

## **Abstract**

This thesis evaluates the effectiveness of Ministry of Presence upon Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) homeless and hungry individuals at faith based meal programs in San Francisco. Written from the standpoint of a transgender pastor, the author uses body centered praxis to urge pastors and homeless advocates to shift from a psychological framework to a sociological one. Additional lessons are drawn from the life and ministry of Central City Pastors in San Francisco's Tenderloin and South of Market (SOMA) districts who served from 1963 - 1975.

**Key words:** gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual, queer, homeless, San Francisco, body, praxis, ministry of presence, sociology, psychology, mental health

## **Dedication**

For homeless LGBTQ youth. You are amazing!

May you find homes and forever families soon.

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SOLO GRATIA:  
AN ANALYSIS OF THE FAITH AND FAITH EXPERIENCE OF  
CENTRAL CITY PASTORS AND LGBTQ HOMELESS AND  
HUNGRY INDIVIDUALS LIVING IN SAN FRANCISCO

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## Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Standpoint .....	1
Solo Gratia .....	1
Naming, Welcoming and Praxis.....	2
Academic and Systematic Standpoint .....	9
Responsive and Responsible Practical Theology of Emergency .....	25
Chapter 2: The Pastoral Response to the LGBTQ Homeless in San Francisco from 1964-1970 ....	42
The Rise and Call of the Central City Pastors.....	42
Behind the Mask: Inner Homophobia and Racism .....	48
The Pastoral Response to Vanguard .....	57
Lessons for Contemporary Ministry to LGBTQ Homeless Individuals .....	62
Chapter 3: Contemporary LGBTQ Homelessness, Faith and Faith Communities in San Francisco	65
The State of LGBTQ Homelessness in San Francisco .....	65
Faithful Services for San Francisco's LGBTQ Homeless .....	70
Chapter 4: Methodology, Predicted Outcomes and Study Results .....	74
Methodology .....	74
The Ethical Undercounting of Transgender Individuals .....	75
Predicted Outcomes.....	80
Results by Site .....	80
Comprehensive Results .....	90
Chapter 5: Assessments, Conclusions and Recommendations .....	92
Learnings and Recommendations for Faithful Services to Homeless LGBTQ San Franciscans .....	92
In Defense of Ministry of Presence and a Call to Move Beyond It .....	93
Solo Gratia .....	104

Appendix .....	106
Appendix 1: Human Subject Protocol .....	107
Appendix 2: Consent Form .....	109
Appendix 3: Survey on Faith and Homelessness .....	111
Appendix 4: Bibliography .....	113

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# Chapter 1: Standpoint

## Solo Gratia

Solo Gratia, or grace alone, is a phrase that reminds Lutherans that our baptisms and faith in Jesus frees us from any need to follow faithful rules. I stand firmly within the tradition of reformed people who understand that the only agent of change, in my salvation or the salvation of the world, comes from God. Nothing I do, say or leave undone can ever separate me from this love and salvation that God gives me (Romans 8:38).

Martin Luther believed in Solo Gratia so strongly that he believed people could not only sin, but enjoy it. As a result, he decided to keep one vice, anger: “I find nothing that promotes work better than angry fervor. For when I wish to compose, write, pray and preach well, I must be angry. It refreshes my entire system, my mind is sharpened, and all unpleasant thoughts and depression fade away.”<sup>1</sup>

Luther’s chosen vice was no small matter. His vile words led to the death of countless Mennonites, Anabaptists and fuelled the anti-Semitism of the Holocaust. Believing that tying families together and ensuring care and support for the vulnerable is more important than civic guidelines about monogamy in marriage, Luther stepped outside his own theology when he advised Philip of Hesse that it would be better to be

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<sup>1</sup> Luther, Martin, Off the Record With Martin Luther: An Original Translation of the Table Talks, trans. and ed. Charles Daudert (Kalamazoo, MI: Hansa-Hewlett, 2009), entry no. 2410b, p. 110.

married to two women, than to get a divorce.<sup>2</sup> Solo Gratia allowed the strict rule following Luther to practice ministry on his toes.

In this chapter, I will share the history of my body, identity, theology and ministry. In each area, I will describe the transitions that have shaped my learning and outline a few ways other pastors and people of faith can begin to transition from pastoral care that is rooted in psychology to one that is informed by sociology.

### **Naming, Welcoming and Praxis**

When I was developing in my mother's womb, my name was Ryan. Back then, in South Dakota, they determined the sex of a baby by listening to its heartbeat. My heart told the doctors that I would be a boy. When I was born, the first words proclaimed were "Oops," when the doctor looked between my legs and my body told the doctor I was a girl. For three days my name was "baby girl Rohrer," before my parents decided to name me Megan Marie Rohrer.

Twenty-six years later I was ordained as a pastor and became The Rev. Megan Rohrer. However, because I was ordained extraordinarily (at the time LGBTQ pastors were not allowed to openly serve) it would be another five years before the Lutheran church stopped arguing about whether or not I was actually a pastor.

My ordination, in 2006, was the 10<sup>th</sup> extraordinary ordination of 18 that would take place before the ELCA changed their policies in 2009. My ordination was the first

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<sup>2</sup> Gritsch, Eric W., Martin- God's Court Jester: Luther in Retrospect, Fortress Press, 1983, 81.

of an openly transgender pastor in the Lutheran Church and, in 2010, I became one of the first seven out gay pastors brought into the ELCA under the new policy that enabled LGBTQ pastors to serve openly.

For my first 12 years in ministry, I primarily worked with chronically homeless and hungry LGBTQ San Franciscans in the Polk Gulch and Castro Districts. An interfaith ministry founded in 1996, through a series of neighborhood forums that included neighbors, merchants and congregations, the Homelessness Task Force (HTF) was created as a response to the chronically homeless adults living in the Polk Gulch district of San Francisco. HTF's original purpose was to help people living in poverty, one by one, renew their lives and become self-sustaining people through meals where guests and volunteers ate together as equals in the eyes of God(dess).<sup>3</sup>

In June of 2002,<sup>4</sup> the HTF became a 501(c)3 organization called the Welcome Ministry. The Welcome Ministry's programming consisted of the Welcome Center, a sanctuary for lunch, hospitality and assistance to those living in poverty in our neighborhood every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon, a Wednesday evening drop-in program, a twice-monthly Saturday community dinner, and individual pastoral care for our homeless and hungry guests.

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<sup>3</sup> I have chosen to use the term "God(dess)" throughout this text to highlight the transitional nature of God's gender. I also seek to give the reader a choice. If you feel comfortable with the term "God," please read it that way. If you have been wounded by patriarchal theology and feel more comfortable with the term "Goddess," please read it that way. I have chosen to use parenthesis in an attempt to embrace a liberating transgender theology. I also believe that the whispering wind of the Holy Spirit delights in the mystical ways God(dess) is able to relate to us not only throughout the gender spectrum, but beyond the bodily constructs that sometimes limit our prophetic imaginations.

<sup>4</sup> This was also my first month on the job.

Through these programs, we (I and about 350 volunteers a year) built relationships of caring and trust with individual guests. When individuals were ready to improve their lives, we provided referrals for drug and alcohol addiction recovery, housing and employment. Our mission was to create self-sustaining individuals who are able to feed themselves and care for their bodies and the community in which they live.

Our work was incredibly unique in San Francisco where most programs and foundations were rewarded for quantity over quality. We took the time to learn the names and faces of our guests and found that it was healing for all involved. We often said that the volunteers and staff had their lives changed in more noticeable ways than the homeless and hungry we were working with, as our lives were transformed through our interactions with the homeless.

Primarily serving the Polk Gulch neighborhood in San Francisco, our guests were predominately white, male, gay or "gay for pay," runaways or throwaways, sex workers who had been homeless for 20 years plus and were typically mentally ill, addicted, sex workers, infected with HIV/AIDS and/or Hepatitis C. Additionally, our guests had an above average rate of being veterans, abused, felons, disabled, suffering from traumatic brain injury, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and/or experiencing depression and anxiety disorders. Many of our guests had problematic behavioral issues that caused them to be banned by organizations, so our only rule was that if you are a threat to yourself or someone else you had to leave until you are done.

Just one block away, Polk Street was San Francisco's first gay neighborhood before Harvey Milk and the middle and upper class gay community moved to the Castro. The hustlers and gay youth were left on Polk Street. The beautiful young hustlers were celebrated when they fueled the local economy. After the AIDS crisis decimated the gay community and slowly closed all but one of the gay bars in the neighborhood, the young hustlers lost their safety net. Steadily as the community forgot its gay past and the hustlers became middle aged (read: unattractive as gay hustlers), they soon became the litter of neighborhood. Now the community that once depended upon them, calls the police to get rid of them and actively seeks to close all the organizations that provide them with care.

Within this context, Welcome's ministry of presence has been an appropriate response to the needs of its too often abandoned and forgotten guests. Listening to the stories and learning the names of the homeless of Polk Street was healing and life changing work.

David was a church organist before his mental illness caused him to be unable to work, so he knew that if he camped in front of the church door that I would have to come and talk to him even though I had too much paperwork that day to answer the door. David was so sick that I let him inside and gave him a space to sleep. The church secretary brought him soup, which he was too sick to eat. I created an extra hour of work at the end of the day, because I didn't have the heart to tell David that he would

have to leave. I knew that it was my job to make David leave the building, and that if I did he would die.

When I walked in to tell David he had to go outside, he was pale but he already had his stuff together. He consoled me and informed me that Jesus had told him he would die on the streets, but that it was all going to be ok. David asked for a Bible with the words “holy” on it. The next morning when I arrived at the church I got a call from the medical examiner telling me that David froze to death on the streets the night before and someone had found the Bible with his mail in it. Because Welcome’s address was on David’s mail, they called me to identify his body. I identified David’s body, gave him his last rights through the examination window and we held a service for the homeless who gathered to remember him.

David’s death changed my pastoral language. Where I had once spoken the words of the Gospel, I began to sound more like the book of Isaiah. I was angry with God(dess) and all who participated in the events that led to David’s death, and the hundreds of homeless individuals who die on the streets, from addiction, lack of health care and from loneliness each year. At the same time that our ministry of presence was healing and saving lives, it was also responsible for David’s death because he and the other homeless deserved more, deserved justice, deserved housing and proper health care. For months I screamed and mourned the absence of God(dess)’s justice in the world and with the homeless in San Francisco.

In response, I created the Homeless Identification Project (HIP) and hired Pastor Jay Wilson, to work at the Welcome Ministry. His training as a clinical social worker and experience as a transgender, disability rights advocate provided new resources for our guests. The goal of HIP was to help 150 homeless individuals obtain their ID, but we ended up helping more than 324 because nearly every service in town required ID, though only Welcome was able to help those living in poverty to pay for them. Glide Memorial, an organization with more than 8 times our budget started referring individuals to our program, because everyone they worked with was required to have their ID to utilize their services.

Miraculously, in 2008, HIP did something we would never have been bold enough to pray for. In cooperation with the SF Homeless Outreach Team we were able to help more than 155 of our guests move indoors. In early 2009, the Welcome board decided that we had helped so many individuals move indoors that we could no longer call ourselves a homeless program. So we became Welcome – a communal response to poverty.

We continue to work with the same low income individuals to help them learn the skills they need to remain indoors, to improve their quality of life and to become self-sustaining individuals. Our new name allows us to not only work with the homeless, but to respond to the needs of poverty in our community, whatever form that takes over the years. It also enables us to help other communities across the Bay Area and the country to learn to respond to poverty in their neighborhoods.

Welcome is now a ministry of empowerment that uses education, arts, emergent ministry and communal activities to enable those living in poverty to become healthy individuals, members of the community and leaders. Welcome is experienced in creating communal programs that respond to the needs of those living in poverty, but our greatest challenge comes from our desire to truly create spaces that embody our deep belief that all people are equally in need of care despite their social and economic class.

Our ministry seeks to adapt and change as poverty adapts and changes. We are people of faith who work on our tiptoes, poised to respond to the new face of poverty, to continually examine our own motivations and participation in the systems of injustice that we ignore, encourage or create.

While feeding the bodies and souls of our homeless guests, they taught me how to become more balanced, creatively respond to problems and how to reach a goal on a minimal budget. Each year, I spent a week living on the streets, feeling in my bones a taste of what it was like for the homeless. During my time on the streets, I surveyed San Francisco's services and tried to find small ways we could improve the continuum of care.

As Welcome took on new projects, I also learned new skills to support those in need. For HIP, I became a notary public. The following year I learned about community gardening and helped congregations convert unused land into urban gardens that grew and gave away over 5 tons of produce. For three years, I trained in Somatic

Experiencing to help low income individuals heal from PTSD and worked with individuals with paranoid schizophrenia to help them with harm reduction. I created a program that enabled Project Homeless Connect to provide dentures for the homeless and am currently coordinating the Homeless Vision Project, which has provided free prescription glasses to more than 1,200 San Franciscans.

In addition to my work at Welcome, in February of 2014, I became the pastor of Grace Evangelical Lutheran Church in San Francisco. With a unanimous vote of all 16 of their members, Grace called me as their pastor. Soon after I became the pastor at Grace, I had a transgender related surgery. Afraid of the reaction of my congregation, the Bishop and the public at large, the congregation's unconditional love that honored my body and medical choices has been healing. In the last year, I learned that sometimes justice comes sooner than we expect it.

### **Academic and Systematic Standpoint<sup>5</sup>**

Ancestrally, I am a Scandinavian, German and English Lutheran who can confirm my Lutheran heritage all the way back to a baptism in Germany that took place in 1648.<sup>6</sup> Culturally, I am a Midwesterner who spent the first 21 years of life in South Dakota. For me, "Lutheran" has been more of an identity than a list of things I believe. Consequently, it is easier for me to explain my faith by talking about stories of Darlene Audus, my grandmother, than to use the typical theological language you may expect to

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<sup>5</sup> This section is adapted from Rohrer, Megan "Queerly Saved," Queerly Lutheran, Wilgefortis, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Sievert Janssen Schulte<sup>6</sup> was baptized on December 20, 1685 at the Völlen Evangelische-Lutheran Church in Völlen, Leer County, Ostfriesland, Hanover.

find. The following is patchwork quilt that begins to form a theology of salvation (justification by grace, through faith in Christ), through the life and works of Martin Luther, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Darlene Audus.

### *Martin Luther*

Martin Luther views justification as liberation from our sins in the now and not yet (causing us to be simultaneously a saint and a sinner). The liberating death and resurrection of Christ grants us freedom to "be a sinner and sin boldly, but believe and rejoice in Christ even more boldly.... No sin will separate us from the Lamb, even though we commit fornication and murder a thousand times a day."<sup>7</sup> At the same time that we can be assured that we are justified, we are also called to be faithful.

Luther believes faith is three things: 1) "hearing the word of promise"<sup>8</sup> in the Word of God(dess) (especially preached);<sup>9</sup> 2) unity with, or marriage to, Christ;<sup>10</sup> and 3) "the only key by which the hidden mystery of the cross may be unlocked."<sup>11</sup> First, a person hears the Word and has faith. Then, the believer understands the Word because of their faith. Because of the centrality of the Word, the cross is crucial to faith:

The [God(dess)] who is crucified is the [God(dess)] who is hidden in [God(dess)'s] revelation. Any attempt to seek [God(dess)] elsewhere than in the cross of Christ is to be rejected out of hand as idle

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<sup>7</sup> *Luther's Works (LW), Volume 2*, 371; *LW48: Letters I*, 282

<sup>8</sup> McGrath, Alister E., *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough*, Blackwell, 1985 174.

<sup>9</sup> "Concerning Christian Liberty," 117-118; and McGrath, 174.

<sup>10</sup> "Concerning Christian Liberty," 125; and McGrath, 174.

<sup>11</sup> McGrath, 175.

speculation: the theologian is forced, perhaps against [their] will, to come to terms with the riddle of the crucified and hidden [God(dess)].<sup>12</sup>

Just as the cross is a crucial part of faith, so too is suffering. Both God(dess) and humans suffer for the same purpose: to bring believers to God(dess). Because suffering is key to the experience of faith, God(dess) is active in suffering both on the cross and in the suffering of believers.<sup>13</sup> Luther calls suffering a “precious treasure,” because he sees God(dess) hidden in suffering “working out the salvation of those whom [God(dess)] loves.”<sup>14</sup> Believers suffer “Anfechtung<sup>15</sup>: [God(dess)] assaults [a person] in order to break [them] down and thus to justify [them].”<sup>16</sup> Alister McGrath describes the state of Anfechtungen in the following way:

Luther’s understanding of the condition which [a person] must meet if [they are] to be justified can be defined in terms of self-abasement and crying out to [God(dess)] for grace. Once [a human] fulfils this condition, [God(dess)], in [God(dess)’s] righteousness, may be relied upon to be faithful to [God(dess)’s] promise of grace...<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 161.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 151.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 151.

<sup>15</sup> It is nearly impossible to define Anfechtung/en, to those who are unfamiliar with it. For Luther it is sometimes a substitute for temptation, trial or affliction. The best way I can describe it, would be to call it the development of a Lutheran gut. It’s partially an internal (sometimes bodily) impulse that brings us closer to God. But, it is also simultaneously an assault from the Devil or the struggle between God and evil that reminds us for the need for God. Anfechtung is what an individual experiences, Anfechtungen, the formal version of the word, is often used when God is the agent of Anfechtungen. [For additional information about Anfechtung/en, see: Scaer, David P., “The Concep of Anfechtung in Luther’s Thought,” Concordia Theological Quarterly, Volume 47, Number 1, January 1983.]

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 151. There are multiple sources of Anfechtungen for Luther, but because this essay is about justification and soteriology it is primarily concerned with Luther’s understanding of the cross and the ways that Anfechtungen applies to justification and soteriology. Luther’s connection of Anfechtungen with the devil is connected to the temptation to sin that is continually in an individual’s life (LW 51:179-180). However, since justification allows us to “sin boldly,” I am choosing not to address the type of Anfechtungen that tempts people to sin.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 107.

Through grace (solo gratia), suffering and the Word of God(dess), the believer finds faith and “by the pledge of [their] faith in Christ, the believer becomes free from all sin, fearless of death, safe from hell, and endowed with the eternal righteousness, life, and salvation of [their] Husband Christ.”<sup>18</sup> This is true justification and liberation, by grace, through faith that ends all suffering.

### *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer views humans in a fallen world where sin and shame break community with God(dess). The Holy Spirit, who brings Christ to the individual, overcomes this brokenness. Christ takes our punishment, which undoes<sup>19</sup> our sin, and brings the individual into a position to have union with God(dess).<sup>20</sup> The relationship between the individual and other humans also follows this same process, for unity with other people is not possible without God(dess). Unity with the other comes from the unity of the Spirit, for it is only in Christ that we can completely love the other. All of this is possible through faith in combination with God(dess)’s will.

Bonhoeffer takes Luther’s idea of justification by faith one step further. Like Luther, the cross is central to Bonhoeffer’s understanding of justification, however Bonhoeffer adds a communal component to justification:

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<sup>18</sup> “Concerning Christian Liberty,” 125.

