served there. Sermons throughout mill village churches emphasized the virtue of good, hard work.<sup>37</sup> On the other hand, First Baptist appears to have had the reputation by this time as being an affluent church attended by powerful people, such as both of South Carolina's Federal judges.<sup>38</sup> While many local professionals and community leaders attended church here, mill employees did not.

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<sup>36</sup> Claire E. Jamieson, “Change in the Textile Mill Villages of South Carolina's Upstate During the Modern South Era” (Master's Thesis, University of Tennessee-Knoxville, 2010), 126.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 49.

<sup>38</sup> Hamlet, 102.

The prevailing narrative about life in the mill is not a complete one, however. Like nearly all other aspects of southern culture at the time, racial inequality existed in the mill village, too.

The few Negroes working at the mill, usually 25 or 30 men and women, held the lowest paid jobs as scrubbers, or doing warehouse work, garbage disposal, firing the boilers, trucking cotton (hand trucks). They were housed in usually two-room houses in an area away from the regular white section—this was called “Nigger Town.” As a rule Negroes were treated kindly by the white people, in a rather paternal way, however. A job at the mill was much sought after by the Negroes and it was a rare thing for one to ask for his or her “time” (quit). Many of the colored people, both men and women, often did odd jobs around the village to supplement their income. By and large the two races had a very friendly and happy relationship.<sup>39</sup>

Even for white workers, textile mills in the early Twentieth Century were unforgiving workplaces with often harsh conditions. Making ends meet as a mill employee only worked within the carefully-constructed mill village culture where groceries and housewares were purchased at the mill village store and children were permitted to work. The mill didn’t pay enough for people to live or shop out of the village nor did families earn enough to put food on the table without sending the household children into work, too.

Reformers advocating for the establishment of child labor laws frequently descended upon mill villages thinking they would find sympathizers to their cause in the families of child millworkers. Their efforts were met with resistance; not only did mill employees feel loyal to the “big boss-man” as a father-figure, they also knew that their households required income from multiple mill jobs in order to operate.<sup>40</sup> Legislation placing appropriately tough restrictions on child labor would eventually pass.

Perhaps in a foreshadowing of more dramatic changes, mill companies in the 1950s and 1960s altered the ways in which they related to their employees as they abandoned the strictly

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<sup>39</sup> White, 9-10.

<sup>40</sup> Jamieson, 65.

paternalistic system to which they had adhered in the past. “Mill employees were given an opportunity to purchase their homes at affordable prices.... Being fired or laid-off, quitting, or retiring from a job no longer necessarily meant eviction from one’s home. Home owners could sell their properties to any buyer.”<sup>41</sup>

### ***The Post-Mill Period***

The mill companies’ desperate search for capital that led them to sell off houses and alter the culture of the mill village proved to be in vain. The desire for cheaper clothing and the subsequent search for cheaper labor were overwhelming the American textile industry faster than the industry could respond. After a series of disastrous fires and equally devastating shifts in trends in industry and labor, Toxaway Mill closed in 1980. Riverside closed shortly thereafter. Fires in 2000, likely the result of arson, destroyed the mill structures and dashed tentative plans to repurpose the sites into residential lofts and commercial space. Both structures were demolished in 2001. The closure of the mills marked the conclusion of a decades-long shift of money, influence, jobs, and power within Anderson.

In spite of development in downtown Anderson, there is widespread evidence of community decline in the neighborhood around the church. There are houses in ill-repair and, if newspaper stories are to be believed, of ill-repute.<sup>42</sup> A massage parlor adjacent to the old mill village has been the target of investigations into charges of prostitution, though confronting solicitation has become a rallying point for some members of the community who have been

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Smith-Miles, Charmaine. “Toxaway-Riverside Mill site gains more attention.” *The Anderson-Independent Mail*. 9 April 2008.

quick to alert police about the presence of suspected prostitution activity. There is widespread vacant commercial, residential, and industrial space. The previously discussed industrial waste continues to be an anchor pulling the neighborhood down. Cleaning up the waste sites where the mills once stood won't guarantee a neighborhood turn-around, but their continued presence makes a neighborhood turnaround more difficult and more unlikely.

### *Lessons from History*

As a close reading of the history of Anderson shows, the racial and economic inequities that exist today and affect the church and its surrounding community are longstanding and complex. This history cannot be changed, but it can be known, rather than neglected or ignored as irrelevant. Acknowledging that the deep-seated divide between the church and the surrounding community is rooted in the intertwined histories of church and community is a first step.

