Organizational Dynamics

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Assignment #3 – Essay

1. Write a 5-page essay responding to a significant problem you have identified in an

organization you are knowledgeable about. Demonstrate how an understanding of group

dynamics can help you solve this problem.

2. Paper Outline

a. Begin with an introductory paragraph that has a succinct thesis statement.

b. Address the topic of the paper with critical thought.

c. End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis.

d. Use a minimum of eleven scholarly research sources (two books and the

remaining scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles).

The Resiliency of Black Churches Amongst Gentrification

As a large, white-colored church sits amid a bustling D.C. Avenue, change is happening all around. High-priced apartment buildings pop up, the small neighborhood bank goes away and the neighbor's faces look whiter and whiter. Homes are remolded and behind the church, a sophisticated shopping development is built to include an expensive movie theater with all the modern amenities one could want. The local beauty supply store is sold off as well as the Popeyes chicken restaurant. Construction impedes traffic on Sunday mornings and parking is almost impossible. Born et al (2021) would label this as indirect displacement when there is a loss of cultural and social resources. The neighborhood has been gentrified. Born et al (2021) define gentrification as ‘Gentrification is the process in which a community with a gap in current versus potential value is leveraged for housing and business investment through an influx of new residents with typically higher income and educational attainment than existing residents. These new residents generally are whiter as well” (p. 6).

The church needs a strategy despite and in lieu of the gentrifying process. How does it maintain resiliency and stay relevant? The members of the church have been there for about thirty years, and many have lived in and around the very same neighborhood for just as long. Members of the church begin to get frustrated because of the lack of parking, it gets harder and harder to find a quick, reasonably priced snack after church, and local government officials, real estate agents, and developers pressure the leaders of the church every week to sell the property. The incoming residents may or may not be interested in visiting this well-established, and well-regarded house of worship. It will be hard for many members to travel across D.C. lines if the church moves to Maryland and retaining resources for social services would be more challenging. Partnerships have long been established. How does the church remain resilient and relevant?

Allen (2023) insightfully stresses “Religious resilience refers to a religious artifact’s capacity to withstand changes in the social, political, and racial landscape that would otherwise undermine its value, yet instead, the artifact maintains its perception as a significant component of society that fundamentally influences the lives of individuals and groups (p. 15).

Born et al (2021) enlighten us on this issue stating, “While churches have long stood as political and economic resources to their communities, existing research has not explicitly covered the relationship between faith-based organizations (FBOs) and anti-gentrification efforts though such strategies are being recognized for their potential to create housing and public benefits”(p. 5).

In addition to indirect displacement, Born et al (2021) describe two other types of gentrification: 1) direct displacement occurs when there are rising costs in rent or business and these costs cause interruptions in continued residence or business operations. The person or business is evicted from their dwelling; 2) Exclusionary displacement. This occurs when potential residents, usually people of color, are outbid in the real estate purchasing process by higher-income households.

The Black church has to also stand up to new technologies of postmodernity. Mdingi (2020) explicates the relationship between the black church and what he calls the 4IR or the fourth revolution. Mdingi (2020) explains that the 4IR encompasses things such as robotics, nanotechnology, IoT or Internet of things, virtual reality, and biotech. Mdingi (2020) emphasizes AI (Artificial Intelligence) as the central element of the fourth revolution. Because of AI and other technological advances, humans face obsolescence, and the environment faces grave destruction. Mdingi (2020) asserts “The Christian church must be rooted in creation and must have the moral responsibility of being Imago Dei" (p. 4).

The notion of a black church is a religious experience for those denied human intelligence and those subjected to dehumanization. Mdingi (2020) emphasizes the relevant need of the black church to bring the gospel to the oppressed in this new era of the 4IR. Because of my role as a property manager in the affordable housing sector, I can observe up close and personally the lack of education and computer savviness in this day and age. One of my responsibilities is to recertify families for their housing and many residents who were never formally educated in computer software programs can be served by the church in an area where society has left them behind “The black church transcends church buildings and becomes a religious experience of those deemed as subhuman and thus enslaved for the enterprise of servitude to white and Western socio-economic, technological, and cultural expansion” (Mdingi, 2020, p. 6).

Mdingi (2020) sees the black preacher as well as the institution of the black church as a protector of the intellect and that the denial of one’s humanity includes the denial of one’s intellect. His concern and charge for the black church is to continue to preserve, protect, and emphasize the importance of humanity in a world of technological advances.