<sup>19</sup> Because Christ’s actions occurred in the past, sin is has already been justified. This is explained more in depth in [Christ the Center](#).

<sup>20</sup> This is similar to Luther’s concept of marriage with God(dess), but it has more to do with returning to the state of nakedness with God(dess) that existed before the fall and can be found again when we are united with Christ and shame is conquered.

All are in [God(dess)] and yet each remains distinct from [God(dess)]. All are united with each other, and yet distinct. Each possesses [God(dess)] totally and by themselves in the grace-filled dual solitude of seeing truth and serving love, and yet never is solitary because they always live only within the church-community. But we shall see not-only [God(dess)] but also [God(dess)'s] church-community. We shall no longer merely believe in its love and faith, but see it.<sup>21</sup>

Because we are free for and free from others<sup>22</sup> we are free to have union with whomever we choose. The rub is that we will be judged by God(dess) based on our connections. Bonhoeffer writes:

[God(dess)'s] judgment and grace apply to persons. This means that judgment and grace apply to all individual persons within the church-community-to the plurality of spirit as described above-to marriages and friendship that have become part of the *sanctorum communio*, and finally to the unity of these, the collective person of the church-community, the unity of spirit.<sup>23</sup>

This multi-level judgment allows humans to be both condemned and accepted by God(dess): “[God(dess)] can condemn a collective person and at the same time accept individuals who are part of it, and vice versa, is an idea that is as necessary as it is incomprehensible.”<sup>24</sup>

The communal component of Bonhoeffer’s vision of justification means that humans can and should take upon themselves the sins of the other. This is the role of the church community, for it is in the church community that “we see the love that

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<sup>21</sup> *Sanctorum Communio*, 289.

<sup>22</sup> This idea of freedom is also articulated by Luther in “Concerning Christian Liberty,” 115.

<sup>23</sup> *Sanctorum Communio*, 287.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 286. Bonhoeffer cautions that this should neither confirm nor deny the idea of universality, because God(dess)’s judgment is incomprehensible.

voluntarily seeks to submit itself to [God(dess)'s] wrath on behalf of the other members of the community, which wishes [God(dess)'s] wrath for itself in order that they may have community with [God(dess)], which takes their place, as Christ took our place.”<sup>25</sup> This means that a member of the church-community should not judge other members in the community, but instead seek to allow the other to put God(dess) at the center, just as Christ brings God(dess) to our center.

Through the grace of God(dess), in our faith we are saved by God(dess) both individually and in relationship to the communities we are bound to. So, our faith gives us freedom (free for and free from other people), calls us into right relation, and union, not only with God(dess), but also with our neighbor as a part of the sanctorum communio (community of saints).<sup>26</sup>

*Darlene Audus*

When I think of justification by faith, I think of my grandmother, Darlene Audus. Darlene is a child of The Great Depression who believes that every person has the ability to do good things in the world. When Darlene goes to rummage sales she buys things she will never use. In fact, she rarely buys anything for herself at all. With 6 children, 12 grandchildren, and 7 great grandchildren, Darlene has plenty of people to buy for. Darlene has two rooms in her house that are mainly used for storage of all the things that people might be able to use someday. Sometimes, Darlene will let us look around

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 184.

<sup>26</sup> Lutherans believe that all people are simultaneously sinners and saints. So, here the term “community of saints” refers both to the approved saints who are our ancestors in faith and every faithful since the beginning of the world.

and see if there is anything that we need. Other times, she will put things in special places that will be given to us someday as a gift.

Darlene is the happiest person I know, even though she has lived most of her life doing things for other people. She is also deeply saddened when other people are suffering. She does everything in her power to help people get the things that they need. One time, when I was in a car accident and I was in the hospital, Darlene drove over 200 miles to sit next to my bedside. She told me it was worth it, because even though I slept the whole day, I knew she was there. It was not enough for Darlene to hear that I was okay; she wanted to see it for herself.

But the thing I will always remember about Darlene is how she feeds people. Darlene cooks food all day and then feeds more than a dozen of her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. The entire meal, Darlene will serve people and (if she can get away with it) she will never sit down and eat. The older folks try to get Darlene to sit down and enjoy the meal that she has cooked, but she always refuses or sits down for a couple of seconds and then hops up to get something for someone. The older folks do not know why she does not sit down, but I know the secret. Darlene does not sit down at the dining room table and eat because she is too busy eating the food that the kids at the kid's table do not want to eat. The parents say to their kids: "you better eat all of those peas, or you won't get any dessert." And, "did you finish all your food yet?" Then, when the parents are not looking Darlene will eat their peas, and bring the kids dessert. For those children, eating peas is the most unimaginable suffering they

can think of. Darlene cannot see any reason not to relieve the suffering of others, especially when it involves doing something she loves in a way that nourishes her body.

### *How My Understanding of Salvation/Justification is Shaped by my Lutheran Heritage*

My understanding of justification by faith is a combination of the ideas presented by Luther, Bonhoeffer and Darlene. From Luther, I have learned that the Word and the cross are crucial to faith. It is through the Word that I first discovered that God(dess) loves and justifies me.

However, because I learned from Darlene that suffering is something that should be avoided; I had a hard time accepting that suffering for the sake of God(dess) or by God(dess), is ideal or necessary. It did not make sense to me that God(dess) would want to send God(dess)'s Son to suffer for me or that God(dess) would want me to suffer so that I could have faith. Luther's description of Anfechtungen seems too much like an abusive father that "assaults" people and "breaks them down" for their own good. While this description of God(dess) reminds me of my earthly father, I do not think it is ethical to describe God(dess) in this manner. What message does it send to a woman in an abusive relationship if this is our example of how faith is developed in a loving relationship? How can I, as the victim of an abusive alcoholic father, love a God(dess) who treats me the same way? What can I say about the Christians who threw holy water on me, sang hymns when I was around and tried to beat the gay demons out of me, so that I could be saved? My experience and deepest convictions will not let me believe that God(dess) assaults me for my own good.

While I do not think God(dess) wants me to suffer in order to have faith, I do believe that God(dess) used suffering for my justification.<sup>27</sup> God(dess) loved humanity so much that God(dess) became human and suffered with and for humankind and me so that humankind and I are and will be resurrected with God(dess) into eternal life. Because I have been justified, I can “sin boldly.” This does not mean that I want to sin, or that I choose to sin.<sup>28</sup> Rather, it means that my sin is forgiven, or undone, even before I confess them, because of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. However, I am an active sinner, because I am given the power to “sin boldly” with the promise that I am and will be justified.

However, I cannot stop with my own justification. I am compelled both by Bonhoeffer and by Darlene to also long deeply for the justification of others. Because I can rest assured in my salvation, I am free to speak truth to power and strive to diminish, deflect and eliminate the suffering of others. This should be done with caution and care not to diminish the agency of other people with attention to the particular ways that God(dess) is calling us to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly by eating peas so others may enjoy dessert.

I am justified, liberated and made free (free for and free from) not because of my suffering, but through the suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross. My faith is the belief that God(dess)’s grace is the agent of this justification. And, my response to justification

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<sup>27</sup> However, if God(dess) had asked my opinion, I would have encouraged God(dess) to seek other means.

<sup>28</sup> The extraordinary Rev. Steve Sabin of Christ Church Lutheran where I was an intern would add here that God(dess) forgives us all our sins, even the sins we do that we knew were sinful and even if we enjoyed it.

is to “sin boldly” and discern the ways God(dess) is calling me to be a part of the saving work that God(dess) is doing until my justification extends beyond myself to all of creation.

### Queering Lutheran Understandings of Salvation

Just as I am shaped and formed by my Lutheran heritage, I am also shaped and formed by my status as a transgender lesbian feminist. In this section, I will look at the understanding of salvation as presented in liberation, lesbian feminist liberation and queer theology.

#### *Liberation Theology*

Liberation theology purports that God(dess) is on the side of the suffering, as depicted in the Exodus story and the suffering of Christ on the cross. It is difficult to list common beliefs of liberation theology, because the understanding of who is suffering changes based on what population is writing the theology (South American, American Indian, Asian, Black, Womanist, Gay, Lesbian, Queer, etc.). I have drawn on John Allen and Peter Phan for my conception of Liberation Theology.

After studying nine distinguished liberation theologies, John Allen found four common ideas that are critical to the movement: 1) the “preferential option for the poor:”<sup>29</sup> the church removes its alliance from affluent social structures and realigns with the poor who demand justice; 2) “institutional violence:”<sup>30</sup> acknowledging that the

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<sup>29</sup> John L. Allen Jr., “Key principles of liberation theology.” National Catholic Reporter, June 2, 2000. InfoTrac Expanded Academic ASAP.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

current social arrangements evoke violence on millions through oppression and forced poverty; 3) “structural sin:”<sup>31</sup> “Structural sin” is the belief that communal sin is important and that the church has an obligation to act against communal sins; and 4) “orthopraxis:”<sup>32</sup> counteracts orthodoxy or right belief with the idea that right action is more important.<sup>33</sup> Allen also points out that liberation theologians understand that they must work with social structures in order to achieve justice and that they act in pastoral dimensions (because they have an obligation to share and counsel to others).

Unlike Allen, Peter Phan does not believe that liberation theologies should be lumped together and assessed. Phan notes that while diversities are important, liberation theologians “are fellow travelers on a common journey, albeit through different routes to the same destination.”<sup>34</sup> Phan believes that liberation theology has an influential methodology that seeks the root cause of oppression and to end it through interreligious dialogue, storytelling, and a continual hermeneutical circle. Then, in hermeneutics liberation theologians can transform the “unjust word” and take an “advocacy stance.”<sup>35</sup> Stated simply, liberation theologians seek to end the false universalism of the church of the majority.

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> “Orthopraxis” means right action. It is an alternate to “orthodoxy,” or right theory, doctrine or practice. Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Peter C Phan, , “Method in Liberation Theology,” Theological Studies, electronically retrieved, InfoTrac: Expanded Academic ASAP.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. With the use of the terms of Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza.

While Phan and Allen disagree about how the different liberation theology movements work together, they both argue that the church has a responsibility to not only interact with orthodoxy, but also to pay attention to its orthopraxis in the world as an extension of God(dess)'s saving activity in the world.

### *Lesbian Feminist Liberation Theology*

Lesbian feminist liberation theology, according to Mary Solberg, is a call to allow experience, (strong) objectivity, and accountability for/from all people to change the myth of the collective experience.<sup>36</sup>

Much like other liberation theologies, lesbian feminist liberation theology understands the importance of praxis. Carter Heyward argues that because we are all a part of One Body an important component to being human is praxis.<sup>37</sup> Expanding on this, Heyward writes, "Our question is not when or how God will act to save women, men, and the earth itself, but rather when and how we will act."<sup>38</sup> Heyward values praxis because the body of Christ, the church and Christians are the embodiment of Christ alive and acting in the world. However, it is important to remember that praxis also comes with responsibility. Solberg extends the realm of the world's orthopraxis to

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<sup>36</sup> Mary M. Solberg, Compelling Knowledge: A Feminist Proposal for an Epistemology of the Cross, State University of New York Press, 1997, 37-53.

<sup>37</sup> Carter Heyward, "Living for the Living" Speaking of Christ: A Lesbian Feminist Voice, ed. Ellen C. Davis, Pilgrim Press, 1989, 29.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 42.

both action(s) and non-action(s).<sup>39</sup> In this way the orthopraxis of the world is both shaped by what we have done and by what we have left undone.

Lesbian Feminist Liberation theologians propose that this can be done by reshaping the social science systems in the world including: economics, sex, gender, sexuality, cultural, class, race, ethnic, and abused. For this reason, Christ (both the historical and living body of Christ) is with the suffering.

#### *Lutheranizing Liberation and Lesbian Feminist Liberation Theology*

Lesbian feminist liberation theology is one lens for looking at the social systems in the world. But, I believe that liberation theology fails to represent the saving work of God(dess) for two reasons: 1) liberation theology does not account for the salvation of oppressors or the oppressed once they are liberated; and 2) the dualistic separation of the oppressed and oppressor is not an earthly reality, because we are all simultaneously oppressed and oppressors (saint and sinner).

Luther's work calls me to again look at the saving work of the historical Christ. Luther argued that we are all equally oppressed and all oppressors in our sin, because we are all equally condemned by the commandment, "thou should not covet."<sup>40</sup> In the equality of our sin, we are seen by God(dess) unmarked by the dividing lines of economics, sex, gender, sexuality, culture, class, race and ethnicity. This means that no

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<sup>39</sup> Solberg, 1-9, 50-53, 125-159.

<sup>40</sup> Martin Luther, Basic Luther: Four of His Fundamental Works, Templegate Publishers, Springfield, Il, 119.

one is actually queer. And, while we have the ability to work as God(dess)'s continuing salvation in the world, only the historical life, death and resurrection of Christ can act as the complete saving act of God(dess).<sup>41</sup>

### *Queer Theology*

Like liberation theologians, queer theologians identify with the saving work of God(dess) in the Exodus story and in the suffering of Christ on the Cross. However, queer theology envisions God(dess)'s historical saving actions through Christ as queer in two ways: 1) Christ's praxis was/is queer; and 2) Christ's sexuality was/is queer.

Christ's praxis is queer because it confronts the majority's heterosexist,<sup>42</sup> patriarchal and oppressive political structures. Robert Goss highlights the queer praxis of Christ, in his book *Jesus Acted Up*:

It was not [God(dess)'s] will that Jesus died to ransom those with sin. This was a Christian interpretation of the death of Jesus. Rather, the cross symbolized the violent and brutal end of Jesus in the context of his political praxis for [God(dess)'s] reign. Jesus was executed by the political infrastructure of Jewish Palestine as a political insurgent. The Jewish religious aristocracy and their Roman rulers perceived Jesus' message

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<sup>41</sup> This is because temporally it is Jesus life, death and resurrection that sets in motion my justification, which in turn enables me to strive for my neighbors health, wholeness and justification. While it is true that my participation in God(dess)'s saving actions in the world is one of the ways that Christ is alive and resurrected in the world through the body of Christ (the church/community of saints), with out the salvation and justification that I get from Jesus I am unable to get beyond my own needs to helping my neighbor.

<sup>42</sup> See Luke 7, Chapter 1 where Jesus cures a centurion's slave. The text says that it is a slave that is the most favored one, which probably meant it was the centurion's gay male lover. Jesus cures the man without ever seeing the centurion, without ever seeing the gay male lover and proclaims at the end that not even in Israel has Jesus found such faith.

and practice of [God(dess)'s] reign as a threat to the political order... His death embodied his own vision and commitment to practice [God(dess)'s] reign to the very end.<sup>43</sup>

According to Goss, Christ's queer praxis saves queer people from spiritual violence by illustrating: 1) that HIV/AIDS is not God(dess)'s punishment for gay people; and 2) that gay people are called to sexual intimacy as saved and fully embodied people.

Like Goss, Leslie Addison also recognizes the liberating power of the queer praxis of Christ:

[Jesus] was a transgressive, he was disruptive. He was killed in attempt to silence voices crying for change. Christ was resurrected, continues to be resurrected, by a [God(dess)] who is more powerful. He is a reminder to us that we can expect opposition, but that we can also count on the grace and dunamis<sup>44</sup> that we need to overcome it.<sup>45</sup>

Both Addison and Goss view the saving praxis of Christ as a call for queer individuals and communities to strive for orthopraxis, to use the historical Christ's saving praxis to perpetuate the unending saving orthopraxis of the resurrected body of Christ.

In addition to Christ's queer praxis, queer theologians also imagine Christ's sexuality is/was queer. According to Hayward, viewing Christ as a queer person is part of a universal longing to create a familiar God(dess). She further concludes that "it is not wrong to create theological and Christological images of ourselves. In fact, it is vital

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<sup>43</sup> Goss, 75-76.

<sup>44</sup> Dunamis is Greek term, meaning "power."

<sup>45</sup> Addison, Leslie Katherine, Passionate In-Queeries: Towards a Lesbian/Bisexual/Gay/Transgender Christology, (PSR Thesis) 1996, 74.

to our well-being and to our taking responsibility for what we are doing in the name(s) of God(dess).”<sup>46</sup> Envisioning a queer Christ, is a tool that helps queer Christians see that God(dess) is with them in their suffering and that Christ identifies with the sexually oppressed. For, as Goss writes:

If the Christ is not queer, then the incarnation has no meaning for our sexuality. It is the particularity of Jesus the Christ, his particular identification with the sexually oppressed, that enables us to understand Christ as black, queer, female, Asian, African, a South American peasant, Jewish, a transsexual, and so forth. It is the scandal of particularity that is the message of Easter, the particular context of struggle where [God(dess)’s] solidarity is practiced. [God(dess)] and the struggle for sexual justice are practical correlation in a queer Christology.<sup>47</sup>

Goss imagines that Christ is queer, not only for queer people, but also for heterosexuals. If a straight person can imagine that Christ is queer, their likelihood of maintaining and promoting heterosexism will decrease.

One tool for envisioning Christ as queer exists in the Gospel of Matthew. Christ’s claim: “as you have done it to the least of these, you have done it to me” presents the easiest way to imagine Christ as queer. In our society, heterosexism purports that queer people are “the least of these.” In light of the Matthew text, it could be said that denying queer people rights, denying their place in the priesthood of all believers, beating them, spiritually abusing them, creating special rules and rituals for them, and

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<sup>46</sup> Hayward, 19.

<sup>47</sup> Goss, 85.

failing to seek justice for queer people is not only done to queer people, but it is also done to Christ.

### *A Queer Lutheran Understanding of Salvation*

God(dess) loved humanity so much that God(dess) became human and suffered with and for humankind so that humankind is and will be resurrected with God(dess) into eternal life. Because I have been justified, by grace through faith, I can “sin boldly.” This does not mean that I want to sin, or that I choose to sin. Rather, it means that my sins are forgiven, or undone, even before I confess them, because of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. However, I am an active sinner, because I am given the power to “sin boldly” with the promise that I am and will be justified. Consequently, I am free to discern the ways God(dess) is calling me to participate in the saving work that God(dess) is doing, until my justification extends beyond myself to all of creation. The queer Christ’s physical suffering on the cross liberates us/me from our/my suffering as we act as both the oppressed and oppressors. And, though we are simultaneously saints and sinners, Christ’s queer praxis calls us all to orthopraxis that seeks to end the suffering of all beings in the cosmos.

### **Responsive and Responsible Practical Theology of Emergency**

Formal systematic understandings of faith shape the life, ministry and boundaries of pastors and are helpful in congregations and academic institutions, but they are less helpful and accessible to the typical LGBTQ homeless individual living in

emergent<sup>48</sup> circumstances. Street theology must be much more creative and struggle with the messy reality of unfair, unjust constant suffering that thrives in the deep, deep darkness. Acknowledging my privilege to ponder and postulate God(dess)'s macrovision, I must also admit that no matter how progressive and liberating it may be, it is not always appropriate when I work with/for the homeless.