So, how might change be brought about? Since major economic initiatives are beyond the resources of the church, what can the church do? I suggest that rather than looking for external solutions, the church should look within. The church may not be able to make immediate changes in the surrounding neighborhood, but it can change its perceptions of its neighbors and its role as a church in the community. First, the church can learn its history and the history of the community and be honest about its role, intentional or not, in perpetuating historical inequities. Second, the church can listen for the history told by its neighbors. How do the people in the surrounding neighborhood tell the history of Anderson, their neighborhood, and the relationship between the church and its neighbors?

Third, the church can reexamine its understanding of what it means to be the church in this place. What is the congregation's theological understanding of what it means to be church? Or, put another way, what is its embedded and operational ecclesiology? I suspect that the church's implicit ecclesiology reinforces the congregation's disconnection to the surrounding community. This ecclesiology is reflected in my perception that the congregation is more concerned about the responsibilities of my work within the church rather than within the community. If this is the case, then the ecclesiology of the congregation needs to be challenged and revised. I believe that this congregation can find resources in its own Baptist theology to develop a revised contextual ecclesiology that makes possible a renewed connection between church and community.

### **Congregational Operative Baptist Ecclesiology as Context**

Though it seems obvious by the church's name, a significant part of the church's identity is as a Baptist congregation. In order to understand the particular ecclesiology of First Baptist, one must understand something of Baptist theology in general. Gordon Lathrop writes that the "method of liturgical ecclesiology is the method of the liturgy itself: meaning occurs as one thing is put next to another in such a way that the community is called to faith in the triune God."<sup>43</sup> Baptists do indeed find our meaning and discover our operative ecclesiologies when we hold one thing next to another and when we hold ourselves, less perhaps, next to the things we say we value and more to the things that our praxis reveals that we value. While the context around First Baptist is revealed through the people that make up the church's community, the

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<sup>43</sup> Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999) Kindle location 235.

congregation's operative ecclesiology is revealed through its corporate work and what that work in its many facets reveals about how it understands itself as a community of faith.

### ***Baptism***

It is perhaps most appropriate to begin a consideration of Baptist identity with the activity from which Baptists derive their name. So much of Baptist ecclesiology is based on a view of baptism that is, as one Baptist professor said nearly a century ago, “against the great mass of modern Christians.”<sup>44</sup> The Baptist position that “baptism is a human response of faith, not a divine act of grace”<sup>45</sup> is not just a statement about Baptism; it is, in fact, a rudder that directs much of Baptist corporate life, impacting in very substantial ways ecclesiological acts like worship, education, missions, and stewardship.

Baptism in the context of a Baptist church is, one, reserved only for the professed believer and, two, practiced only by the immersion of that believer in water. These two peculiarities in Baptist life serve to illustrate the importance Baptists have traditionally placed on the priesthood of the believer and the autonomy not only of the church but also the believer himself. Baptists reject proxy faith; a child cannot receive faith from her parents. The salvific encounter with God is always an individual one.

Through the use of immersive baptism, Baptists fly in the face of prevailing Christian practices. This method of baptism continues to be somewhat of a protest against an authoritative tradition on the part of a people who have never cared to be told “from on high” what to do in

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<sup>44</sup> A.T. Robertson, “The Spiritual Interpretation of the Ordinances,” in *The Life of Baptists in the Life of the World: 80 Years of the Baptist World Alliance*, Walter B. Shurden, ed. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1985) 50.

<sup>45</sup> R. Wayne Stacy, “Baptism,” in *A Baptist's Theology*, R. Wayne Stacy, ed. (Macon, Georgia: Smyth and Helwys) 164.

their congregations. The Baptist spirit is an independent and individual one, likely demonstrated nowhere more clearly than in our doctrine of Baptism, one of two so-called ordinances (“ordinances” because Christ ordained that we do them) in Baptist life.

Baptism, much like the Lord’s Supper, is viewed in Baptist doctrine as a symbol of divine grace, a picture of renewal and cleansing. The use of enough water so that the candidate can be visibly “buried with Christ...into death” and “raised [out of the water] to new life” (Romans 6:4) easily demonstrates the Pauline contention that death and life meet in the baptism. Given the view of baptism in my tradition and the impact that view has on the life of the church, it is not surprising to find that the baptistery typically occupies the highest, central, and most prominent position in a Baptist church’s sanctuary architecture. First Baptist is no exception.

Even with the individual nature of faith in the Baptist church, Baptism is a corporate celebration. “Christian Baptism cannot be done alone,” Lathrop contends. “One does not baptize oneself. With the baptized there must be at least a baptizer, and with the baptizer comes the opening to the whole assembly. The best practice today always has that whole assembly there.”<sup>46</sup> In Baptist life, baptism simultaneously reinforces the mission of the church; formally welcomes the candidates and their families into the church; celebrates God’s work in the lives of the candidates; and reminds the worshipers who observe the baptism of their own baptism, which in the Baptist church is usually conducted late enough in life so that the candidate has lifelong memories of the event. The Baptist church often measures its health and vitality by how often its baptistery must be filled for worship, and baptism itself is viewed as a communal celebration.