COVID-19 was a turning point for most churches in America, especially black churches. Black churches already on average have fewer resources and bring in fewer tithes than the average white church. The recent pandemic made it even harder for black churches to stay afloat and continue to serve their communities.

The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (2023) reported that at the height of the pandemic, two-thirds of Black Protestants reported they participated in virtual services over the past month. In the most recent survey, 54 percent of Black Protestants say they participated in services online or on TV in the last month, compared with 46 percent of White evangelical Protestants and smaller shares of Catholics (20 percent), White non-evangelical Protestants (19 percent) and Jews (16 percent). The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (2023) reports that Black Protestants have now experienced a substantial bounce in physical attendance, from a low of 14 percent in July 2020 to 41 percent in the most recent survey.

If ever there was a time to stay relevant and resilient, it was during and after COVID-19. Although the pandemic threatened the existence of many churches, the black church was crucial during a period of confusion, anxiety, isolation, and depression. Leonhardt et al (2023) state “For ethnicity, Black communities have been disproportionately hurt by COVID-19 [19] and some past research evidence has shown that Black Americans facing anxiety were more likely to turn to religion compared to White Americans” (p. 3). Brown et al (2022) pointed out a few of the challenges when churches transitioned to online services including 1) the difference in worship experience compared to in-person services, 2) loss of revenue, and 3) limited technological capacity. While these challenges still pose a threat to the black church organization, resiliency and relevance are still crucial factors in this somewhat post-pandemic era. The black church has and still serves as a sponsor for health initiatives that serve the black community when black residents may have nowhere else to go. Brown et al (2022) command “Church organizational structure and leaders position the Black church as a relevant entity to reach the target population” (p. 2). Furthermore, they assert “The organizational members and structures of Black churches (e.g., pastors, health ministries, etc.) in conjunction with the information and messaging expertise of public health practitioners should be utilized to address COVID-19 information dissemination and subsequent behavioral change as it has been used previously to address other health issues” (p. 2). Brown et al (2022) offer strategies for black churches to remain relevant as the pandemic may never be officially over. Hosting information sessions, providing a platform for local health agencies to disseminate up-to-date information and risks due to variant virus strains, using social media such as Facebook and Instagram to promote healthy habits, and incorporating messaging into other church initiatives such as clothing and food giveaways just to name a few.

Tagwirei (2023) offers sound advice that can be applied to the black church improving its organizational dynamics while at the same time remaining relevant. Tagwirei (2023) suggests that if a church adopts comprehensive Presbyterian principles to encourage consultation with subordinate leaders, combines them with congregational grassroots appreciation, empowerment, and engagement, and also accommodates decisive Episcopalian ideas, its leaders can demonstrate both exclusive and inclusive accountability, transparency, and decisiveness in addressing diverse issues and contexts (p. 10).

The church as an organization stands to provide many benefits to the community and can even be a social benefit to new residents in a gentrified community with changing demographics. Although most African Americans can be considered exogenous in that they look to a God, a deity outside of themselves for intervention, comfort, and protection, churches can still be a beacon of light to nonblacks and those who may be more endogenic, moving into gentrified neighborhoods. As we move closer to the coming of the Messiah, the world is going to get scarier and more confusing. No matter the ethnicity, families and individuals, for the first time are going to look for comfort inside houses of worship instead of bars and cafes. Davenport & McClintock (2021) found that high organizational religiosity was related to a reduced level of significant depressive symptoms.

It is my proposal that reputation and status undergird organizations, including a church's resiliency. The relationship that a church has with the local government and its status in the neighborhood can provide benefits to it being able to remain resilient. Kim et al (2021) mention in their article that the better the reputation an organization has and the higher its status, the more access it has to critical resources. This is important for a church that may need zoning changes, new construction approval, and various resources to meet the day-to-day needs of its congregations. Local city officials and existing neighbors are aware of a church’s long-standing character and what it has provided to the local community. This reputation and status will grant the church favor and social capital in times of demographic changes and challenges.

Exchange relations between the church and other organizations such as the city’s professional sports teams, wealthier and larger churches in the surrounding area, and local charities can continue because of a church’s reputation. Born et al (2021) suggest University-community partnerships. Also, churches that have incoming-generating retail property will have to re-strategize and provide a variety of amenities and services to fit the needs and desires of the changing demographics. Church’s can provide start-up and affordable commercial and retail space for these types of businesses.

Allen (2023) found that data from in-depth interviews with 65 Black Christian Millennials revealed that the socio-cultural function has remained constant, while the socio-political and socio-educational functions have evolved from the perspective of study participants. The socioeconomic function has become defunct, and the socio-emotional function has emerged.