No matter how important any theology or research may be, it is unlikely to be helpful to those who live in a constant state of emergency. Unless this paper and ink becomes edible, it will feed no one. Nor will it help anyone recover from addiction, cure mental health issues, end poverty, greed or homelessness. Falling short of the true justice that God(dess) promises, I yearn for a practical theology that understands the emergent lives of the vulnerable individuals that this thesis will spend most of its time talking about.

My journey towards a responsive and responsible practical theology of emergency is rooted in Thomas Groome's Shared Faith. Similar to the skill share method used in disability communities, Groome's method is ideal because it does not require "typical" bodies or cognitive functioning. Rather, it encourages creative imagination and relies on the belief that God wills "fullness of life for all... on every level of human existence: personal, interpersonal and sociopolitical."<sup>49</sup> Fullness of life, when experienced as a spectrum, is something that all people can work towards. Groome's

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<sup>48</sup> I use the term emergent to describe vulnerable individuals who are struggling to secure their food, shelter and safety on a regular basis.

<sup>49</sup> Groome, Thomas H., Sharing Faith: A Comprehensive Approach to Religious Education and Pastor Ministry: The Way of Shared Praxis, 1991, 13.

method not only allows for this spectrum, but also creates a process and environment in which:

people are actively engaged as participating subjects in events and communities marked by relationships of inclusion and mutuality, where they are enabled to speak their own word in dialogue with others, to deal critically and creatively with their own reality, to appropriate and see for themselves the truth in the faith handed on, and come to decision together as responsible subjects of lived Christian faith.<sup>50</sup>

Groome's ableist<sup>51</sup> assumptions that people communicate with speech and use of the word "see" when Groome means "understand," can easily be resolved by acknowledging the diverse ways individuals and communities communicate (i.e. sign language, writing, touch pad or automated voice).

Groome's three areas of focus (cognitive/mental, affective/relational and behavior/obediential) are not possible for all people; however by narrowing these ideas (to believing, trusting and doing) Groome makes them much more accessible. Despite these limitations, Groome's method allows individuals to overcome these potential barriers, because it enables communities to self-identify and choose their own praxis: "that right must be honored if people are to become subjects of their own faith history rather than objects for whom or to whom theology is done by specialists."<sup>52</sup>

### *Focusing Activity*

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<sup>50</sup> Groome, Sharing Faith, 15.

<sup>51</sup> Ableism is a way of thinking that treats non-disabled individuals as the standard of "normal" living. I do not intend this critique to be a judgment of theologians past writings. Rather, I hope it will encourage more inclusive writing in the future work of pastoral and practical theologians.

<sup>52</sup> Groome, Thomas H., "Theology on Our Feet," Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology, Eds. Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling, 1987, 60.

Keeping the limitations of the method in mind, I shall begin by narrowing the focus of this paper. While this section outlines a pastoral and practical theology in emergency, it will barely scratch the surface of the topic. A theologian could spend her whole life writing about the many types of emergencies (natural disasters, wars, lack of health care, poverty, etc), and still not cover them with any depth. Even limiting the topic to pastoral and practical theology with the homeless would be a daunting task in the face of global poverty. I am focusing on the chronically “mentally ill” homeless and formerly homeless individuals that I have worked with at Welcome.

Before we begin looking at this issue in depth, it should be noted that Bonnie Miller-McLemore argues strongly that pastoral care, when limited to those in crisis, “ignores the critical task of interpreting modern culture and articulating a social ethic relevant to public problems.”<sup>53</sup> While Miller-McLemore makes an important point, I am not theologizing in a vacuum. My thoughts here should be read in conjunction with the many other writings about pastoral and practical theology. So dear reader, please remember that I am neither seeking to glorify suffering, illness or poverty, nor to limit the scope of practical or pastoral theology. Instead, my purpose is to address a gap in pastoral and practical theology, by arguing how and why practical and pastoral theology can and must address the needs of those diagnosed with chronic and disabling “mental illness.”<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Miller-McLemore, Bonnie J., “Pastoral Theology as Public Theology: Revolutions in the ‘Forth Area,’” Pastoral Care and Counseling: Redefining the Paradigms, Ed. By Nancy J. Ramsey, 2004, 55.

<sup>54</sup> I use quotes here to signify my protest to the term “mentally ill.” It is a pejorative term that implies someone is sick and in need of healing. While this is sometimes the case, other times I have noticed that those labeled “mentally ill” often make more sense than those diagnosing them.

## Movement 1: Naming/Expressing Present Praxis

### *The Community:*

I have already gone into great detail about Welcome's guests. Whether they live outside or are marginally housed, these individuals regularly live in a state of emergency each month, week or day. Some individuals with severe disabilities and "mental illness" experience each moment of their life as an emergency.

Some of the constant emergent physical needs these individuals must attend to include: constantly looking for food shelter, safety; a place to go to the bathroom; and dealing with medical emergencies. Simultaneously, these individuals must also address emergent emotional needs including: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD); anxiety and depression; schizophrenia; paranoia; and harassment from police, service providers and the general public. As if it were not enough, these individuals also have to deal with missionaries and youth groups who come to their neighborhood to "save" them. The message they hear regularly, is that their homelessness, addiction and disabilities are a result of their sinfulness and if they would have more faith God(dess) would heal them and bring them prosperity.

### *The Pastor:*

As their pastor, I have not only observed the political, personal and communal aspects of homelessness, but I have also embodied the experience by living on the streets for a week at a time on ten occasions. Sleeping on the streets for a week is certainly nothing near the isolation, desperation and emergent reality the homeless live with daily.

Closer to this reality, is my memory of being homelessness that I have from when I was six and my mother fled my abusive and alcoholic father. I also know what it feels like to live with disabilities from my experience living on the autistic spectrum and being diagnosed with sensory overload (ADHD).

However, the experiences of my street retreat, my childhood memories of homelessness and experience as a highly functioning disabled adult, are very minor compared to the experiences of the chronically homeless and marginally housed individuals that I work with. The very fact that I am getting paid to work with the chronically “mentally ill,” who come to me out of their emergent need, should highlight an important difference in our power and privilege. Other obvious differences in education, authority and my role as their pastor also separate me from those I minister with/for/to.

*The Theology:*

Pastoral and practical theology seeks to provide ways for all people:

to think theologically for themselves and for each other. That is why it is essential for pastoral ministers in the habitus of theologia. They themselves must know how to do theology on their feet if they are to sponsor their people in how to think theologically toward ‘a sapiential (existential, personal) and praxis-oriented understanding’ of their lives in faith.<sup>55</sup>

While an imperfect metaphor, because of its assumptions about the bodily realities of pastors, Groome’s description of pastors doing “theology on their feet” is a

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<sup>55</sup> Groome, “Theology on Our Feet,” 60.

useful one. I would take this metaphor one step further and argue that pastors working in emergent situations or with people in crisis do theology on their toes. Like a boxer who dances around the ring on their toes, poised to act and react, a pastor in emergency situations or working with individuals in crisis must maintain a habitus that is: non-judgmental; non-reactive; calm; patient; gospel centered; and focused on harm reduction.

Pastoral theology has been called the “branch or field of theological knowledge and inquiry that brings the shepherding perspective to bear upon all the operations and functions of the church and the minister, and then draws conclusions of a theological order from reflection on these observations.”<sup>56</sup> Despite this bold statement, little if anything has been written about pastoral theology for those living in emergency or with chronic “mental illness.”

Miller-McLemore not only argues that “pastoral theology must give public voice to those least heard,” but also that it “must challenge public ideals and structures, listen to those publicly silenced, and reconstruct religious beliefs and practices that perpetuate major social problems, such as racism, sexism, and economic exploitation.”<sup>57</sup> From these descriptions, it is easy to deduct that pastoral theology should address the needs of those experiencing emergency, particularly those experiencing chronic “mental illness” who are not only the “least heard” in our society, but also in our theology.

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<sup>56</sup> Hiltner, Seward, Preface to Pastoral Theology: The Ministry and Theory of Shepherding, 1958, 20.

<sup>57</sup> Miller-McLemore, “Pastoral Theology as Public Theology,” 57.

## Movement 2: Critical Reflection on Present Action:

Now that I have outlined the current situation, we can move to the second movement where we will answer two important questions: 1) If we continue our current practice, what will our future look like?; and 2) What are the biases around the issue that need to be unpacked?

### *Maintaining the Status Quo:*

Before I begin addressing the first question, I want to remind you that this is an act of creative imagination. There is no right or wrong answer; it is my informed act of imagination about what would happen if current practices continued. I imagine that if our current practices continue, the chronically “mentally ill” will continue dying from overdose, suicide, lack of medical care, neglect, abuse and violence in the poverty districts where they live on the sidewalks or in single room occupancy (SRO) hotels. The loudest and most proactive words about God(dess) they hear will be telling them that they are not only going to hell, but that the hell they currently experience is their punishment from God(dess) for their sin.

I, their pastor, would continue to feel isolated from my colleagues and from local faith communities who at best fail to acknowledge the presence of disabilities of any kind and at worst say hateful and oppressive things about those experiencing poverty, “mental illness,” addiction and other issues faced regularly by those living in emergency. My continuing education events will continue to assume that the people I minister to are: middle class, care about matters of the larger church, have the time and money to

participate in church studies, to travel to synodical and churchwide gatherings and ought to be told to give more stewardship money to the synod.

The Lutheran church<sup>58</sup> will continue to train pastors “to do theology in their heads, [who] are not prepared to do it on their feet.”<sup>59</sup> Once rostered, the Lutheran church will then send pastors only to the communities that can afford to pay a pastor’s salary and the upkeep on their church building. The exception to this rule is congregations that will significantly enhance the diversity of the Lutheran church. However, the church only means racial diversity. As a result, the Lutheran church will grow more and more hopelessly out of touch with the day-to-day lives of its members, achieving the exact opposite of the goal of pastoral and practical theology. And subsequently, the Lutheran church will find herself only able to address issues of import to the middle class and will only talk about global poverty and disease. Ultimately, the Middle Class mainline church will die as the chasm between rich and poor grows wider and the middle class slowly disappears from society.

#### Biases:

Moving now to the second question, I will switch from creative imagination to critique. Practical theology has been called “the embodiment of religious belief in the day-to-day lives of individuals and communities.”<sup>60</sup> But whose day-to-day lives are practical theologians talking about? Originally writing only about the lives of straight,

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<sup>58</sup> Being a Lutheran, my imagination of the future is specifically about the Lutheran church. Others will have imaginations based on their own context.

<sup>59</sup> Groome, “Theology on Our Feet,” 57.

<sup>60</sup> Miller-McLemore, Bonnie J., “Practical Theology,” *Encyclopedia of Religion in America*, eds. Charles Lippy and Petter Williams, (forthcoming Congressional Quarterly Press), 2010.

white, employed men with advanced degrees, as time has progressed practical theologians have become more aware of the implications of age, race, sex and class. David Tracy, one of the most progressive practical theologians when it comes to diversity, in the same sentence that he proclaims that theology is open to “all,” limits it to “all intelligent, rational, and responsible persons.”<sup>61</sup> Unfortunately, those living with chronic mental illness exist outside of the vision of practical theology. They, like too many others in our society have found that, “in the modern world, on many issues, theology has ‘nothing special to say.’”<sup>62</sup>

Pastoral theology, because it relies heavily on psychology as a framework,<sup>63</sup> is also unable to provide care for all. Seward Hiltner writes that “if this person is impeded from receiving the saving truth of the gospel by a marriage problem or a neurosis, then communicating the gospel must proceed through some kind of dealing with those areas before it can become genuine.”<sup>64</sup> It is sometimes the case that individuals are able to address important issues, psychological problems and addiction issues by pulling up their bootstraps. It is also sometimes the case that after resolving these issues that people experience a more “genuine,” intimate, mature faith. Others, particularly those who experience chronic “mental illness,”<sup>65</sup> may not be able to resolve their “neurosis”

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<sup>61</sup> Tracy, David, “The Foundations of Practical Theology,” Practical Theology: The Emerging Field in Church and World, 1983, 67.

<sup>62</sup> Pattison, Stephen, “Public Theology: A Polemical Epilogue,” Political Theology, 2, 2000, 61.

<sup>63</sup> Miller-McLemore, “Pastoral Theology as Public Theology,” 52.

<sup>64</sup> Hiltner, Seward, Preface to Pastoral Theology: The Ministry and Theory of Shepherding, 1958, 56.

<sup>65</sup> Chronic mental illness is a diagnosis defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and includes a diagnosis of one or more diagnosis of disorders that range from attention deficit and disruptive behavior disorders (ADD/ADHD), eating disorders, personality disorders and schizophrenia.

within their lifetime. Does this mean that they can never have genuine experience of the gospel?

If we agree with Hiltner, how many of the 54 million people (or 19% of the population in the United States) who are living with disabilities would we say are unable to ever experience the gospel? Perhaps, only the 16 million who have difficulty with cognitive, mental or emotional functioning?<sup>66</sup> Those who have been declared chronically “mentally ill,” those who disagree with their psychological diagnosis and individuals who experience psychological criteria (particularly the guidelines in the DSM) to be biased are likely to find most pastoral theology to be discriminatory, condescending or completely irrelevant to their lives.

Of course, psychology can provide *some* useful and life changing insights for individuals, relationships and communities. But, the fact that hearing the voice of God(dess) is considered a psychological disorder should provide at least one major reason why pastoral theologians must be free to think, write and act beyond the framework of psychology.

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<sup>66</sup> Fox, Maggie, “More than 54 Million Disabled in U.S. Census Says,” Reuters, December 18, 2008 [Electronically retrieved 12/13/2009: <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE4BH6WY20081219>].

### Movement 3: Making Accessible the Christian Story and Vision:

Now that we have a better understanding of the issue and the cost of remaining in the status quo, I shall put aside our present day situation for a moment in order to take a brief look at the promises and possibilities in scripture. While there are hundreds of texts that could be useful about compassion, healing and leaders coming from unexpected places, backgrounds and lifestyles, I will focus on Jeremiah, Jesus and Paul.

#### *Jeremiah:*

Our first story is about Jeremiah. Like all the characters we will examine, Jeremiah was required to do a lot of countercultural things in order to faithfully share God's message to God's people. Jeremiah's unusual actions include: inviting the Rechabites to drink wine in disobedience of their ancestor's command (Jeremiah 35:13-16); burying a linen belt so it will get ruined (13); buying a clay jar, only to smash it in front of elders and priests (19); and making a yoke from wood and leather and wearing it around his neck (27-28). As a result of his strange behavior, Jeremiah is: beaten and put into the stocks by a priest who declares that he is a false prophet (20:1-4); imprisoned by the king (38:28); threatened with death (38:4); and was thrown into a cistern by officials (38:6).

#### *Jesus:*

Like Jeremiah, Jesus the subject of our second story was also countercultural. To truly understand Jesus' story, we must begin in Genesis with the story of the creation of

the world. Here, God(dess) is a divine separator<sup>67</sup> who separates land from water, people from animals and light from dark (Genesis 1-2:4). In order to separate the things of heaven from the things of humans, God(dess) puts a dome in the sky to protect the earth from the water and (good and evil) spirits (1:6-8).<sup>68</sup> This dome had windows in it, that were opened (7:11) and closed (8:2) during the flood in the Noah story.

So, when the Gospel of Mark begins with Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River (Mark 1:9), and the heavens rip into two and a spirit flies down into Jesus (1:10) it leaves biblically minded readers/listeners and the characters of Mark's story to discern whether Jesus was just infected by the spirit of God(dess) or a demon. Adding to the confusion in the story, is the fact that the demons know Jesus (1:34 and 5:15), while the faith leaders reject him. Jesus' disciples are not only unable to understand his teachings, but they are too afraid of Jesus to ask questions about them (9:32). The scribes determine that Jesus has a demon (3:22), but they along with the chief priests are too afraid to execute Jesus because of his ability to keep the crowd "spellbound" (11:18).

But it is not only the academics, priests and politicians that decide that Jesus is a demon, Mark also writes that Jesus' own mother and siblings believe that he is a demon (3:31-35). This rejection by his family causes Jesus to reject his earthly family and proclaim that "whoever does the will of [God(dess)] is my brother and sister and mother" (3:35).

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<sup>67</sup> God(dess)'s actions in this creation story are eerily reminiscent of the sorting and separating that is often diagnosed as obsessive compulsive disorder or as an indicator of autism.

<sup>68</sup> The pastor in me cannot help but note that these are the same elements we use in baptism.

*Paul:*

Despite being rejected by his family, society and the religious leaders of his day, Jesus' life, death and resurrection ensures us that no one need ever experience that same rejection from God(dess). Paul writes in Romans (8:38): "I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of [God(dess) ] in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Not only does Paul argue that nothing can separate us from God(dess), but that in God(dess) the classifications that we used to separate ourselves from each other will disappear: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

#### Movement 4: Dialogue Between the Christian Story and the Participant's Stories and Visions

Now, let us look at some of the ways the stories about Jeremiah, Jesus and Paul affirm and question the issues we are focusing on. Jeremiah, of course, is not the only prophet whose unusual and counter cultural behaviors are recorded in scripture. Isaiah walked naked and barefoot for three years (Isaiah 20) and was told ""Leave the way! Get off the path! Let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel!" (30:11). Ezekiel lay on his side for 390 days and only ate measured food (Ezekiel 4).

I chose to highlight Jeremiah's story because one of my chronically "mentally ill" guests came into my office one day and declared that he was celebrating his "Jeremiah birthday." When I asked him what that was, he told me that he had been screaming in

the streets for 23 years. Dominic, is diagnosed as “mentally ill,” because he hears the voice of God(dess). His full time job is ministering to the world what God(dess) is telling him; because he is one of the few people who follow Jesus’ advice to sell all earthly possessions to follow God(dess), consequently he lives without a home.

Jeremiah’s story spoke to Dominic and his day-to-day experience. As his pastor, I was able to remind Dominic that after 23 years Jeremiah stopped screaming, and perhaps this could be an opportunity for Dominic to begin to take care of some of his own personal needs and improve his quality of life. Jeremiah’s story can serve as a reminder to pastoral and practical theologians that some of our most profound and transformative scriptural stories come from individuals whose day-to-day lives are nothing like the middle-class families that contemporary theologians are focusing on.

Like Jeremiah, Jesus’ story also pushes the envelope. Lewis Mudge imagines that “to have joined the early Jesus community must have meant experiencing an upheaval in one’s symbolic world, especially where issues of ultimate and penultimate power were concerned.”<sup>69</sup> Because of Mark’s wonderful storytelling and the open question of whether or not Jesus is a demon (what the “mentally ill” of his time would have been called), it is easy to imagine that Jesus would likely be diagnosed as “mentally ill” by contemporary psychologists. If that is the case, then Hiltner’s comment about people resolving their “neurosis” before they can have a genuine understanding of the gospel, makes him sound an awful lot like the Pharisees.

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<sup>69</sup> Mudge, Lewis S., “Toward an Ecclesial Hermeneutic,” Formation and Reflection: The Promise of Practical Theology, Eds. Lewis S. Mudge and James N. Poling, 1987, 112.