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<sup>46</sup> Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy People: A Liturgical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999) Kindle location 348.

## *The Supper*

The early practice of the observance of the Lord's Supper adopted by Baptists is still largely intact in First Baptist's practice today. Again, the liturgy of the church reveals something of the theology of the church: Christ is not present with the elements nor does Christ become present through any words spoken by the minister. The presence of Christ is in the hearts and minds of all who are worshiping. As with baptism, the believer's personal relationship with Christ—and responsibility for himself—is paramount. The Supper is open in the Baptist church, especially today, to anyone who calls Jesus Lord, even if that person is not a member of a Baptist or has not been baptized by immersion. After all, as Lathrop says, "This meal is not about our holiness, say the people, but about God's. God, who in Christ welcomes and forgives sinners, welcomes us. We eat holiness, drink holiness in the meal of Christ's gift. Participating, we are made a holy people."<sup>47</sup> The meal is not the church's supper nor is it the church's place to control who has access to this meal. The freedom that is inherent in a polity that respects the autonomy of the local congregation seeps even into the notion of accessibility to the Supper.

A shared meal is more common in First Baptist's fellowship hall than it is the sanctuary. The fellowship meal, especially on Sunday after worship, is a formational event in Baptist life. Born in denominational life in the days when Baptists had the earned reputation of being poor folks, the pot-luck meal allowed everyone to bring something—whatever they could—to share with the community. The result of these pooled resources<sup>48</sup> was a beautiful and complete meal that satisfied the bodies and spirits of the congregation for the remainder of the Lord's Day and as they prepared to begin another week that was for many of them very laborious.

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 271.

<sup>48</sup> The meager contributions by individual members of the community of faith for the greater good are reminiscent of Acts 2:42-47.

Even in the fellowship hall, structure conveys much about the church. First Baptist features a commercial kitchen where most meals are prepared by our professional kitchen staff; the congregation feasts on a meal that requires no preparation on its part. Still, the shared meal is akin to the pouring of glue on the various parts of the church, sticking one to another, reinforcing the image of the members as the Body of Christ.

Two schools of thought emerged in Baptist life in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries. The Sandy Creek tradition, birthed in the mountains of North Carolina in response to the Great Awakening, was characterized by more spontaneity, enthusiasm, dramatic preaching. This movement was very fearful of education, and practically prohibited seminary-educated ministers. The Charleston tradition, which began in the First Baptist Church of South Carolina's so-called Holy City, focused on orderly worship, the ordinances, ethics, and education. Their commitment to education led them to establish Furman University, Wake Forest University, the University of Richmond, and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.<sup>49</sup> First Baptist Anderson was one of the churches that began in the Charleston tradition.

### ***Ecclesiological Resources***

Education is an important facet in the ecclesiology of this church and it can be a resource to challenge an embedded ecclesiology that may be discordant with the church's professed ecclesiology. As stated before, Baptist education is impacted greatly by the Baptist understanding of salvation. The goal of education given the broader Baptist context is simple: people must be taught about how to become a Christian (and an adult, baptized believer) and

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<sup>49</sup> Walter B. Shurden, *The Baptist Heritage: Four Centuries of Baptist Witness* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1987) 704.

how to be a growing, obedient Christian thereafter. Southern Baptists in particular have a history of training and equipping laypeople to be Christian educators in their local congregations, a reaction to the old—and now obsolete—reality of a largely uneducated population of Baptists in the South.

Education has been revered so much in Baptist life that some churches who do not affirm women in ministry likewise prohibit women from teaching male pupils above a certain age for fear that that the practice would infringe on what they interpret as the Pauline prohibition of women in positions of leadership within the church. The worship space at First Baptist, a congregation which incidentally has not called a Senior Pastor without a doctoral degree in decades, is dwarfed by the space dedicated for education. Sunday School classes gather not just for instruction but also for fellowship and mission endeavors. Weekly education programs for adults and children alike are well-staffed and well-attended. The church's education ministry provides an opportunity for students to study the Bible, learn Baptist history and heritage, discern spiritual gifts, and discuss spiritual disciplines. Veteran teachers study diligently every week to prepare their lessons and visit the church library to find resources to assist them in wrestling with a particular text or topic.

The proclaimed word is central to Baptist worship, a fact illustrated in the placement of the pulpit above the table at the center of the chancel. First Baptist usually has worship services without communion or baptism, but there is only one Sunday morning worship service a year during which there is no sermon. All of this gives credence to the popular view of worship as a spectator event. Many people in the South use the terms "worship" and "preaching" interchangeably. The sermon directly impacts First Baptist's ecclesiology and is a tool that can be facilitated to introduce a new understanding of what it means to be church.