Laasch et al (2023) provide an interdisciplinary framework that I believe can apply to church organizations. The authors integrate the disciplines of ethics, responsibility, and sustainability as one competency for responsibility management. Based on the definition of each discipline by Laach et al (2023), the church should not operate without moral judgment and moral courage, must develop community-building competencies and social issues awareness as well as utilize foresight competence. The church’s ethical management in times of un-seen phenomena such as today’s cultural wars as well as geopolitical wars, calls for the church to adopt a moral competence to speak truth to power amidst the world’s tensions and adversities. Social awareness is needed to meet the needs of incoming immigrants and those suffering from identity crises. Sustainability for the church requires the organization to embrace diversity and seek out collaborations and coalitions with incoming cultures.

To remain relevant and sustainable, the church must embrace the cultural aspects of today’s youth, which include social media and modern technology. Youth ministries would do well with incorporating the talent and gifts of young people who are savvy with AI, streaming technicalities, and other ways the church can safely engage virtually. The youth can teach classes and produce the worship service for online viewers creating immersive experiences. In addition to teaching youth about Jesus, Scripture can be contextualized to show the youth that the church cares about current social issues just like corporations and government. The youth are consumers who are often ignored. Majewski and Beltowska (2023) in their study reveal the perspective of the Polish youth culture when it comes to corporate social responsibility which can be applied to the church “ Based on the results of the survey, it was concluded that the Polish Z generation is a group knowledgeable about the CSR concept and aware of its importance in terms of influencing an organisation's positive reputation” (p. 257).

Complimentarily, Jo et al (2021) suggest “Churches wishing to grow should invest equally in member satisfaction and recruitment (conversion)” (p. 2). In addition, for sustainability, Jo et al (2021) recommend linking new converts (unbelievers who have just come into the fold and lost prior networks) with believers to build trust and form networks. Joe et al (2021) assess the church as a complex system in which social, economic, institutional, cultural, educational, political, and other elements are interrelated dynamically. Their research on the sustainability of religious communities suggests leaders of the church plan external activities that contribute to the sustainability of the community which will foster sustainable church growth. Although contextualized in Zimbabwe, Tagwirei & Masango (2023) offer strategies for sustainability by the church extending its focus beyond *kerygma* and *Diakonia.*

Similarly, Tagwirei (2023) cites Msiska (2020), “Furthermore, it is essential to consider that the church operates as both an organism and an organization” (p. 4). Tagwirei (2023) also adds “Consequently, she needs structures of order or authority for her government. Such administration of the church is her polity” (p. 4).

If a small church is struggling or wants to change its strategy to stay afloat, an internal assessment or intervention research project may be in order. The desire to accommodate incoming demographics or change programs according to new phenomena must be across the board and include all staff. Church leadership should realize that some employees may be resistant. Klutz (2019 offers incite into insider intervention research which may be helpful in if a church is stagnant or adjusting well enough to the new milieu. This would be similar to an investigative audit to uncover weaknesses, strengths, and shifts needed to adjust to the current social climate. More detail is available in Klutz (2019).

It is easy to forget that individual churches present small organizational challenges that threaten resiliency. Stavros (2022) offers an illumination into role theory and the fluidity of roles for each position. This also may apply to the small church organizational context. Because of cultural changes in the church’s neighborhood, or new socio-cultural dynamics, although roles may normally offer continuity, they may be loosely and dynamically structured to fit a new breed of parishioners, and new ways of managing church business. Perhaps roles can be switched between the youth pastor and associate pastor for example. The idea is that all employees and staff should remain flexible and open to changes in standard operating procedures as well as fluctuations in programs.

This is a turbulent time for not only America but individual communities and micro-societies across the nation. The landscape of our country is changing every day. We never know when another pandemic will emerge or another phenomenon that sweep the nation and the world. Because of Christ's imminent return, many prophecies of Scripture are being fulfilled, which means the church, and especially the black church must develop strategies, coping mechanisms, and creative approaches to adjust to a changing world that needs Christ. “The Black Church’s dynamic role in the everyday lives of Black Americans is undeniable. Historically, it offered the community many secular services and resources in addition to providing its customary religious functions”(Allen, 2023, p 16). The more challenges America faces, the deeper the struggle gets for many of the marginalized and unseen, and the black church will remain the hub for empowerment, uplifting, service, and the emboldening of a people, a community that has never given up or given in.

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