I have intentionally told Jesus' story in a way that makes it relatable to the chronically "mentally ill," particularly those who have runaway or been thrown away by families who thought they were diseased or sinful. Paul's words about Jesus add words of comfort that nothing can ever separate us from God(dess)'s love. Perhaps in our current context we would say: Nothing, neither death nor life, disability nor diagnoses, nor things present or things to come, no matter what any politician, pastor or police officer ever tells you, will ever separate you from the love of God(dess) in Christ Jesus.

Beyond this consolation, Paul also shows how the God(dess) who is obsessed with separating things in creation, works through Jesus to get rid of the separations that divide people. These words can serve as a counter to the ableist ideas about what "normal" bodies, minds and psychologies ought to look like. If it is true, as Paul writes, that we are "all one in Christ Jesus" then it should be impossible to have a theology that excludes people based on cognitive functioning.

#### Movement 5: Decision/Response for Lived Christian Faith:

People living with disabilities are not only the largest marginalized minority group in the United States, but also the poorest (with a 70% unemployment rate).<sup>70</sup> This is certainly a group that ought to fall into Miller-McLemore's vision of the "least" that pastors should not only speak on behalf of, but that we "must challenge public

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<sup>70</sup> De Mian, Heather, "Ableism, Accessibility and Inclusion," SOA Watch [Electronically retrieved 12/13/2009: <http://www.soaw.org/article.php?id=607>].

ideals and structures, listen to those publicly silenced, and reconstruct religious beliefs” to counter ableist assumption.

If pastoral care and theology is to be of any use to the world or the day-to-day lives of individuals, as Groome says, “Christian faith must be nurtured in and arise from the ‘marrow bone’ of people, that we cannot settle for engaging ‘the mind alone’ of our co-learners.”<sup>71</sup> While the voice of [God(dess)] heard or experienced by the “mentally ill,” may not be anything like what we would hope the voice of God(dess) would say. Yet, listening for the voice of God(dess) and for what God(dess) is calling us to be and do in the world is the day-to-day task of the Christian. The example of “mentally ill” individuals who not only take their faith and praxis seriously, but who do so even though they are rejected by society should be an example for others to follow.

Pastoral and practical theology must provide opportunities for individuals living in emergency to share their identity, experiences and theories. Yearning for fullness of life for all people, we must become problem solvers and be willing to share skills so that those living in emergency can find lasting ways to address their emergent issues. And most important of all, we must not erase and ignore the stories and experiences of people living in emergency or chronic “mental illness” from our sermons, bible studies, papers and books. Expanding our assumptions so that our theologies speak to more diverse religious experiences costs us nothing. Doing nothing, risks that we could be ignoring the voices of the prophets God(dess) has sent to us.

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<sup>71</sup> Groome, Sharing Faith, 7.

## Chapter 2: The Pastoral Response to the LGBTQ Homeless in San Francisco from 1964-1970

*Long ago the church decided the world was evil and dirty, so it turned its face from reality and looked to Heaven. And then it awoke one day to discover the world had gone by; and not only that, but the world had also reached the point where, like it or not, it was painfully affecting the church. We must not let the world go by nor turn our faces from it. We must deal with it as it is, when it is savagely beautiful and joyful; and when it is painful, evil and dirty.*

– Rev. A. Cecil Williams at a meeting of the Society for Individual Rights<sup>72</sup>

### The Rise and Call of the Central City Pastors<sup>73</sup>

As the Baby Boomers became teenagers, the National Council of Churches (NCC) [which in the early 1960's included United Church of Christ (UCC), Methodists, Presbyterians, American Baptist and the Lutheran Church in America (LCA)] knew that if they were unable to successfully engage youth, they would die. The Rev. Lewis "Lewie" Durham, who was involved with the National Youth Organization, helped the NCC create a young adult project based in Tennessee that polled young hitchhikers across the

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<sup>72</sup> Williams, Cecil, "On Getting and Using Power" Vector, 1165, 1964, p10 [Courtesy of the GLBT Historical Society (GLBTHS)].

<sup>73</sup> The term "Central City Pastors" refers to the Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian and Episcopal pastors who worked together politically for the rights of residents in San Francisco's Tenderloin and South of Market (SOMA) districts. Because the Glide Foundation had the most staff and financial resources dedicated to organizing these pastors, much of their work centered around the foundation and its staff.

country to see where they were headed.<sup>74</sup> Most of the youth answered “San Francisco.” In 1961, the NCC decided to fund a youth ministry position in San Francisco at Glide Memorial, a Methodist church and the Rev. Robert “Ted” McIlvenna took the position.

Arriving five years before the height of Haight Ashbury and the Summer of Love, McIlvenna discovered that the youth living in the Tenderloin, surrounding Glide, were predominately gay and transsexual hustlers. The prevalence of gay youth, caused McIlvenna to reach out to the leaders of the Mattachine Society, the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB) and the Society for Individual Rights (SIR) and subsequently led to the formation of the Council on Religion and the Homosexual (CRH) in 1964.<sup>75</sup>

Unlike McIlvenna, the Rev. Charles “Chuck” Lewis accepted his appointment to become an Urban Specialist at the LCA’s North Beach Mission, because he was excited to become a missionary to young adults and gay men.<sup>76</sup> Lewis, along with the other Urban Specialists (Revs. Bill Grace a Presbyterian, Clay Caldwell of the UCC, and William “Bill” Black of the LCA) and the Rev. Robert “Bob” Crome (Assistant to Episcopal Bishop James Pike of the Diocese of California), joined McIlvenna to serve as the Clergy representatives on the CRH council.

CRH was thrust into the media spotlight in January of 1965, when a New Year’s event at California Hall to raise funds for CRH was raided by the Vice Squad. At the time, the typical gay man harassed by the police, arrested or threatened with “outing” “would

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<sup>74</sup> Interview of Lewis Durham by Paul Gabriel on July 18, 1998, Courtesy of GLBTHS.

<sup>75</sup> Meeker, Martin, “The Queerly Disadvantaged and the Making of San Francisco’s War on Poverty, 1964-1967,” *Pacific Historical Review* Vol. 81, No. 1, February 2012, pp. 21-59.

<sup>76</sup> Interview of Charles Lewis by Paul Gabriel on February 8, 1997, Courtesy of the GLBTHS.

have plead guilty to any charge the D.A. offered in an attempt to avoid publicity.”<sup>77</sup> The pastors, including several whose wives served tea to the police officers during the standoff,<sup>78</sup> were able to confront the police in a way the typical LGBTQ individual could not. The following day they organized a press conference and as news of the California Hall incident spread so did the number of CRHs across the country.

Shortly after, Durham<sup>79</sup> and McIlvenna began working with the Revs. Fred Bird and Edward “Ed” Hansen and lay leader Mark Forrester on the Central City Citizens Council (CCCC). On May 25, 1966, their work succeeded when the Central City (Tenderloin and South of Market Area) was designated an antipoverty district, making it the first white poverty district in San Francisco. The group primarily organized by pastors successfully argued that the residents were queerly disadvantaged,<sup>80</sup> facing similar discrimination, societal and familial struggles as racial minorities.<sup>81</sup>

Martin Meeker, in *The Queerly Disadvantaged and the Making of San Francisco’s War on Poverty, 1964-1967*, remarks on the use of the antipoverty funds:

Among the main projects executed were: the establishment of a Multi-Service Center, which was the clearinghouse for services and the administrative center for the target area; the funding of the Hospitality House in the Tenderloin, a 24-hour drop-in service center for runaways and street youth, which exists to this day; and the purchase of a mobile

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<sup>77</sup> Fitch, Frank, “Remember California Hall,” *Vector*, Feb. 1973, 35.

<sup>78</sup> Gabriel Interview of Louis Durham.

<sup>79</sup> Lewis Durham joined the staff of the Glide Foundation in 1962.

<sup>80</sup> The Central City antipoverty funds were specifically approved to support gay and transgender hustlers in the Tenderloin and the elderly population in the South of Market Area. See: Hanson, Edward, “Politics, Law and Human Rights” conducted by Meeker, Martin, 2009, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2009.

<sup>81</sup> Meeker, “The Queerly Disadvantaged,” 29.

health van, which was operated by “hippie doctor” Joel Fort and brought medical services and education to the street. Community empowerment was the touchstone of a few programs sponsored by Central City or developed in this context. One of the more visible of these was called Vanguard and was run by youth, mostly gay male, lesbian, transgender, or some mix thereof.

In short, the antipoverty funds were used to underwrite the projects and priorities of Glide as outlined in the *The White Ghetto: Youth and Young Adults in the Tenderloin Area of Downtown San Francisco*.<sup>82</sup> Primarily written by Hansen, Glide’s intern who was working on his doctorate in Religion at Claremont Theological Seminary, the document estimates that in 1966 approximately 300 young men were “hustling in the Tenderloin area as a means of earning money and obtaining some sort of adult affection.”<sup>83</sup> These youth were in desperate need of employment, housing, addiction support, psychological and emotional support, health care and protection from police and abusive Johns.<sup>84</sup>

After completing *The White Ghetto*, Hansen was able to shift his focus to working with the Vanguard youth, who were given an office and use of Glide’s mimeograph machine.<sup>85</sup> The Vanguard youth said farewell to Hansen in their first issue of *Vanguard Magazine*. Hansen’s replacement, Larry Mamiya, was an intern from Union Theological Seminary. He remembers Vanguard as an inclusive and diverse group of hustlers who he saw both as “street gang” and “Glide’s youth group.”<sup>86</sup> While he did not attend Vanguard’s meetings, he did help the youth create a Friday and Saturday

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<sup>82</sup> Hansen Edward, Bird, Fred, Forrester, Mark and Des Marais Jr., Victor J., Feb 1, 1966, Courtesy of GLBTHS, Ed Hansen Papers 98-37.

<sup>83</sup> Hansen et. al, “The White Ghetto,” 3.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 3-9.

<sup>85</sup> Hanson, Edward, “Politics, Law and Human Rights” conducted by Meeker, Martin, 2009, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2009.

<sup>86</sup> Interview of Larry Mamiya by Megan Rohrer on Oct 25, 2009, Courtesy of GLBTHS.

night dance in the basement of Glide (which Mamiya believes were the first gay dances held in a church) and a Thursday night meal with the Diggers<sup>87</sup> that eventually evolved into Glide's current day feeding program that serves three meals nearly every day of the week.

Committed to completing the plan outlined in "The White Ghetto," Glide and Mamiya were only interested in working with Vanguard until they could open their twenty-four hour coffee house for youth. Still in existence today as a space where Tenderloin residents can create art for free, the Hospitality House was originally designed to be a safe space for the Tenderloin youth where they could be supported by psychologists, social workers and other healthy adult role models.<sup>88</sup> Federal poverty money provided the funds for Hospitality House to open its doors, and Mamiya to shift his focus to the youth of Haight Ashbury and the Summer of Love which had just begun.

Around this same time, Vanguard moved out of Glide and shifted from aggressive activism to the more transcendental Haight Asbury inspired organization. This drastic change can be seen in the dramatic difference between the style and content in first and second volumes of Vanguard magazine.<sup>89</sup> At the same time there

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<sup>87</sup> The diggers are a group that existed in the Haight from 1966-1968 that Mamiya worked with. The Digger Archive is online at [www.digger.org](http://www.digger.org) The meals feed nearly 300 people for \$35. The Thursday night meal was one of the many times that Glide provided the funds for "free" activities. , Paying rent and other equipment, Glide's underwriting enabled the free concerts and stores to exist. It was Mamiya's job to discern which groups in the Haight Glide should fund. See: Rohrer Interview of Mamiya.

<sup>88</sup> Rohrer Interview of Mamiya.

<sup>89</sup> The first volume of the magazine tackles issues of homelessness, mental health, sexuality, social economic status and advocacy. The second volume's art work shifts from to psychedelic drug references and becomes more poetic and free spirited.

also seems to be an organizational shift, as Vanguard, like the Mattachine Society, became an organization in name only that continued to publish.<sup>90</sup>

Even though it had physically left Glide, Vanguard's publication is unquestionably still shaped by Glide's influence. In *The United States of America vs. Lloyd Spinar and Conrad Germain*, McIlvenna took the stand to fight the laws that prevented gay periodicals from being published. Spinar and Germain, a gay couple, each faced 145 years in prison if they were convicted for producing, distributing, and possessing homosexual 'obscenity.'"<sup>91</sup> Hal Call remembers: "[Ted] was a married man defending these cocksuckers. The government just couldn't comprehend that!"<sup>92</sup>

The landmark case was decided in 1967, with the judge declaring "the rights of minorities expressed individually in sexual groups or otherwise must be respected."<sup>93</sup> Opening the door for individuals to publish materials that included gay sexuality the freedom gained by this legal precedent can be seen in the second volume of Vanguard magazine, which becomes much more graphically sexual.

The third volume of Vanguard, published in 1970, has only one issue, which is actually Keith St. Claire's project for a class at City College. St. Clare published other works under the Vanguard name, including the poetry of fellow Vanguard member

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<sup>90</sup> Don Lucas admitted that the Mattachine organization began operating in name only in the mid 60s. During this time Lucas, with Mark Forrester, used Federal Poverty funds to provide counseling services for male prostitutes and transvestites. Sears, James T., Behind the Mask of the Mattachine: The Hall Call Chronicles and the Early Movement for Homosexual Emancipation, 2006, 524.

<sup>91</sup> Sears, 517.

<sup>92</sup> Sears, 518.

<sup>93</sup> Sears, 530.

Adrian Ravarour called Free: Poems of Flow, however a list of the posters and periodicals made on by Vanguard was never kept. After 1970, Vanguard's publishing seems to be picked up by the Communications Company Collective, which was also funded largely by Glide.<sup>94</sup>

## Behind the Mask: Inner Homophobia and Racism

*My agenda was to be able to integrate the homosexual into society and have him live a normal life without being harmed."*

– Don Lucas of the Mattachine Society<sup>95</sup>

While the San Francisco homophile organizations (DOB, Mattachine Society and SIR) were viewed as radical by the media and the predominately heterosexual public, they were still more mainstream than other GLBT groups like ONE.<sup>96</sup> The San Francisco homophile organizations used a tactic, which the Mattachine called "the logic of assimilation, whereby the homosexual, castrated through public relations, was cast as the homophile."<sup>97</sup> Don Lucas, the Mattachine representative on CRH, once lamented how much more could have been accomplished if only gay men would have "left their

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<sup>94</sup> St. Clare, Keith, "Foreword," Epiphanies: Energy Flow Poetry, 2008, v.

<sup>95</sup> Sears, 525.

<sup>96</sup> In 1954, the Mattachine Society announced that it did not agree with the "aggressive, militant, and activist attitude of the [ONE] Magazine." [Sears, 303]. SIR's motto "responsible action by responsible people in responsible way" also falls in this same category. [Sears, 521.]

<sup>97</sup> Sears, 512.

sexuality at the doorstep.”<sup>98</sup> Similarly, Call remarked that the leadership of SIR wanted their organization “to be social but nonsexual.”<sup>99</sup>

Historian Martin Meeker has called the tactic of using straight-laced rhetoric a mask, that effectively countered the antigay sentiment of the time.<sup>100</sup> While keeping a public persona of normalcy, the activists privately lived and promoted more sexualized lives<sup>101</sup> This mask is also the key reason the homophile organizations chose to partner with clergy, despite their anxiety about working with the church. CRH’s founding summary is perhaps the only CRH document that enables historians to look behind this mask:

One of the main problems needing attention, it was felt, was that of the young teenage homosexual. It is a known fact that a large segment [sic] of our teenage population has homosexual tendencies and does seek counseling or understanding concerning this behavior. Also, it is practically impossible for the existing organizations working for and in [sic] behalf of the homosexual to be of help in this area due to the legal implications. It was therefore felt that Clergymen of all Denominations would be best suited to handle this area of counseling. However, it was also felt that a great deal of orientation and understanding on the part of the Clergy would have to be instituted before this could be effective.<sup>102</sup>

The work of the leaders of the homophile organizations training the CRH pastors enabled the pastors to work with and advocate for the gay youth on behalf of the homophile organizations who could not do so publicly. Ultimately, the work of CRH

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<sup>98</sup> Sears, 512.

<sup>99</sup> Sears, 521.

<sup>100</sup> Sears, 541.

<sup>101</sup> An easy example of this can be seen in Call’s erotic photography interest and subsequent opening of an gay books store on the same block as Glide after the pornography laws were changed.

<sup>102</sup> Courtesy of GLBTHS, Don Lucas Papers, 19-18 CRH By Laws and Founding Summary.

ensured that when the youth from Vanguard approached Glide for support two years later, that the pastors would not only welcome them, but also enable them to seize their own power in the community.

CRH was publically marketed as an organization to provide professional education about homosexuality to pastors and congregations. This enabled homophile organizations to privately advocate for young homosexuals, while at the same time publicly asserting that work with the young gay and transgender hustlers was inappropriate. The Wall Street Journal was one of the media outlets that printed the public message of the homophile organizations:

Oddly, among those unhappy with the Glide Vanguard relationship were leaders of several other homosexual organizations. "We thought the publicity (about dances and prostitution) would tend to perpetuate in the public mind a stereotype of the homosexual as irresponsible and sexually permissive," one says.<sup>103</sup>

The fact that Vanguard found itself in conflict with the public strategy of the homophile organizations is not surprising. Vanguard is not only the first organization of gay youth, but also the first Gay Liberation organization.<sup>104</sup> Susan Stryker has called Vanguard's participation, with a young lesbian group called the Street Orphans, in the

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<sup>103</sup> Merry, Howard, "Tenderloin Ministry: A 'Secularized church Pursues It's Mission in Unorthodox Causes" The Wall Street Journal, March 13, 1967.

<sup>104</sup> Meeker, 31.

1966 Compton's Cafeteria riot the "first known instance of collective, militant, queer resistance to the social oppression of transgender people in United States history."<sup>105</sup>

The beginning of a new era in LGBTQ advocacy, Vanguard's young organization was bound to ruffle the feathers of those who had been working for so long to desexualize public rhetoric about GLBT individuals. Not shying away from the conflict, Vanguard's first president John Paul Marat wrote a statement directed to the "middle class, well established hidden homosexual" led homophile organizations. Acknowledging that Vanguard only represents 1% of the homosexual population (hustlers) who have a unique interest in LGBTQ rights, he encouraged the homophile organizations to "start getting rid of all the masks and costumes that are weighing us all down." To accomplish this, Marat suggests that everyone in the LGBTQ community ought to "first admit to ourselves that we are the most prejudiced people about our ourselves [sic] ..." <sup>106</sup>

The homophile organizations do not follow Marat and Vanguard into the new era of Gay Liberation until after the Stonewall Riots in New York forever change the course of LGBTQ activism. <sup>107</sup> Mimicking the greater experience of youth in America, the alienation of Vanguard from their adult colleagues may help to explain Vanguard's move

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<sup>105</sup> Stryker, Susan, "Roots of the Transgender Movement: The 1966 Riot at Compton's Cafeteria," Critical Moment, Number 12, 2005.