For much of its history, Baptist preachers were proclaiming to illiterate congregations who relied on them not only to interpret scripture but also to read it. Beyond that, preachers desired to evoke a response during the invitational hymn that follows each sermon. Other parts of worship at First Baptist are impacted by the operating ecclesiologies. The offertory prayer each week is led by a deacon, symbolizing the people's offering going to God's work. The church budget itself, one of the focuses of my work as a staff minister, reveals something of the ecclesiology of this church, too. In addition to maintaining the physical infrastructure of the church and paying the salaries of thirteen employees and stipends for two interns, robust global missions work is supported in typical Baptist fashion. Regardless of the mindset of the person in the pew, First Baptist's budget is a means of participating in God's work outside the walls of the church.

### ***The Ecclesiology of First Baptist Church***

Theoretically, no denominational organization affiliated with a local congregation can impose its views on a Baptist church. Therefore, the liturgy of the Baptist church is in large measure determined within the walls of that church. Though the widespread use of Southern Baptist hymnals challenged this freedom for a while, the increased competition among hymnal publishers and the fact that hymnals have fallen out of favor with many contemporary churches is leading to greater diversity among Baptist liturgies in southern churches.

The obvious downside of such an operational ecclesiology in the context of Baptist polity is that the congregation can become unmoored from prevailing orthodoxy and orthopraxy by

creating its own. As I suggested earlier, First Baptist's ecclesiology is informed more by what the church does than by what the church membership says it believes.

I believe there is often dysfunction on the part of church members who are involved in community ministry. The church's help can be annual or semi-annual, and members may feel as if they have done their part. Members may put in two or three hours a year, feel good about themselves, tell themselves they have bloomed where planted, and pat themselves on the back. Finding a place for First Baptist's members with lots of resources to connect with a community with lots of need remains an enormous challenge, especially when it seems church members feel they have much to give to and nothing to receive from the residents of the neighborhood.

Many members at First Baptist hope for gentrification in the church's neighborhood, and have expressed a desire that the church support efforts to redevelop the area in the church's neighborhood. Paying careful attention to the fact that improvement is highly subjective and historically misapplied in this part of Anderson, I wonder if the neighborhood "improved" and the property values "improved," where would the people go who currently call the neighborhood home? The 200-year-old yarn that is spun (pun intended) about change being for the good of those who are in control continues. If leaders from within the community were empowered, they might help ensure that exterior leadership wouldn't produce change that would turn into gentrification.

## PART III

### INTEGRATING CONTEXT AND ECCLESIOLOGY

I did not begin this project with the intention of advancing a contextual ecclesiology. Rather, I intended to author a program by which participating church members would come into closer contact with their context. As I pursued that work, I became increasingly concerned that efforts that are traditionally called “outreach” might be misguided if the church did not take some time to learn about itself, have some difficult yet important conversations about its role in the community and the community’s history, and learn more about the neighborhood where it exists. I hope that greater contextual ecclesiology at First Baptist will result in healthier and affirming community engagement. This project is a crucial means to that end.

#### **What I Discovered: Embedded Theology**

The powerful, implicit thought that informs a Christian’s “countless daily encounters with their Christianity”<sup>50</sup> is described by Howard Stone and James Duke as embedded theology. Karen Scheib further develops this idea: “Embedded theology shapes our theological narrative and is an important part of our faith formation and spiritual practice,” she writes. “We also live out this implicit theological story in our daily lives, as we face ethical decisions or as we strive to love our enemies.”<sup>51</sup> The embedded theology at First Baptist—which is manifested in job descriptions, budget allocations, perceived passion and energy investment of the church, and

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<sup>50</sup> Howard W. Stone and James O. Duke, *How to Think Theologically*, third ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013) Kindle location 352.

<sup>51</sup> Karen D. Scheib, *Pastoral Care: Telling the Stories of Our Lives* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016), 29.

through a congregational survey—indicates that the congregation believes the church exists first and foremost to serve the people within it. This embedded theology within the congregation has emerged from church splits and a desire to keep the church together no matter what.

Furthermore, disconnection from the neighborhood reinforces an inward focus, which in turn exacerbates disconnection from the neighborhood; it is a self-perpetuating cycle.

The care for church membership is an important part of the ministry of the church, but it is not the only component of that ministry. In an effort to gauge the church membership's priorities as well as to subtly introduce other important church ministries, I asked church members to complete a survey in which they chose from among several views of church ministry.<sup>52</sup> Using Avery Dulles' *Models of the Church*<sup>53</sup> as the language of the questionnaire, I asked congregants which facet of the church's ministry was most important to them and which they'd like to see grow. As a follow-up to each question, I gauged the congregation's awareness of the current ministry programming by asking them to give examples of current ministries that fall under the Dulles' model they used in their initial responses.

As stated earlier, respondents gave credence to the understanding of First Baptist's embedded theology as concern for church community by resonating most with Dulles' Community of Disciples and Community of Grace models.<sup>54</sup> Over half of those responding indicated that one of these two models of church was most important to them. Respondents indicated that Dulles' least resonant models were of the church as Servant and Basic Sacrament, with the incongruity of sacramental language in a Baptist setting at least partially responsible for the placement of the latter far down the list of most important models. The number of

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<sup>52</sup> Appendix, i-iv.

<sup>53</sup> Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, expanded ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Image Books, 1987).

<sup>54</sup> Appendix, v-vi.

respondents who chose the Wilmary, First Baptist's housing ministry, as a positive example of a church ministry exceeds the number of volunteers from the church who are active in the Wilmary ministry, leading me to conclude that several dozen individuals within First Baptist like the idea of this ministry more than they like serving in this ministry.

### **First Baptist's Ecclesiology as Change-Agent**

Are there ways to honor the worthwhile ministry that occurs within a church fellowship while challenging the theology that focuses internally at the expense of community ministry? Fortunately, First Baptist's current ecclesiology includes tools at the disposal of a minister who wishes to challenge the congregation's prevailing embedded theology.

Celebrating baptism as a milestone in the life of the believer, an indicator of the health of the congregation, and a challenge to the baptized person and the baptizing community to grow in the Holy Spirit is an important step in using this Baptist distinctive as a way to encourage the congregation to venture outside the walls. The other ordinance in Baptist life, the Lord's Supper, is a reminder of the welcome Christ extends to anyone who would respond, regardless of race, socioeconomic status, or station in life. The way the elements are received at First Baptist—through the distribution of small cups and pieces of bread throughout the congregation—is a subtle reminder that Christ equips every Christian to serve and that all of us “stand in need” of receiving that which is offered. No one is exempt from receiving; no one is exempt from service.

Though the meal in the sanctuary is powerful, the meal in the fellowship hall is more pervasive in Baptist life. As in the First Century, the sharing of a meal is a powerful event, and

theology and love are communicated by whom one chooses to invite to the table. First Baptist's regular meals present a possible opportunity to have conversations, extend welcome, and fellowship with a stranger.

The Charlestonian way of being Baptist—and the First Baptist way of being Baptist—places a strong emphasis on Christian education and educating sermons from educated people. If a church education program is helping young people understand how they can become Christians but not helping adults who grow in their love of neighbor, the program should be revamped to offer a loving challenge to anyone of any age to deepen their commitment to following Christ—to salvation, to service, to love. A strong educational program can help church members alter their embedded theology to better match what the church says it believes about hospitality and love for neighbor.

### **Implications for Future Ministry**

I have already done some of the work of bringing these findings to the congregation I serve. Over a series of twelve weeks, I taught Bible studies about discipleship, mission, hospitality, love, and service. My teachings, rooted in scripture, invited conversation about the application of the biblical witness within First Baptist's specific context. A survey I conducted at the conclusion of the study indicated a slight up-tick in the value participants in the study placed on Volf's model of Church as Servant.<sup>55</sup>

These conversations are engaging the unspoken narratives that are inaccurate but nonetheless powerful in First Baptist's ecclesiology. I taught the scripture and asked the

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<sup>55</sup> Appendix, vi.

questions; the people in my study spoke about their embedded theology, which “may seem so comfortable that we carry it within us for years, unquestioned and perhaps even unspoken.... We may be secure in the conviction that this is what Christianity is all about and leave it at that.”<sup>56</sup>

Engaging that theology will require the full resources of First Baptist’s liturgy. Through education, shared space, moving into the community, and common worship experiences, First Baptist’s embedded theology can become a deliberative theology, an “understanding of faith that emerges from the process of carefully reflecting upon theological convictions,”<sup>57</sup> a sort of “second-order theology.”<sup>58</sup> Though changing the embedded theology is an ultimate goal, the next step in that incremental process is the opportunity to speak that which is unspoken, consider that which is unexamined, clarifying that which is obscure.

These needs—for examination and clarification—are not just the task for the persons within the church. They are needs within the community, too. The church and its leaders would do well to realize that the church can call people together to engage in these tasks, to be a partner in the very important work of community-level discussion and understanding. I suspect that nurturing a contextual theology will be years-long work, and the church needs all the help it can get as it engages in the task to more accurately understand itself and its neighbors.