<sup>106</sup> Marat, Jean Paul, "Statement" Courtesy of the GLBT Historical Society, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin Papers, 21-3 National Homophile Organizations, Vanguard.

<sup>107</sup> In an article titled "Church and the Homosexual" written for Spectrum, that can be dated after the Stonewall Riots based on references to the Rev. Troy Perry, Phyllis Lyon and Tom Maurer acknowledge that CRH was rounded to help young homosexuals. It even begins to credit the aggressive tactics of youth in the movement as paving the way to a more tolerant future. [Courtesy of GLBHS, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin Papers, 35-1 Church and the Homosexual, Spe

to Haight Ashbury, where Mamiya notes that the youth were turning inward to “reject the idea of reforming society in favor of creating a new one altogether.”<sup>108</sup>

Yet, Marat’s call is not the first time the homophile organizations have been told that their work begins with self-evaluation. In 1964, in his speech “On Getting and Using Power,” Cecil Williams spoke to the members of SIR and encouraged them to use the methods of the Civil Rights Movement. The first step, he argued, was to answer in your gut “Who are we?”<sup>109</sup> While this question was posed to the gay community, so they could decide who they were, what rights they had, what rights they needed and how they could work politically to get their needs met, Williams’ comment shows the importance of self-awareness for leaders.

Yet, a closer look at the lives of the clergy involved with CRH and Vanguard reveals that the homophile organizations were not the only ones living behind masks. While the clergy had more power and privilege in society and were able to directly challenge unjust laws and advocate for hustlers and transgender youth, they also battled their own inner homophobia and racism. Williams, the first African American Pastor to serve as the Methodist head pastor of an urban congregation admits “until 1955 I tried, to be white; bleaching cream, hair straightening combs – even talking like

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<sup>108</sup> Mamiya, Lawrence H., “Haight-Ashbury and the New Generation” Psychedelic Drugs and Religious Experience: An Overview and a Critique of the Psychedelic Drug Scene as Viewed by the Medical Community and by the New Generation, Bachelor Divinity Thesis, Union Theological Seminary, 1968, 2.

<sup>109</sup> Williams, Cecil, “On Getting and Using Power,” p4 .

whites.”<sup>110</sup> In 1967 he is often quoted as deflecting conversations about his race by responding, “I would refer you to the [God(dess)] who made me.”<sup>111</sup>

Many of the pastors working with Glide and CRH were able to publicly preach and teach openness about sexuality, while privately being unaware or actively neglecting their own sexual feelings. In an interview with Martin Meeker, Glide intern Ed Hansen, talks about how he was encouraged by his therapist at Claremont Theological Seminary to neglect his homosexual feelings while actively reinforcing his heterosexual feelings:

I was naïve. That helped. I didn’t know any homosexual people. And when I applied for that internship up at Glide, I knew that part of their ministry was with gay people. So I naively put in my application that because I had my own homosexual feelings, I would probably have more sympathy and compassion for that ministry. Lewis Durham told me later that when they read that, they wondered, “Oh, my, what are we getting ourselves into to have this young seminarian who’s got homosexual feelings coming and putting him in this environment?” But they decided, “Well, we’re cutting edge here. We’re kind of exploring new possibilities. Let’s just let it happen and see where it goes.”<sup>112</sup>

At the same time that Hansen was enabling the Vanguard youth to claim their power, he was actively repressing his own sexual feelings:

In terms of my own feelings, it’s interesting that that year I was in San Francisco, my own homosexual feelings went deeper and were not present to me in the same way. It was like I was noticing how different I was from the other people, like Leo Laurence or Mark Forrester that I was encountering. In a sense, I was telling myself, “I’m not like them. I’m

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<sup>110</sup> Kinsolving, Lester, “Sermon of A Negro on The Riots,” The San Francisco Chronicle, July 31, 1967.

<sup>111</sup> Williams, “On Getting and Using Power,” p10 and Kinsolving, Lester, “Sermon of A Negro on The Riots,” The San Francisco Chronicle, July 31, 1967 [Courtesy of the Glide Archive].

<sup>112</sup> Hanson, Edward, “Politics, Law and Human Rights” conducted by Meeker, Martin, 2009, Regional Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2009.

married. I'm a very religious person. I'm a minister." And so it was like all of my homosexual feelings were just set aside, for the most part.<sup>113</sup>

While Hansen goes on to describe several encounters when his homosexual feelings were not in check, he is ultimately able to convince himself that he is not gay because of the differences in social class, addiction and other problems that he saw plaguing the gay youth he was working with in the Tenderloin. Forty-three years later, Hansen has long since divorced his wife and has been living with his husband for more than a decade.

Like Hansen, Lewis also repressed his homosexual feelings. Called the "worst kept secret in town" by his colleagues, Lewis' sexuality seemed to be mystery only to himself:

In my case, I was still a virgin at 36. I had, the only experiences I had had prior to that was as a teenager, mutual masturbation and once in seminary. But there were no labels and so I never identified myself as being homosexual or being gay or anything like that. It wasn't until 1968 when another Lutheran pastor from another country was here and he came to stay with me that the very first night that we were together it just happened. And it was as natural as rain. And even then, I don't know that I still put a label on it.<sup>114</sup>

Discovering his sexuality seven years after he begins working with homosexuals in San Francisco, Lewis may have been the pastor who was the most accepting of their homosexual feelings at the time. In contrast, Bishop James A. Pike seems to have been the most conflicted. After engaging in sex with a man in school "out of loneliness," Pike

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<sup>113</sup> Meeker interview of Hanson.

<sup>114</sup> Gabriel Interview of Lewis.

suddenly and unexpectedly marries his first wife Jane Alvies.<sup>115</sup> Though Bishop Pike eventually accepted that his son was gay, his son could not and subsequently took his own life because “he could never live up to his father’s image.”<sup>116</sup> Pike forced several gay men out of the priesthood as Bishop, Cromey his delegate on CRH enthusiastically talks about how Pike changed his mind about homosexuality after Cromey told him about the CRH retreat. Pike then tracked down the gay pastors and found them ministry positions.<sup>117</sup> Cromey, an admitted egotist, probably did affect Pike’s thinking, but it seems more likely that the impact of his son’s death had a bigger influence on him. Pike’s obvious torment can be seen in his 1967 book The Other Side: My Experiences with Psychic Phenomena chronicling his paranormal conversations with his dead son.

In his sexual autobiography Sex Priest, Cromey talks about his own sexual journey. In spite of the fact that his first memory of sex was of a female babysitter and another woman,<sup>118</sup> having been “gently accosted” three times by men as a youngster<sup>119</sup> and his experience getting caught with his brother’s penis in his mouth,<sup>120</sup> it is not until the CRH founding retreat in 1964 on a walk through the woods talking with Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, that Cromey comes to understand that homosexuality is natural and an

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<sup>115</sup> Robertson, David M., A Passionate Pilgrim: A Biography of Bishop James A. Pike, 2006, 26 and 28.

<sup>116</sup> Anonymously told by Stuart, Donald, I’m Listening as Fast as I Can: The Night Ministry in San Francisco, 2003, 20 and confirmed by Warren Cromey who served as Bishop Pike’s assistant. See: Interview with Robert Cromey by Megan Rohrer, Nov. 2, 2009, Courtesy of the GLBTHS.

<sup>117</sup> Gabriel and Rohrer Interviews of Cromey.

<sup>118</sup> Cromey, Warren Sex Priest, 2005, 21.

<sup>119</sup> Cromey, Robert Warren, In God’s Image: Christian Witness to the Need for Gay/Lesbian Equality in the Eyes of the Church, 1991, 35.

<sup>120</sup> Cromey, Sex Priest, 23.

important civil right.<sup>121</sup> Cromeey admits that he did not really understand his own sexuality until he attended an Esalen Institute event a Big Sur in 1969.<sup>122</sup> At this event, Cromeey not only admits that he was having affairs with several women in his congregation, but he also explored his sexuality and discerned that he was not attracted to men.<sup>123</sup> Yet, it would still be a few more years before he would be able to recognize that his father was clearly bisexual and a few more decades before he would stop feeling guilty about masturbating.<sup>124</sup>

This closer examination of the sexual feelings and sex life of the CRH clergy, is not an attempt to judge or critique the pastors, rather it should encourage contemporary pastoral leaders. These clergy struggled with the complexity of their own lives at the same time that they were working mightily to help others understand the freedom and liberation of God(dess)'s grace. These were not superhero pastors whose methods and dedication are beyond replication by contemporary urban pastors. Rather, these pastors were just as human, sinful and in need of healing, forgiveness and the permission to live sexually free lives as the individuals they worked with. And as the next section will reveal, they were simply trying to problem solve and react to the social issues around them. And as a result, their ethics, lives and minds were changed by the culture they were immersing themselves in.

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<sup>121</sup> Cromeey Interview by Megan Rohrer.

<sup>122</sup> Cromeey, Sex Priest, 11.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, 13.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 18.

## The Pastoral Response to Vanguard

*[E]very group action openly engaged in by the homosexual community is a social action. A dance, a play, going to the theater, bowling, hiking, must take on aspects for homosexuals of political ramifications... That is contributing to the change in societal life of Our Community.*

– Bill Beardemphl, President of SIR<sup>125</sup>

Beginning as early as 1961, the Central City pastors began creating a pastoral presence in San Francisco that focused on deep listening to the needs of the community, enabling individuals in the community the help themselves and to directly address the real needs of the community. The pastors were both proactive and reactive. “We’re like a boxer on his toes,” Durham commented in Time.<sup>126</sup>

In addition to the work with Vanguard and created by the antipoverty programs listed above, Lewis and some of the other Central City pastors began, in 1963, bringing their ministry directly to the streets each night from six until two in the morning.<sup>127</sup> In 1964, the San Francisco Council of Churches officially created the Night Ministry and called the Rev. Donald Stuart to be the first Night Minister. Recently celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Night Ministry operates a call center and has roving ministers who provide ministry to those who are anxious, lonely, suicidal or just in need of a listening

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<sup>125</sup> Sears, 523.

<sup>126</sup> “Missions: A Bridge to the Non-Church,” *Time*, Oct. 20, 1967.

<sup>127</sup> Charles Lewis and Joanne Chadwick Interview by Megan Rohrer on Oct. 19, 2009, Courtesy of the GLBTHS.

ear.<sup>128</sup> While working with anyone in need, Stuart often worked with the young gay and transgender hustlers who were working the streets and the bars of the Tenderloin. Lewis, Stuart, Hansen and Mamiya all did ministry at night, listening to the stories of those in need in bars, their hotel rooms and in prison.

Serving as both a ministry of presence and accompaniment, the pastors working at night were able to reach those who would never enter a church. Mamiya, who talked about his work as a ministry of problem solving,<sup>129</sup> noted that one of the most common ways he ministered to the Vanguard youth was by bailing them out of jail by using his Sunbeam sports car as collateral.<sup>130</sup> While unorthodox, this style of ministry made clear that “almost any time a San Francisco derelict needs a hand out, a prostitute needs an encouraging word, a busted hippie needs a pad, they can count on help from Glide.”<sup>131</sup> While contemporary readers may wonder if Glide’s work was closer to social work than ministry, a gay Tenderloin resident may have summed it up best when he said: “Probably Glide’s sneaky mission is to preach the word of God to people who wouldn’t ordinarily listen.”<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> The chronicle of Stuart’s work as the Night Ministry is called I’m Listening as Fast as I Can: The Night Ministry in San Francisco.

<sup>129</sup> The Glide Staff are quoted as saying “The church has to become involved as never before, lest it wither and die; it must “solve” problems” Oppedahl, John, “Glide Church – a Bold Path To the Fringes of Society”, SF Sunday Examiner & Chronicle, Sep. 10, 1967.

<sup>130</sup> Rohrer interview with Mamiya.

<sup>131</sup> “Missions: A Bridge to the Non-Church,” Time, Oct. 20, 1967.

<sup>132</sup> Oppedahl, John, “Glide Church – a Bold Path To the Fringes of Society”, SF Sunday Examiner & Chronicle, Sep. 10, 1967.

Deeply rooted in the Theology of Incarnation,<sup>133</sup> Durham explained that “the church must say ‘yes to all people because God cares about all people.’”<sup>134</sup> The Wall Street Journal, reporting on the changing liturgy and messages used to celebrate Christmas in 1966, noted that Williams would be using Christmas day to talk about the increased importance of machines and the sexual revolution, while Cromey’s dialogue sermon would address “such issues as Vietnam, civil rights and the problems and pleasures of an urbanized society.”<sup>135</sup>

Williams says that the Theology of Incarnation directly influenced Glide’s decision to give Vanguard office space and host their dances: “We were the only ones who would respond to the needs of these people,” says Williams. “If you make yourself available to people, there’s got to be a complete commitment. A commitment just to help those it’s easy to help is hypocritical.”<sup>136</sup>

The commitment of the Central City pastors went beyond their work with Vanguard to one of the biggest experimentations of the day: LSD. The influence of the Haight Ashbury community, through the Invisible Circus and experimentations with psychedelic ministry would lead Cromey, Pike and Mamiya to explore spiritual LSD trips led by the Rev. Laird Sutton (who was worked for Glide and CRH).<sup>137</sup> Lucas and

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<sup>133</sup> “Theology of Incarnation” is an understanding that comes from Matthew’s understanding that wherever there is someone homeless, naked, in person or vulnerable that Jesus is present.

<sup>134</sup> “Missions: A Bridge to the Non-Church,” Time, Oct. 20, 1967.

<sup>135</sup> “Christmas 1966: Change in the Churches Reflected in Celebration of the Holiday Season,” The Wall Street Journal, December 22, 1966.

<sup>136</sup> Merry, Howard, “Tenderloin Ministry: A ‘Secularized church Pursues It’s Mission in Unorthodox Causes” The Wall Street Journal, March 13, 1967.

<sup>137</sup> Mamiya outlines his first trip in the appendix of his dissertation.

Forrester, used antipoverty funds, opened the Mattachine offices for “strictly experimental” counseling that “explored all aspects of spiritual enlightenment,” which included the use of LSD (when it was still legal).<sup>138</sup> At a Symposium on Psychedelic Drugs and Religion, Cromey explained how psychedelic drugs were a sacrament<sup>139</sup> and often told the story of when Bishop Pike tried to recreate the oil used by Moses on confirmation youth only to discover that it produced a high similar to that of smoking pot.<sup>140</sup>

Another risk the Central City pastors took was with the transgender community. The regular presence of Dr. Harry Benjamin “in the Bay Area throughout the 1950’s and 1960s helped attract [transgender] individuals seeking information, advice, and access to hormones and sex reassignment surgery.”<sup>141</sup> However, because many bar owners in the Tenderloin feared raids that would cause them to lose their liquor license, many transgender hustlers were forced to work the streets (which was much more dangerous).<sup>142</sup> Organizing together, and housed at Glide, these MTF prostitutes from

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<sup>138</sup> Sears, 525.

<sup>139</sup> Smith, David E., Cromey, Robert, Downing, Jack and Sutton, Laird, “Symposium: Psychedelic Drugs and Religion” *Journal of Psychedelic Drugs*, Volume 1, Issue 2, Winter 1967-1968.

<sup>140</sup> Interview of Robert Cromey by Paul Gabriel on September 16, 1996 and August 7, 1967, Courtesy of GLBTHS and Smith, David E., Cromey, Robert, Downing, Jack and Sutton, Laird, “Symposium: Psychedelic Drugs and Religion” *Journal of Psychedelic Drugs*, Volume 1, Issue 2, Winter 1967-1968.

<sup>141</sup> Members of the GLBT Historical Society (Susan Stryker with Excerpts from an Interview of Elliot Blackstone by Paul Gabriel), “MTF Transgender Activism in the Tenderloin and Beyond, 1966-1975: Commentary and Interview with Elliot Blackstone” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Volume 4:Issue 2, Duke University Press, 1998, 352.

<sup>142</sup> Members of the GLBT Historical Society (Susan Stryker), “MTF Transgender Activism in the Tenderloin and Beyond, 1966-1975: Commentary and Interview with Elliot Blackstone” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Volume 4:Issue 2, Duke University Press, 1998, 354.

the Tenderloin “are currently the earliest known transgender activist organization in the nation.”<sup>143</sup>

Louise Ergestrasse sought out Elliot Blackstone, the San Francisco Police Department’s liaison to the GLBT community<sup>144</sup> and taught him about transgender issues and they went on to work together to create Conversion our Goal (COG), which met at Glide Memorial.<sup>145</sup> Both Blackstone and Williams testified in court on behalf of Louise Ergestrasse, helping her to obtain the first known name change for a transsexual in San Francisco.<sup>146</sup>

Glide’s successful use of empowerment, social experimentation and political action through team ministry<sup>147</sup> is outlined by Don Kuhn in How to Get Things Done in the City: “This team quietly moves according to a design whenever a member calls for help. Each trusts the other. This team, the members acknowledge, is the church at work in the city.”<sup>148</sup> This team ministry was also aided by an “underground ministry”

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid, 362.

<sup>144</sup> Blackstone was appointed in response to the CRH California Hall incident.

<sup>145</sup> Stryker, “MTF Transgender Activism,” 352.

<sup>146</sup> Williams testified along with Elliot Blackwell, the police liaison to the GLBT community, who was put in place after the CRH Masquerade Ball incident. [Greig, Michael, “Court OKs Transsexual’s Name Change,” The San Francisco Chronicle, Sept. 14, 1967].

<sup>147</sup> Mamiya described Glide’s Team Ministry in his interview with Megan Rohrer the following way: Ted McIlvenna worked with foundations and got grants for Young Adult work directed to the Glide Foundation; Cecil Williams was the spokes person whenever the cops or the mayor’s office had any concerns; Donald Kuhn was the communications director who developed the idea of the underground church that networked key religious people, members of city hall and others who could influence the mayor; Louis Durham ran the Glide operation, the foundation and the church. Mamiya was the street contact in the Haight who would determine what should be supported and what should not.

<sup>148</sup> Kuhn, Donald L., How To Get Things Done in the City, Glide Information Center, 1969, 23.

that helped to provide political information and influence mayoral appointments to important political offices.<sup>149</sup>

## **Lessons for Contemporary Ministry to LGBTQ Homeless Individuals**

Contemporary readers should note that there are few factors in the case of Vanguard and the Central City pastors that cannot be replicated. First, nearly everyone involved has stated that the work would not have been possible without the endowed funds of Glide Foundation or the antipoverty funds. Those who did not have access to Glide funds, creatively got by on very little money with support of others on the team who actively helped each other get work.<sup>150</sup>

An additional asset to most of the pastors, was that they were working as a missionary or for the Glide Foundation. Independence from congregations enabled the pastors to be more radical, because they did not have to answer congregations who tended to be more conservative than the pastors. Instead, the pastors were encouraged to proactively keep bishops in the loop before any potentially negative news about their work broke. This not only enabled them to have good relationships

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<sup>149</sup> Described by Larry Mamiya (interviewed by Megan Rohrer on Oct 25, 2009, Courtesy of GLBTHS) and diagramed by Donald L. Kuhn ([How To Get Things Done in the City](#), Glide Information Center, 1969, 27-29).