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<sup>56</sup> Stone and Duke, Kindle location 411.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

## APPENDIX

## Congregational Survey #1 Josh Hunt Doctoral Project

*I am currently working on a project in conjunction with my doctoral work at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University. My work focuses on ecclesiology, which is a term that describes the theology and structure of church. I value your input to help me with the research portion of my project. Please complete the following questionnaire and return it to me via the included self-addressed stamped envelope or in the drop box located in the vestibule of the church.*

This questionnaire is intended to determine what you value about the ministry of First Baptist Church and your biggest dream or hope for that ministry. There are no incorrect answers. Your participation is completely optional and completely anonymous.

No healthy church's ministry can be characterized by only one or two of these models created by theologian Avery Dulles. Rather, a comprehensive church ministry will include important work in each of these models. Consider the following models as they relate to the ministry of First Baptist Church. These models and the brief descriptions that accompany each one will be the basis for the questions that appear on the reverse of this paper.

### **The Church as a Community of Disciples**

This model focuses on discipleship. What does it mean to follow the Lord and to carry the implications of this seriously in one's life? This model illuminates the purposes of the church while finding motivation in missionary activity, evangelism, and social transformation.

### **The Church as Herald of the Gospel**

This model emphasizes the importance of the Bible. The church consists of those who hear the word and are converted. The mission of the church is to preach the word to ends of the earth, appreciating the importance of hearing and proclaiming the scriptures as God's Word.

### **The Church as a Community of Grace**

This model emphasizes the people who make the church and their connectedness with each other and with God. It focuses on spirituality, community, and fellowship. The church is viewed as something of a spiritual support group that aids people in their quest to live holy lives.

### **The Church as Basic Sacrament**

This model focuses on the church as the continuing presence of Christ in the world. The term sacrament is understood as a way of making a sacred reality present and active. The sacrament model explains how visible realities mediate invisible realities.

### **The Church as Servant**

The servant model focuses on the need for the church to be involved in social transformation. This model presents a picture of church that is involved with, present in, and in service to a world that is basically good. In this model, church members are understood to be a part of the larger human family, with God known not simply through the church, but also through human experience and the things of the world.

Dulles, Avery. *Models of the Church*. Exp Rei edition. Garden City, NY: Image, 1991.

1. Of the models for thinking about the ministry of the church that were listed, which facet of First Baptist's ministry is most important to you? (Please check one.)

- The Church as Community of Disciples
- The Church as Herald of the Gospel
- The Church as a Community of Grace
- The Church as Basic Sacrament
- The Church as Servant

2. What ministry, activity, gathering, or practice within the church best illustrates its ministry in the model you described as most important to you above?

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3. Of the models for thinking about the ministry of the church that were listed, which facet of First Baptist's ministry would you like to see grow? (Please check one.)

- The Church as Community of Disciples
- The Church as Herald of the Gospel
- The Church as a Community of Grace
- The Church as Basic Sacrament
- The Church as Servant

4. What ministry, activity, gathering, or practice could the church undertake or do better to more fully develop the model for ministry you've said you'd like to see grow?

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## Congregational Survey #2 Josh Hunt Doctoral Project

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This model focuses on the church as the continuing presence of Christ in the world. The term sacrament is understood as a way of making a sacred reality present and active. The sacrament model explains how visible realities mediate invisible realities.

### **The Church as Servant**

The servant model focuses on the need for the church to be involved in social transformation. This model presents a picture of church that is involved with, present in, and in service to a world that is basically good. In this model, church members are understood to be a part of the larger human family, with God known not simply through the church, but also through human experience and the things of the world.

Dulles, Avery. *Models of the Church*. Exp Rei edition. Garden City, NY: Image, 1991.

1. Did you take the first congregational survey related to this project? (Please check one.)
  - Yes
  - No
2. Did you attend the Wednesday afternoon or evening Bible studies that addressed discipleship, community understanding, and ministry to persons outside the walls of the church?
  - Yes
  - No
3. Of the models for thinking about the ministry of the church that were listed, which facet of First Baptist's ministry is most important to you? (Please check one.)
  - The Church as Community of Disciples
  - The Church as Herald of the Gospel
  - The Church as a Community of Grace
  - The Church as Basic Sacrament
  - The Church as Servant
4. What ministry, activity, gathering, or practice within the church best illustrates its ministry in the model you described as most important to you above?

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5. Of the models for thinking about the ministry of the church that were listed, which facet of First Baptist's ministry would you like to see grow? (Please check one.)
  - The Church as Community of Disciples
  - The Church as Herald of the Gospel
  - The Church as a Community of Grace
  - The Church as Basic Sacrament
  - The Church as Servant

6. What ministry, activity, gathering, or practice could the church undertake or do better to more fully develop the model for ministry you've said you'd like to see grow?

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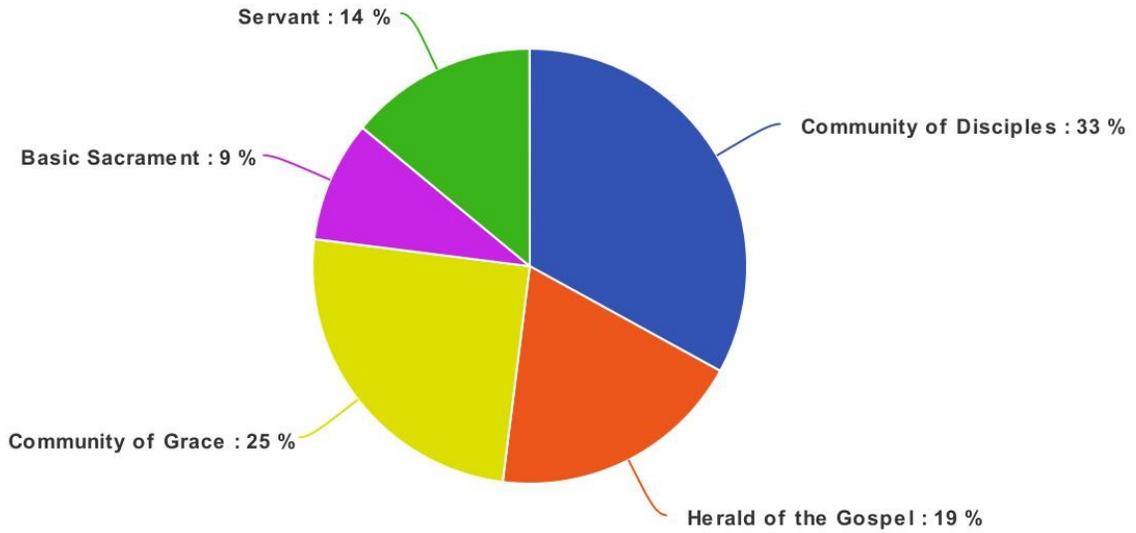
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# Congregational Survey Results

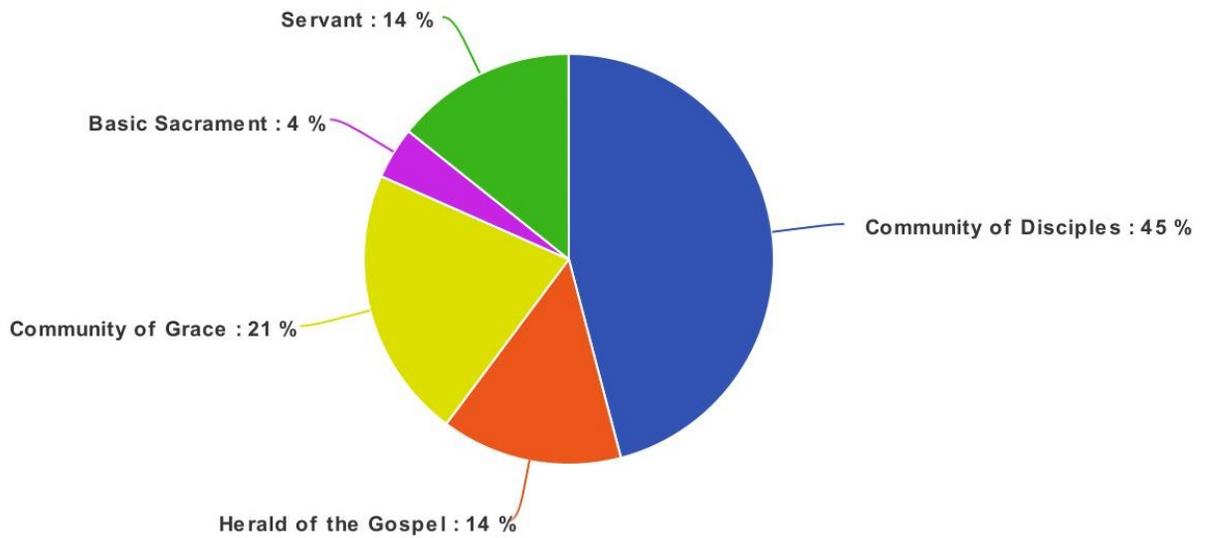
## CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY #1