<sup>150</sup> McIlvenna hired Phyllis Lyon as his secretary, not only giving her a dependable income, but also providing DOB with access to Glides mimeograph machine. Lewis hired his assistant Joanne Chadwick to work with him for a year from a severance payment he received from a previous job until she could be paid by the LCA Board of American Missions. After her funding ran out, she began working for Lyon and Del Martin ghostwriting responses to their fan mail. Later when Lewis lost his missionary funding from the LCA, he began working at the YMCA front desk in order to continue is work with the North Beach Mission and the Night Ministry. See: Rohrer Interview with Lewis and Chadwick.

with their ecclesiastical superiors, but enabled the Bishops to defend the Central City pastors during conflicts. Durham considered it his full time job to educate the Glide Foundation board, upon which the Methodist Bishop Tippet served.

Keeping these limitations in mind, what are the lessons that contemporary pastoral leaders and congregations can take from the history of CRH and Vanguard? First, this history illustrates why leaders need to take the initiative to educate themselves before queer individuals come knocking on their door. Then, instead of waiting for important issues and those in need to come to church, pastoral leaders ought to proactively minister to people where they are, to learn their needs and whenever possible to empower individuals to advocate for themselves. But it should be remembered that, as was the case with Vanguard, individuals who advocate for themselves may not use the methods, language or strategy that congregations and other leaders would prefer.

In fact, pastors and advocates should be prepared for a little controversy, scandal and push back from those who will inevitably resist their work. If possible this work should always be done in a team, in order to deflect ecclesiastical pressure and to keep an eye out for other movements, issues and help that may be on the horizon. Team ministry will also enable pastoral leaders to use their power and privilege (when appropriate) to push, provoke and illuminate injustice in the media, politics and the courts.

The world, and in particular the urban world, will not wait for the churches to make up their minds what they are and what their job is. We must decide who we are now by entering every door that is open to us, from the highest to the lowest, with the Gospel of new creation in Jesus Christ. We must run with joy the risk of failure. The church which risks itself for the world and fails can be forgiven – and resurrected. The church which refuses to take any risks has denied the very purpose of its existence.

- Franklin D. Christhilf<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> “A Brief Manifesto to the Churches in the Cooperative Lutheran Parish of Washington, D.C.,” June 7, 1966, Courtesy of the ELCA Region 2 Archive, North Beach Fellowship SPS, SF CA, 1966 Folder.

## Chapter 3: Contemporary LGBTQ Homelessness, Faith and Faith Communities in San Francisco

### *The State of LGBTQ Homelessness in San Francisco*

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires a homeless<sup>152</sup> count every two years as a part of federal fund allocation. From 2005 to 2013 the number of homeless individuals counted in San Francisco ranged from 6,248 in 2005 to 6,514 in 2009.<sup>153</sup> The most recent report in 2013 counted 6,436 homeless individuals: 91% were single;<sup>154</sup> 63% had one or more disabling conditions;<sup>155</sup> 59% were unsheltered;<sup>156</sup> 41% had been homeless four or more times in the past three years; 31% were chronically homeless;<sup>157</sup> 17% (1,902) were children or youth under the age of 25; and 11% were veterans.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> "Homeless under the category 1 definition of homelessness in the HEARTH Act, includes individuals and families living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements, or with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground." [2013 San Francisco Homeless Count & Survey Comprehensive Report, Applied Survey Research, p55. (Electronically retrieved on 3/14/2015: <http://www.sfgov3.org/modules/showdocument.aspx?documentid=4819>)]

<sup>153</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>154</sup> "Single individual refers to an unaccompanied adult or youth." (Ibid,55.)

<sup>155</sup> "Disabling condition, for the purposes of this study, is defined as a physical disability, mental illness, depression, alcohol or drug abuse, chronic health problems, HIV/AIDS, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or a developmental disability." (Ibid, 55.)

<sup>156</sup> "Unsheltered homeless individuals are those homeless individuals who are living on the streets, in abandoned buildings, storage structures, vehicles, encampments, or any other place unfit for human habitation." (Ibid, 55.)

<sup>157</sup> "Chronic homelessness is defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs as "an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years." (Ibid, 55.)

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

Nearly four decades after San Francisco's Central City was awarded Federal poverty dollars for LGBTQ homelessness, demographic information about the sexual orientation of homeless San Franciscans for the first time in 2013. While it is often estimated that 10% of the general population identifies as LGBTQ, 29% of the homeless population in San Francisco identifies as LGBQ and 3% transgender.<sup>159</sup> "The Homeless Count and Survey also found that LGBTQ respondents were more likely than cisgender, heterosexual respondents to be living with HIV/AIDS (16% compared to 5%) and more likely to have substance abuse disorders (49% compared to 41%), further adding to the vulnerability of LGBTQ individuals that are homeless."<sup>160</sup>

### *Violence*

While there is no in-depth study of LGBTQ homeless San Franciscans, the 2015 Violence Prevention Needs Assessment provides some insight into some of the causes and consequences for LGBTQ homeless and marginally housed individuals. Of the 400 participants in the study, participants self-identified in the following ways: 64% had experienced homelessness; 53% gay; 43% use more than one label to describe their gender identity; 39% make less than \$25,000 a year; 32% reported a disability; 30% queer; 28% identified as transgender or questioning their gender; 14% lesbian; 11% bisexual.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> San Francisco Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Violence Prevention Needs Assessment, 2015 (Electronically received: <http://www.sfcenter.org/violencereport#sthash.6npmOj0l.dpuf>), 31.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 9-29.

Violence rates for all LGBTQ San Franciscans are staggering: 68% experienced physical violence; 48% sexual violence; 81% harassment and more than one-third has experienced all three.<sup>162</sup> Unsurprisingly, the rates of violence experienced by transgender San Franciscans was higher than for other groups. The rates are even higher for transgender women of color who experience multiple intersections of oppression. For example, “60% of transgender Latinas feel unsafe walking around during the day — a time when only 12% of LGBTQI respondents overall do.”<sup>163</sup> Marginally housed LGBTQ San Franciscans living in Single Room Occupancy (SRO) hotel rooms, the city’s current strategy for housing the homeless, feel 13% more unsafe alone in their home and 75% feel unsafe outside in the neighborhoods where they live. The rate for transgender people of color in this same category is 23% where they live and 44% outside in their neighborhoods. 67% of LGBTQ homeless individuals feel unsafe where they dwell, while only 50% feel unsafe in their neighborhood.<sup>164</sup>

While not directly studying homelessness, the studies key findings provide critical insights that help us understand why the issue of LGBTQ homelessness continues to be a problem decades after the Central City Pastors first shone a political light on the problem. The report names San Francisco’s worldwide recognition as a welcoming city as one of the masks the urgent needs of LGBTQ San Franciscans:

The perception of San Francisco as a progressive, LGBTQI-friendly environment is not enough to keep our communities safe. In fact, this perception can itself be a barrier to the system’s willingness to identify

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid, 29.

deficiencies and prioritize system transformation to address discrimination. Support services are overtaxed, and violence continues to be a prevalent issue facing LGBTQI community members.<sup>165</sup>

Contemporary economic issues also seem to have had an adverse effect on the LGBTQ San Franciscans and the service agencies that seek to support them. For example:

The San Francisco real estate crisis affects LGBTQI safety in many ways. Lack of affordable rents make both community members and the community-based organizations who serve them more vulnerable to displacement. In addition, homelessness disproportionately affects LGBTQI communities<sup>166</sup>

Resultantly, the lack of housing and homelessness further affects LGBTQ San Franciscans by making them disproportionately vulnerable to violence: “The lack of affordable housing in San Francisco exacerbates safety concerns for many community members, prompting many to remain in housing or neighborhoods where they don’t feel safe.”<sup>167</sup>

While not directly addressed in the study, the violence report provides evidence to illustrate why transgender youth are more likely to become homeless as a result of running away or being thrown away (kicked out of their family. It concludes: “Transgender survivors of physical violence and those who experienced physical violence before the age of 16 are more likely than others to have been hurt by a family member.”<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid, 9.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid, 10.

## *HIV/AIDS*

While it has already been noted above that homeless LGBTQ San Franciscans have a higher HIV infection rate, it is hard to tell if this is a consequence of the high risk survival choices of homeless individuals, or if their HIV status and any subsequent disability issues that result from it are the cause of their homelessness. Researchers do know that, “food insecurity is a risk factor for both HIV transmission and worse HIV clinical outcomes.”<sup>169</sup> Of the 250 homeless and marginally housed individuals with HIV that were studied in 2009 by the University of California San Francisco, 53.6% were food insecure.<sup>170</sup> This rate is 5 times the national average and two times higher than other studies of food insecurity amongst low-income and homeless individuals.<sup>171</sup>

A 2011 study of 2,353 Veterans with HIV, found a 24% rate of food insecurity, resulting lower weights, higher viral levels (increasing the possible rate of infection to others), worse health outcomes and possibly decreasing the effectiveness of antiviral medications.<sup>172</sup> With more than twice the rate of food insecurity, homeless individuals living with HIV/AIDS would also exhibit the negative effects; however it should be remembered that the decreased the Veterans in the 2011 study had access to regular health care, while many of the homeless individuals in the 2009 study lacked health

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<sup>169</sup> Weisner, et al, “Food Insecurity Among Homeless and Marginally Housed Individuals Living with HIV/AIDS in San Francisco, *AIDS and Behavior Journal*, July 31, 2009, 841 (Electronically retrieved on 3/14/2015: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2758196/>).

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid*, 841

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*, 844.

<sup>172</sup> “Food Insecurity is Associated with Poor Virologic Response Among HIV-Infected Patients Receiving Antiviral Medications,” *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, September, 2011. (Electronically retrieved on 3/14/2015: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3157515/>)

care. The researchers noted: “this study was cross-sectional and health care is available largely free of charge through the AIDS Drug Assistance Program in San Francisco, another possible interpretation is that individuals who are food insecure have trouble focusing on other basic needs such as arranging for health insurance and health care.”<sup>173</sup>

### **Faithful Services for San Francisco’s LGBTQ Homeless**

Despite the fact that most of the continuum of care for San Francisco’s homeless, particularly the services located in the Tenderloin, were created by pastors or faith communities, moderate and progressive Christians no longer use these programs to talk openly about faith with the homeless individuals who utilize services. Some locations are silenced by their dependence on public and private funds that prevent proselytizing. Others have intentionally chosen to operate as a silent ministry of presence under the assumption that the service of faithful service of volunteers is so powerful it doesn’t need to be spoken. I am not aware of any study that validates this assumption.

The Night Ministry, has continued to have pastors in clergy collars walk the streets each night. With a special care for the individuals in Central City and the Castro district, regular care in LGBTQ bars and at the events of drag queens, The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence and the Ducal Courts, the Night Ministry is not shy about providing progressive pastoral care to LGBTQ homeless San Franciscans. But, it is statistically

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<sup>173</sup> Weisner, et al, 2009

unknown if these progressive pastors leave a lasting statistical impact on those they meet in the night.

The Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) and Most Holy Redeemer (MHR) Catholic Church, both have provided long-term meal programs in the Castro District. However, the MCC congregation's struggles and subsequent sale of its Castro property mean that their meal program has been unsteady and is unlikely to be resumed anytime in the near future. MHR, under strict instruction from the Archdiocese is no longer able to provide supportive outreach to LGBTQ individuals and their hard stance preventing groups with drag queens from utilizing their facilities has left a bad taste in the mouth of many of the LGBTQ folk that used to find support at the congregation.

St. Francis Lutheran Church is the only faithful organization serving the homeless in the Castro that is fully welcoming of LGBTQ individuals in the full life of their congregation. St Francis has hosted Sunday Morning hospitality hour breakfasts, feeding 150-250 individuals each week for more than 18 years. Under my direction, the food programs at the church were expanded to provide the districts only food pantry and a Saturday grocery program for HIV+ individuals. After my call to Grace, a new director was hired to take over the programs at St. Francis.

While their pastor occasionally visits the meal program in a clergy collar and guests may talk about their favorite bible stories while waiting for breakfast, the congregation and volunteers participating in the program do not typically talk about their faith. Subsequently, the only San Francisco congregation serving LGBTQ homeless

individuals that fully welcomes them into all aspects of their faith life chooses not to regularly talk to their guests about faith. St. Francis would be delighted to provide faithful opportunities to the LGBTQ homeless participating in its meal programs. However, their own scars from the abuse they experienced from the institutional church and other people of faith, leaves them wondering how to accomplish this.

Located a few blocks from the epicenter of the AIDS crisis, in 1990 St. Francis and First United Lutheran Church defied the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's (ELCA) rule against the rostering of openly LGBTQ pastors. St. Francis called pastors Ruth Frost and Phyllis Zillhart in hopes of ministering to the mostly gay men who were rapidly dying and uninterested in care from faith communities that had hurt them in the past. Many of the LGBTQ members of St. Francis were also actively healing from the deep wounds they had experienced from the ELCA, other congregations and denominations. After the extraordinary ordinations, First United and St. Francis were put on trial and expelled from the national church for over 20 years. After the ELCA's rostering policy changed in 2009, both St. Francis and First United were reinstated.

In the Western Addition and Polk Gulch Districts, St. Paulus Lutheran church has provided programs for LGBTQ homeless individuals since the early 1990's. Commissioned by the City and County of San Francisco to provide a shelter for transgender women, St. Paulus provided services for this vulnerable population until its congregation burned down in 1993. Around the same time their shelter opened, St. Paulus also created the Friendship Banquet. A weekly restaurant quality supper served

on linens, the Friendship Banquet is a reservation only, weekly meal that continues to serve 30-40 HIV+ individuals. Other than beginning the meal with a prayer, the Friendship Banquet begins with a prayer, there is no other faithful programming or support connected to the program.

While welcoming congregations like St. Francis and St. Paulus remain quiet about their faith, conservative Christians, believing that evangelism saves their own and the homeless' souls aggressively talk about their faith with the homeless at their meal programs. Often, food programs and other valuable services are only offered after the homeless and hungry participate in a worship service. Spaces like the San Francisco Rescue Mission trade abusive theology for salmon and cake. With sermons and hymns that shame participants and tell them Jesus' suffering on the cross is a direct result of their homelessness, addiction, sexual choices or other effects of their poverty. Because these congregations are the only ones talking about faith, the assumption amongst many homeless individuals is that faith groups espousing conservative beliefs represent the values of all faith communities.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology, Predicted Outcomes and Study Results**

### **Methodology**

Inspired by the surveys conducted by the Central City pastors in the late 1960's and early 70's, my study explores the faith and faith experiences of LGBTQ homeless San Franciscans. I began with the goal of surveying 100 homeless and hungry individuals to try to learn more about how receiving services at ministry of presence, faith-based meal programs helps LGBTQ homeless individuals have a better impression of faith communities. Additionally, I wanted to know if participants wanted faith-based programs to provide them with additional opportunities to talk about their faith.

Over a month, I surveyed meal program participants at St. Francis and St. Paulus Lutheran Churches. To survey participants of the general homeless population, I surveyed folk encountered in the Castro, Polk Street, Haight Ashbury and Civic Center Districts in participation with the San Francisco Night Ministry and Project Homeless Connect. Participants either completed the survey on their own or I helped them complete the survey in a private space.

Individuals with mental health or addiction issues, that were deemed to limit their capacity to give informed consent, were excluded from the study. As I surveyed individuals, I carried the following guiding principles: 1) Allowing people to self-identify and name their own experience is a liberating and healing experience, particularly individuals who are often excluded from theological writings; 2) All people are created

and loved by God; 3) We are all equal in our sinfulness and simultaneously, by right of our baptism and the promises of God, we are all equally able given the privilege to “sin boldly;” 4) Police, politicians, pastors, health care workers and other individuals in positions of power have been abusive and contribute to the oppression that is experienced by homeless individuals; and 5) It is important to allow people to self-advocate and speak their own truth to power, even when they say something we wish they would not.

### **The Ethical Undercounting of Transgender Individuals<sup>174</sup>**

For much of the past fifty years, LGBT activism and “acting-up” has focused on the political and social value of being out and proud. In recent years, the emphasis on publically claiming an identity has extended to demanding that LGBT populations “stand up and be counted.” At this moment, however, it is important for us to pause and examine the ethical implications of outness and the desire for accurate counts of transness.

Just because it may be possible one day to find accurate ways to count trans people, it does not mean that we always should. Despite being “out” about my trans identity, like many trans individuals, I maintain a low level of disclosure about my medical choices.

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<sup>174</sup> This section is modified from the published article: Rohrer, Megan, “The Ethical Case for Undercounting Trans Individuals,” *Transgender Studies Quarterly*, Volume 2, Number 1, February 2015.175-8.

Living on the autistic spectrum, I am a stickler for rules and exactness in counting. My unique way of thinking, fueled by lessons learned “coming out” in South Dakota, convinced me that the ability to self-identify is an intrinsic part of liberty. In the past, this has caused me to create long, elaborate counting systems and surveys that did a better job at validating people's choices than in collecting concise information.

Working with the homeless, I know all too well that exactitude in counting vulnerable populations has not only real and lasting budgetary implications, but also has the potential to produce the political momentum needed to create safety nets and to end discriminatory policies.

Yet, along with all the positives of accurate data for health care and public policy, and in making us feel a little less alone, there is also an ethical case to be made for not counting trans individuals, particularly those who are the most vulnerable.

Each year since 2002, I have spent a week on street retreat, sleeping on the sidewalks, in shelters or in the makeshift spaces homeless individuals in San Francisco or Minneapolis call home. During these outings I have answered my fair share of surveys, honestly providing my financial, medical, sexual and employment history. I've gone through the process of changing my sex marker in shelter databases and with primary care providers.

In these situations, I have found that the surveys that did the best job uncovering my sexuality and gender identity were time-consuming, were conducted orally in locations without privacy and were used as a gateway to gain shelter or other resources designed to care for the most vulnerable. While some of these surveys make it possible

for individuals engaging in high-risk behaviors to obtain much needed health care, prevention and harm reduction, they also require vulnerable individuals to make themselves even more vulnerable in exchange for obtaining basic food and shelter services. Regardless of the socioeconomic class of those answering the overly sexualized questions, providing unnecessary medical information to strangers can leave trans individuals feeling pathologized, overexposed and abnormal.

In ancient biblical times, people believed that infertile women were a different sex than fertile women.<sup>175</sup> Can you imagine the outrage if people were asked to list their fertility status on forms in an attempt to acquire a more accurate understanding of their sex? What if menopausal women or men taking Viagra were required to state their hormonal status in parity with trans individuals? Should women who have had surgery to remove breast cancer or a hysterectomy and men who had prostate cancer removed be counted differently than others who have not? If not, then why is it considered acceptable to ask trans individuals questions about their hormones and the surgical state of their bodies?

In addition to the ethical issues about vulnerability and privacy, the full spectrum of our community will never be fully represented by these numbers. Perhaps the greatest barrier to accurate and complete data is the identity choice of some individuals to *not* come out as trans. As long as there are individuals some might describe as trans who

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<sup>175</sup> Carden, Michael. "Genesis/Bereshit." The Queer Bible Commentary, eds. Deryn Guest, Robert Gross, Mona West and Thomas Bohache. London: SCM Press, 2006.

have fully affirmed their asserted sex living as low/non trans disclosers, studies on our community will always undercount it.

As Julia Serano points out, low/non disclosing individuals are not hiding their true identity when they chose not to identify as transgender.<sup>176</sup> Rather, these individuals are asserting the identity they have always known themselves to be and/or have become. To many low/non disclosing individuals whose transition is complete, their identity is now male or female and there is no longer a need or desire to identify as a member of the trans community. This creates an ethical dilemma. If the ability to self-identify is an intrinsic part of liberty, then how can it be right to include this individual under a trans umbrella? But not including these individuals undercounts the number of people who *at some point* in their life may need transgender-related health and social services and who may need policies protecting them from discrimination.

Researchers striving for accuracy may try to find better ways to include low/non disclosure individuals. While this could improve understandings of the ways people across the trans continuum live and breathe, it may also have effects beyond the study results. For example, failing to take into account the low/non trans disclosure experience may artificially increase unemployment and violence statistics, causing some trans individuals to believe that their lives will be safer and more productive if they choose to delay transition, or not to transition at all. On the other hand, the inclusion of low/non trans disclosing individuals in data may decrease the rate of discrimination

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<sup>176</sup> Serano, Julia. Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity. 2007.

reported and make it more difficult to use numbers to justify the need for special protection under the law.

There are many positive motivations compelling researchers to more accurately enumerate the transgender spectrum, and to enable people to find their place on it. Still, the project of counting trans individuals raises hard questions. Researchers trying to quantify the trans experience should ask themselves if their personal definition of who is trans is more or less important than the identity of “trans” individuals living a low/non disclosure life. Those who conduct surveys in social services settings should think long and hard about the extra vulnerability they are imposing on an already vulnerable group. Does the perception that food, housing, and other benefits must be “paid for” by answering intrusive questions mean that the consent is real? If it is not yet possible to fully describe and quantify our community, what are the potentially negative consequences of survey results that say they represent the entire trans community?

We are a diverse, evolving community that cannot be generalized or captured in statistics. Instead of striving to be quantified and reduced to numbers frozen at one moment in time, we should find better ways to educate the cis community. Our strength lies beyond what can be counted by researchers. The wisdom that evolves from our lives cannot be fully understood without living them.

## Predicted Outcomes

Before the study, I expected LGBTQ individuals to have a significantly higher experience being hurt<sup>177</sup> by people and communities of faith. Based on my experience working with the population, I felt confident that participants would report that their experience at faith-based programs improved their opinion of faithful people and communities. Additionally, I also believed that these individuals would desire more opportunities to talk about their faith.

While I had no predictions about if and how these rates would be unique to homeless LGBTQ individuals, I hoped the results of my study would encourage faith communities at meal programs to help heal wounds and build a bridge for LGBT Christians to return to those faith communities.

## Results by Site

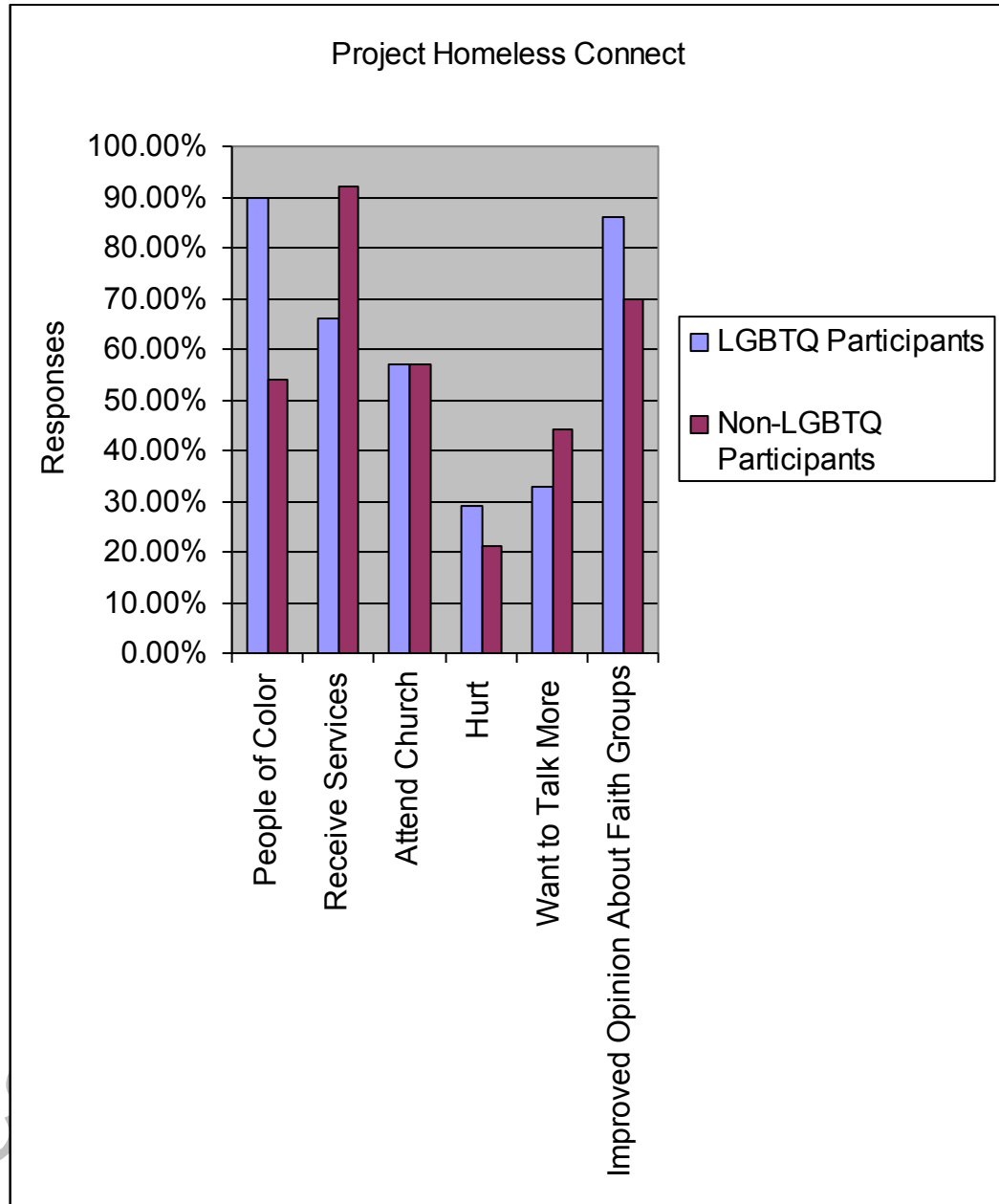
### *Participants at Project Homeless Connect Vision Events*

I surveyed 21 individuals at vision events hosted at Project Homeless Connect, a program of the San Francisco Mayor's office and the Department of Public Health. Some of the individuals at the event had appointments and others were walk-ins from the streets or the Project Homeless Connect office. Of the individuals surveyed, 1/3

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<sup>177</sup> The hurt experienced by individuals can range from physical, psychological, religious or verbal abuse to systematic oppression. The term was left undefined in the survey and subject to the interpretation of the respondent.

identified as LGBTQ. This percentage is slightly higher than the 29% rate of homeless LGBTQ individuals reported by the City and County of San Francisco.



Of the individuals who self-identified as LGBTQ, 90% identified as people of color, 83% have been homeless for 2 years or more, 71% have lived in San Francisco between 11 and 40 years, 50% identified as bisexual, 43% identified as transgender and

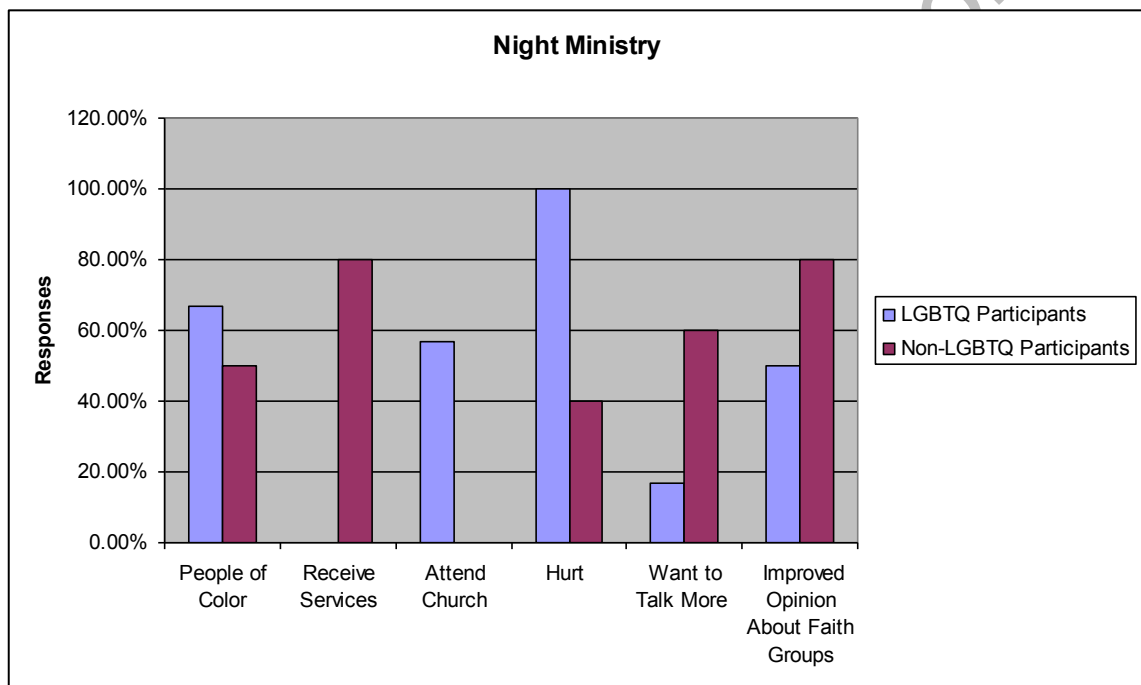
17% as gay. All of the individuals who identified as bisexual also identified as female or transgender. 66% had received food, support or services from faith communities, 57% attend Christian church services, 29% had been hurt by people of faith or faith communities and 33% wanted more opportunities to talk about their faith. 86% reported that their participation in faith based meal programs and services had improved their opinion of people and communities of faith.

Of the non-LGBTQ individuals who completed the survey, 54% identified as people of color, 54% have been homeless for 2 years or more and 70% have lived in San Francisco between 10 and 59 years. 92% received food, support or services from faith communities, 57% attend Christian church services, 21% had been hurt by people of faith or faith communities and 44% wanted more opportunities to talk about their faith. 70% reported that their participation in faith based meal programs and services had improved their opinion of people and communities of faith.

When looking at both the LGBTQ respondents and non-LGBTQ respondents together, 71% of all participants believed that their participation in faith based meal programs and services improved their opinion of people and communities of faith.

### *Participants at the San Francisco Night Ministry*

Eleven individuals were interviewed between the hours of 11pm and 2am in San Francisco (Polk Street, Castro Street, the Duboce Triangle, Civic Center and Haight Street).<sup>178</sup> While I had hoped to survey more individuals at night, the amount of active drug use on the streets made it harder than I expected to find interested survey participants who were able to give informed consent.<sup>179</sup>



55% of survey participants identified as LGBTQ. And of those participants, all of the participants who identified as female also identified as transgender. 80% lived in San Francisco between 5 and 10 years, 67% identified as people of color, 50% identified

<sup>178</sup> Participants were surveyed inside a car in order to protect their privacy.

<sup>179</sup> On the second night of my surveying after three hours on Polk Street, Castro Street, the Duboce Triangle, Civic Center and Haight Street, I wasn't able to find any individuals that could be deemed sober enough to even approach about the survey.

as bisexual, 33% identified as transgender and only 17% had been homeless for more than a year.

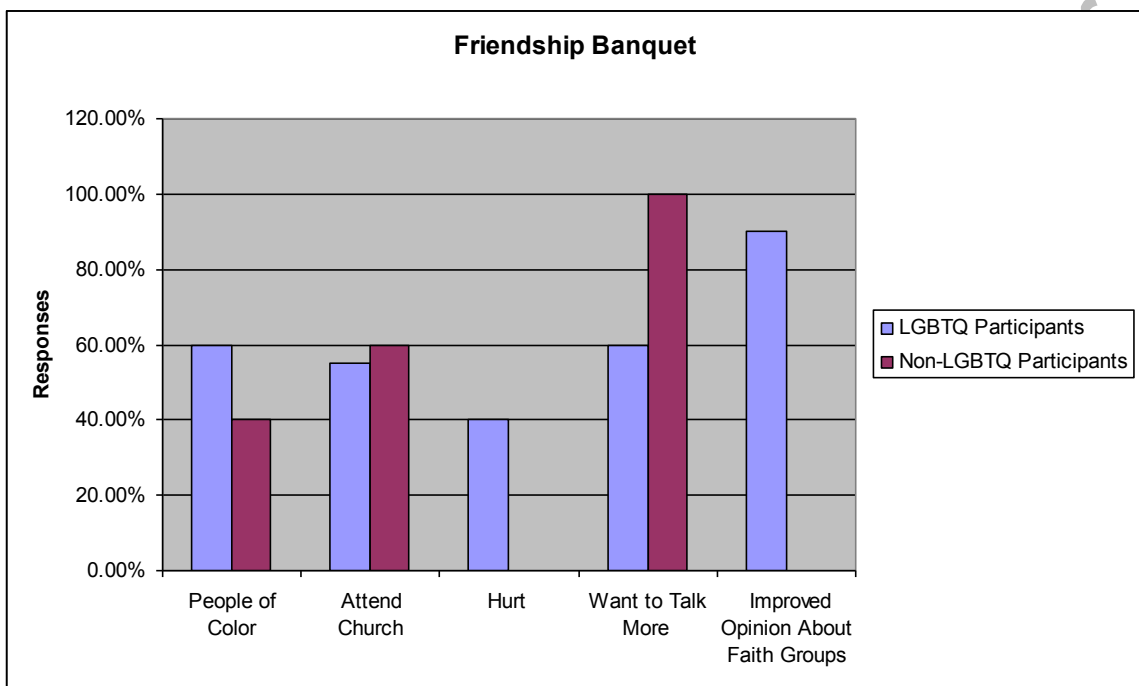
All individuals who identified their faith were Christian. 100% of the respondents reported being hurt by people of faith or a faith community and had received services from faith-based food or service programs. 50% of respondents reported that their experience with faith-based meal and support services improved their opinion of faith communities. Only 17% wanted faith-based services to provide them with more opportunities to talk about their faith.

Of the non-LGBTQ participants, 60% had lived in San Francisco between 4 and 22 years, 50% identified as people of color. All participants who identified their faith identified as Christian and 40% reported being hurt by faith communities. 80% had received food or support from faith-based programs and reported participation in these programs improved their opinion of people of faith and faith. 60% wanted faith-based services to provide them with more opportunities to talk about their faith.

When looking the collective responses of both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ respondents, 91% have received food or services from faith-based programs, 73% had been hurt by people of faith or faith communities and reported that their experience with faith-based food and support services improved their opinion of people and communities of faith, 66% identified as people of color, 33% wanted faith-based groups to provide them with more opportunities to share their faith, but only 18% attend church services. I found it interesting that respondents were nearly two times more

likely to be interested in talking about their faith at faith-based service programs than reported attending church.

#### *Participants at Friendship Banquet*



Of the seventeen individuals interviewed at the 4pm Friendship Banquet, 71% identified as LGBTQ. Of the LGBTQ identified participants, all of the female participants identified as transgender, 60% identified as people of color, 50% identified as gay, 25% identified their sexual orientation as other, 17% identified as transgender and 17% identified as bisexual. All participants who reported their faith identified as Christian (St. Paulus Lutheran, the San Francisco Night Ministry's Open Cathedral), 55% reported that they attend church, 40% have been hurt by faith communities, 90% reported their participation in faith-based food and support services improved their opinion of people

and communities of faith and 60% reported they would like more opportunities to talk about their faith.

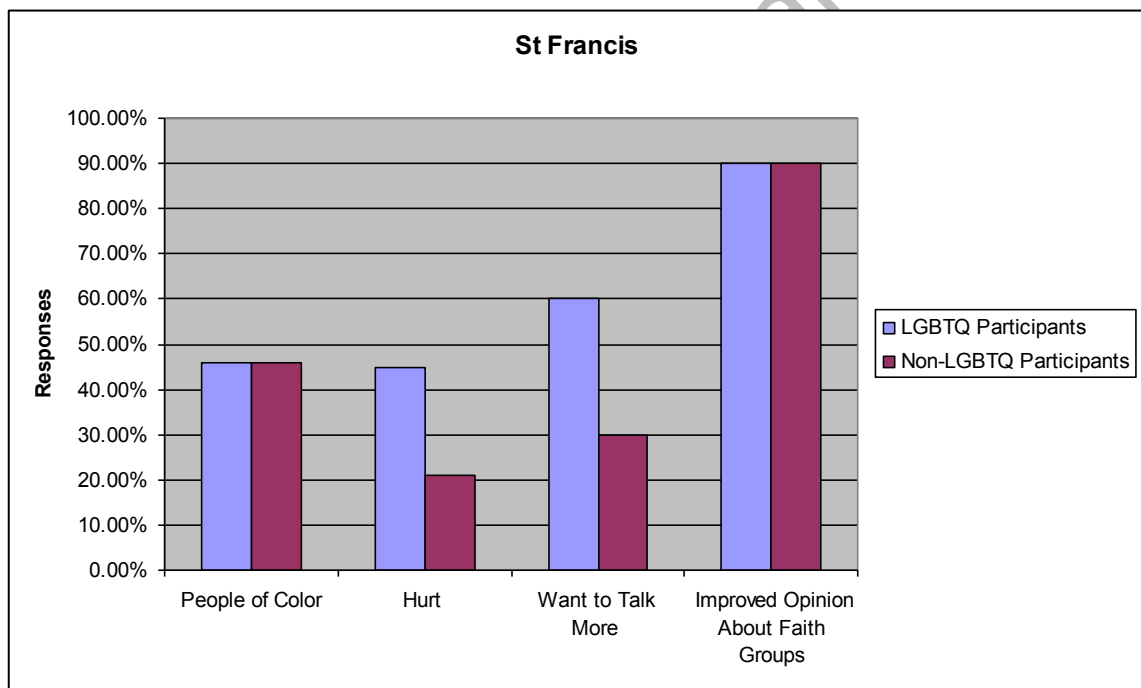
Of the non-LGBTQ participants, all participants who identified their faith identified as Christian (St. Boniface and St. Patrick's Catholic Churches), 100% stated they would like more opportunities to talk about their faith, 40% identified as people of color, 60% attend church and none of the participants reported being hurt by people of faith or faith communities.