### Most Important to Me



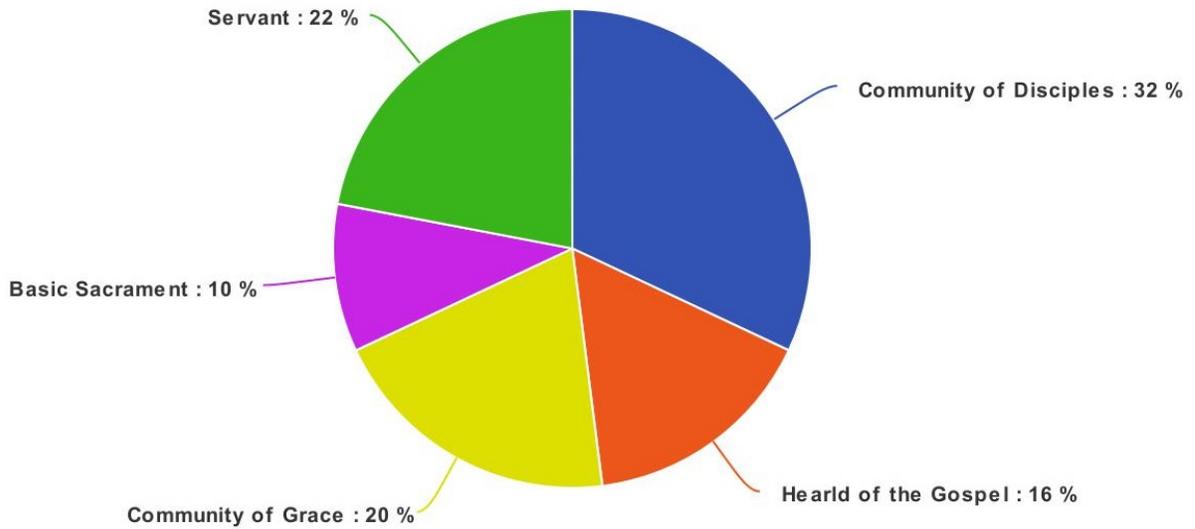
## CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY #1

### Want to See Grow



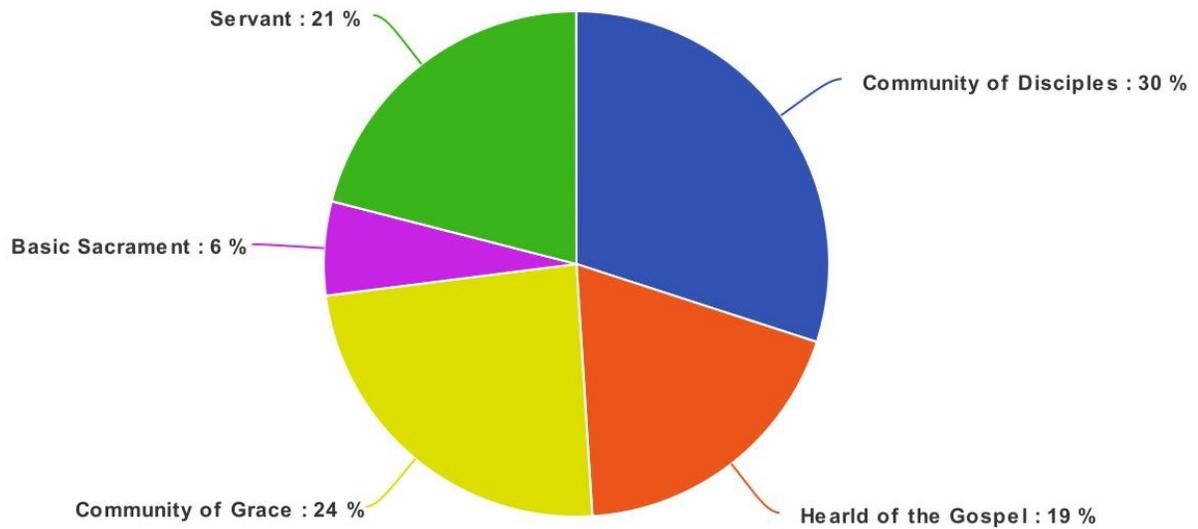
## CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY #2

### Most Important to Me



## CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY #2

### Want to See Grow



**What ministry, activity, gathering, or practice within the church best illustrates its ministry in the model you described as most important or the model you'd like to see grow?**

The Church as Community of Disciples

Worship

Sunday School

Bible Study

Choir

Shared Meals

The Church as Herald of the Gospel

Music and Missions (Educational Programming)

First Baptist Child Development Center

Mission: Anderson

The Church as a Community of Grace

Greeting People After They Join

Benevolence Ministry

Prayer and Visitation

Welcoming Visitors

The Church as Basic Sacrament

New Year's Day Meal

Support of Other Organizations

Missions Giving

Youth and Children's Disciple Now

The Church as Servant

Missions Giving

Saturday Servants

The Wilmary Housing Ministry

Habitat Partnership

Student Mentoring

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