When combining the responses of LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ respondents, 93% reported that their participation in faith-based food and support services improved their opinion of faithful people and faith communities, 73% wanted more opportunities to talk about their faith, 59% attend church, 50% identified as people of color and 50% have been hurt by people of faith or faith communities.

#### *Participants at St. Francis Lutheran Church*

Twenty-eight Hospitality Hour participants were surveyed at St. Francis Lutheran's 7:30 am breakfast near the corner of Church and Market in the Castro/Duboce Triangle District of San Francisco. Known worldwide as an LGBTQ friendly neighborhood, I found that the percentage of LGBTQ participants varied dramatically during different times of the month. 73% of the fifteen participants surveyed at the beginning of the month identified as LGBTQ. At the end of the month, when the number of participants coming for meals doubles or triples, 27% of the individuals participating in my survey identified as LGBTQ.

The variance could be caused by a core group of LGBTQ meal participants who are joined by an influx of non-LGBTQ participants at the end of the month when resources get tight. Or, the fluctuation could be due to the transient lifestyle of the participants eating at the meal program. Additional studies are needed to determine the source of the fluctuation. Merging the data from both weeks, 50% of participants surveyed identified as LGBTQ. This even split of participants, provides an opportunity to examine the difference between the faith experiences of LGBTQ participants from the general homeless population at the St. Francis meal program.



Of the LGBTQ respondents, 21% identified as transgender and all of the individuals who identified their sex as female or other, identified as transgender. 100% of the transgender individuals also identified as church attending Christians who had been homeless for a year or less and those who identified their race identified as

women of color. 2/3 of the transgender respondents identified as Lutherans who attend worship at St. Francis.

Of the respondents who identified as gay, 55% identified as people of color. All individuals who listed their faith, identified as Christian (Lutheran, protestant or Catholic) and 38% said they had been hurt by people and communities of faith because of their sexual orientation. 88% of gay respondents, including those who had never been hurt by faith communities or people of faith, said their participation at faith-based meal programs and services improved their opinion of people or communities of faith. And 63% of gay respondents said they wanted St. Francis' Meal program to offer them more opportunities to talk about their faith.

Of the respondents who identified as bisexual, 25% identified as people of color. Those who listed their faith, identified as Christian (Catholic and Jehovah Witness) and 50% stated they had been hurt by people and communities of faith. Yet, 100% of respondents stated their participation at faith based meal programs and services improved their opinion of people or communities of faith and that they would like more opportunities to talk about their faith.

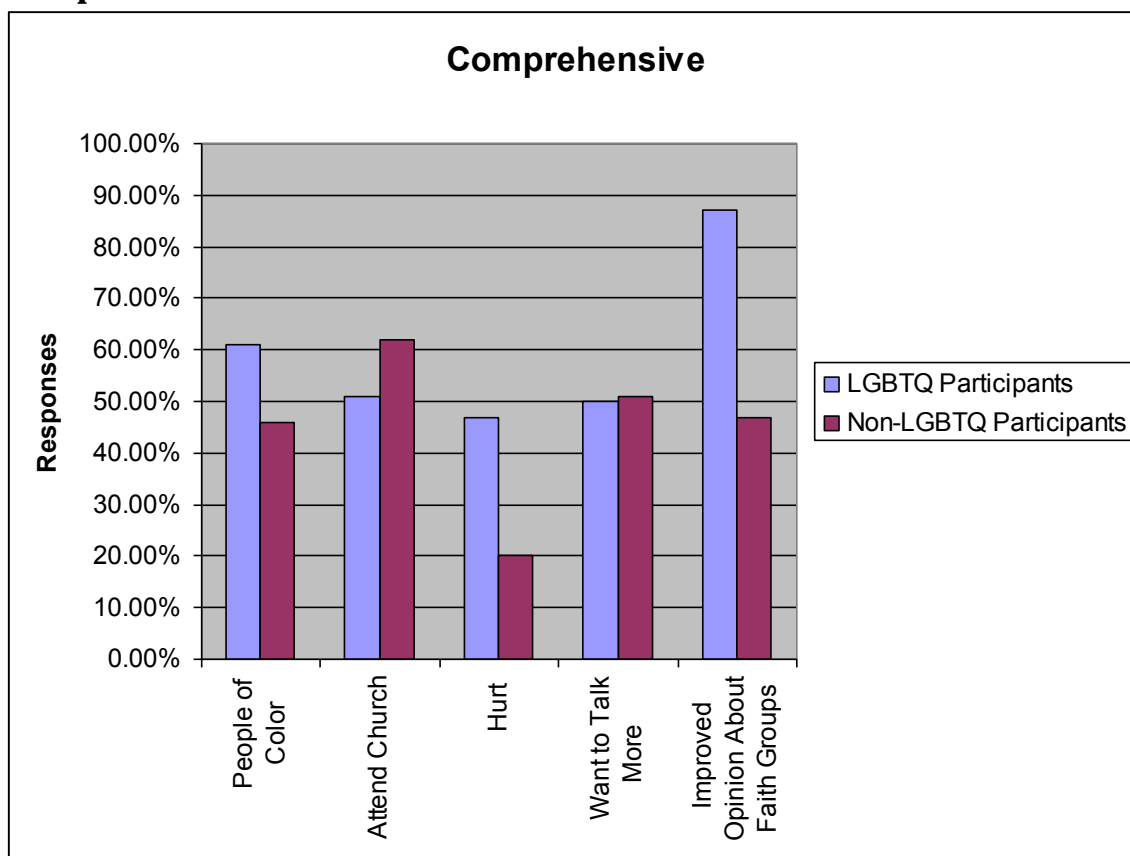
Looking at all LGBTQ respondents, 100% of individuals who provided information identified as Christian, 46% identified as people of color, half had been homeless for a year or less and the other half had been homeless between 3 and 35 years. 45% reported being hurt by people or communities of faith, 90% said that their participation in faith based meal programs and services had improved their opinion of people and

communities of faith and 60% of LGBTQ respondents wanted more opportunities to talk about their faith.

Of the non-LGBTQ respondents, all participants who identified their faith identified as Christian (Episcopal, Catholic, Lutheran), 46% identified as people of color and 71% had been homeless for between 2 and 15 years. 21% reported being hurt by people or communities of faith, 90% said that their participation in faith based meal programs and services had improved their opinion of people and communities of faith and 30% of respondents wanted more opportunities to talk about their faith.

In both the responses of LGBTQ respondents to non-LGBTQ respondents at St. Francis' breakfast program, it is striking to see that 90% of all participants at the program reported that their participation in faith based meal programs and services improved their opinion of people and communities of faith. It is also worth noting that even though twice as many LGBTQ respondents said they had been hurt by people or communities of faith, they were also twice as likely as their non-LGBTQ counterparts to want more opportunities to talk about their faith.

## Comprehensive Results



Of the 78 homeless individuals who participated in my study, 49% identified as LGBTQ. Of the LGBTQ respondents, 61% identified as people of color (82% Latino, 26% African American, 16% Other, 16% Asian Pacific Islander, 16% Native American, 11% “Asian”), 47% gay (78% of these participants also identified as male), 32% bisexual, 29% identified as transgender females and 16% identified their sexual orientation as other.

All respondents who identified their faith, identified as Christian. 51% attend church and of the 47% that have been hurt by people of faith or faith communities, all of the respondents identified the faith communities that hurt them as Christian. 87% of respondents said participation in food and support services had improved their opinion

of people and communities of faith and 50% wanted faith-based groups to provide them with more opportunities to talk about their faith lives.

Of the non-LGBTQ participants surveyed, 46% identified as people of color (75% African American, 19% Latino, 13% Asian Pacific Islander, 6% Native American) and 30% identified as female. 62% attend church and of 20% have been hurt by people of faith or faith communities, all of the respondents identified that the faith communities that hurt them were Christian. 51% of respondents said participation in food and support services had improved their opinion of people and communities of faith and 47% wanted faith-based groups to provide them with more opportunities to talk about their faith lives.

When looking at both groups together, 54% stated they attend church, 32% were hurt by people of faith or faith communities, 85% said participation in food and support services improved their opinion of people and communities of faith and 48% wanted faith-based groups to provide them with more opportunities to talk about their faith lives.

## **Chapter 5: Assessments, Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **Learnings and Recommendations for Faithful Services to Homeless LGBTQ San Franciscans**

Before I begin evaluating the results of my study, I should acknowledge that a survey on faith, may solicit a higher completion rate by people who have a favorable perception of faith. Of those studied, I found a lower number of individuals reported being hurt by people and communities of faith than I expected (by both LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ respondents). It was also notable, in such an urban setting, that everyone who identified their faith, identified as Christian.

With 60% of LGBTQ respondents at St. Francis Lutheran and St. Paulus Friendship Banquet asking for more opportunities to talk about their faith, I encourage both groups to listen to and find ways to support the faith of homeless LGBTQ participants. These faith opportunities may help participants continue healing the hurt they have experienced from people and communities of faith. While it is too much to expect for one study alone, my hope is that studies like this will help people and communities of faith see that LGBTQ individuals, even those who have been hurt, are interested in opportunities to reconnect.

With 85% of all of the homeless participants reporting that their participation in faith-based meal programs improves their opinion of people and communities of faith, this study helps to quantify the positive affect that a “ministry of presence” can have on

participants. I encourage other faith-based organizations to survey their participants and use the data to show the church bodies that consistently cut their funding, how their work is repairing some of the harm that is happening in churches and by abusive religious ideologies. Perhaps additional studies will help congregations see faith-based meal programs as evangelism, with the potential to reconnect people to their faith and faith communities.

Using the best practices created by the Central City Pastors, I recommend that pastors: 1) take the initiative to educate themselves before about issues of race, class, “mental illness,” sexual orientation and gender identities; 2) to understand and that controversy will happen and that proactively informing their ecclesiastical authorities can lead to institutional support; and 3) team ministry makes it possible for people to share power, privilege and resources.

### **In Defense of Ministry of Presence and a Call to Move Beyond It**

For those who undermine, underfund and underestimate Ministry of Presence, I hope this study will provide the validation needed to create, support and fund programs that feed the homeless and provide a listening presence to those who are in need of a pastor. After fourteen years ministering to the homeless in San Francisco, I have evolved from a Ministry of Presence to doing ministry on my toes and I encourage other pastors and homeless advocates who have grown comfortable with Ministry of Presence to work to decrease and eliminate the emergent issues that LGBTQ homeless individuals experience on a regular basis. We must heal, advocate and help people become as self sufficient as they are able and willing to be. Below, I will outline one way pastors can

move beyond a Ministry of Presence, by stepping away from a psychological framework towards a sociological one.

*Diversifying Understandings of the Body*

Sztompka<sup>180</sup> argues that tradition (or society's attempt to construct communal symbols of meaning) can stifle creativity and lead to dysfunctional communal dynamics. While society is often drawn to tradition in times of crisis, change eventually comes when society finds new symbols of meaning. Through agency and praxis, social movements can become forces of change subtly or through revolution.

As I grew up, I began to understand that the word tradition was often used to justify sexism and discrimination. Instead of preserving the best parts of our past, the word seemed to serve as a "get out of jail free card" that people could use to avoid difficult conversations. As we began speaking more honestly about the bumps and bruises that existed in our family, the more agency we seemed to gain over our bodies. For example, in 1986 when my parents got divorced, it was still a taboo. Despite a long history of alcoholics in my family tree, my mother was of the first generation that would flee domestic abuse and get a divorce.

After my father rammed us several times with his car and issued countless death threats the conservative judge was not swayed by her testimony. But, when three other women who were denied restraining orders ended up dead in the same week, the judge decided to take the case seriously. Sadly, my mother's experience is not a new story.

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<sup>180</sup> Sztompka, Piotr, *The Sociology of Social Change*, 1994.

When it comes to understanding the body and the boundaries between men and women, the feminist movement was working for decades to change hearts, minds and traditional ideas about what is “normal.” McCarthy<sup>181</sup> believes that this change can be accomplished by ending the discriminatory assumptions of science.

In response to the active exclusion of women, through the language of science, feminists have begun to construct their own history and to ground their academic discourse in the sociopolitical experiences that shape their lives. Viewing science as culture, feminists believe that today's understandings will shift as constructions about gender, knowledge and race reconstruct over time.

But, science is not the only constructed realm that shapes our ideas about the body. There are likely as many ideas about the body as there are people on the planet. Additionally, each profession has a different perspective on the purpose of the body (utilitarian, capitalistic, esoteric, etc.). According to Gergen,<sup>182</sup> the more viewpoints we learn about, the more we understand the impermanence and relativeness of our knowledge.

Consider the human body, for example. Something exists, but what is it? For example, Plato described the body as a tomb, the disciple Paul as a temple of the Holy Spirit, Descartes as a machine, and the philosopher Jean Paul Sartre that it is none other than the self. For

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181 McCarthy, E. Doyle, *Knowledge as Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1996.

182 Gergen, K. J., *An Invitation to Social Construction* (3rd Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2015.

contemporary marketers, the body – especially a woman’s – is a vehicle for advertising.<sup>183</sup>

From each of their perspectives, Plato, Paul, Descartes and Jean Paul Sarte have a different understanding of the substance of the body. And depending on the time in our life, the time of the month or the time of the day, we may also hold all of these opinions. I know that my understandings of my own body and the bodies of others shifts radically after a difficult break up, birthing a baby or after watching the Olympics. Our bodies can be stretched, worked out or pushed to their limits. And, regardless of what we are actually able to do with our bodies, we humans have always been able to imagine beyond the limits of our skin or our atmosphere. And still, our bodies are so much more than this.

And for many young people today, the body is used as a cultural signal of one’s identity. Both tattoos and body piercing are signs that inform others about “the kind of person I am.” These differences in construction can be very important.<sup>184</sup>

Our body is art, communication and identity. Additionally, the art we put on our bodies can enhance or distract our ability to interact with others. As we embody the values in our hearts and souls to the world, we do so without fully knowing how our bodily expressions will be received, interpreted and felt by others. Beyond a thing that keeps my organs safe, my skin becomes the pages of a book that I can share with others, or keep only for myself and my intimate partner. And still, our bodies are so much more than this.

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

In medicine, for example, a doctor may approach a patient's body as simply "an object to be repaired." From the patient's point of view, [they are] effectively reduced to a piece of meat. The result of this difference may be an insensitivity on the doctor's part to the full and important life situation of the patient. And if mistakes are made in treatment, the chances of a lawsuit are increased.<sup>185</sup>

Each time we walk into a room and people see our body, there are diverse ideas about what we are trying to communicate with our body. What is beautiful to one, is not to another. What is healthy to one, is not to another. Our bodies live in a world where they can simultaneously be perceived as both good and bad at the same time. We may also have this same diversity in our self-esteem. And still, our bodies are so much more than this.

Many people suffer as well from the commonly shared constructions of "beauty." Industries that produce clothing, dental products, weight loss products, health foods, and athletic gear all have an investment in defining the desirable body. And, because of these definitions, we spend billions, support health clubs, pursue exercise regimens, indulge in plastic surgery, and possibly suffer because we cannot "measure up. Particularly as people age, and find themselves defined as undesirable, there is pervasive anguish."<sup>186</sup>

In addition to how we see our bodies, we also have to decide how to clothe our bodies. And, even when we think we look amazing, in a few years the same photo will seem dated in every way imaginable. Or conversely, we might wonder why we couldn't see how beautiful we used to be. And still, our bodies are so much more than this.

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

As therapists propose, the common eating disorders of anorexia and bulimia largely result from the anxiety that adolescent girls confront. In their desire for perfection, they find themselves on regimens from which they cannot escape. Yet, to appreciate the multiple possibilities for reconstruction opens the door to alternatives. As a therapist friend humorously shared, "I had a client once who hated her body. She tried every weight loss program she could find. None of it did any good. Finally she bought a mumu (a tent-like dress popular in Polynesia). She pinned a little card on the front saying 'I survived anorexia.'"<sup>187</sup>

Even if we never learn how to love our bodies, we will spend our whole lives trying to figure out how to feed it. Even if we stop caring about our weight, we will likely have to change our diet as we learn more about our body, its intolerances and try to live as long as we can. And still, our bodies are so much more than this.

There are countless ways that we understand, live in and communicate with our bodies. Yet, the more I examine the many social constructions of the body, the less I feel I understand my own body. In addition to my transgender identity I am also disabled. And if we live long enough, we will all become disabled (if only because our joints and senses will wear out and fade). As a minority, I may never be able to feel comfortable with the definitions and social constructions of the majority. From the margins, the only way to move forward is to imagine a new "normal."

*Imagining Beyond the Binary:*

According to Mills,<sup>188</sup> the sociological imagination draws on social and historical connections that encourage structural changes. Those engaging in sociological

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Mills, C. W., *Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford, 2000.

imagination ask: 1) how society is shaped by structure and order; 2) how the society compares to other historical periods; and 3) the type of conduct (gendered or not) that is thought to be "natural." My sociological imagination begins by remembering the countless societies that honored more than two genders<sup>189</sup> and the individuals who transgressed the gender boundaries of their time, like Sojourner Truth.

Truth, a sharp-tongued preacher who was born a slave, was best known for her extemporaneous speech "Ain't I A Woman?" Discriminated against in intersectional ways throughout her life, Truth was an abolitionist and a proponent of women's rights. When hecklers tried to discredit Truth by calling her a man, she brazenly flashed her breasts at them and continued preaching.

Truth's breasts spoke louder than her words. The heckler tried to raise doubts about Truth's body in order to discredit her. Instead, Truth's breasts and skin color discredited the bigotry and discrimination that was considered "normal" during her day.

Similarly, I must imagine my body as an extension of the journey that my family tree has been living in this world. My life and body is a part of a narrative that lasts beyond the relevance of my ideas, the functionality of my flaps and folds. My body is a praxis. Slater argues:

We'd also have an easier time living if we thought of ourselves as verbs rather than nouns— as events rather than as objects. If we thought, "the universe is John Smith-ing at the moment" (as well as Jane Brown-ing and Betty Green-ing and pelicaning and raccooning and daisy-ing and

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<sup>189</sup> Boswell 1980, 1994, Bullough, et. al. 1997, Greenberg 2004 and Herdt 1994

pebbling). Maybe we wouldn't take ourselves so seriously or get so stuck in rigid and limiting self-concepts.<sup>190</sup>

Instead of wondering if my body is Megan-ing and Ryan-ing, perhaps I should be wondering what Megan-ing and Ryan-ing means for the world. So, I imagine all my intentions, purpose and praxis as my true body. While contemporary politicians fight about which bathroom(s) I should be allowed to use, I'd like to spend my time being the best I can (orthopraxis).

Joan of Arc had a similar philosophy. Certain that their relationship with God and work in the world was more important than gendered questions of politicians, Joan of Arc was killed by a king who demanded again and again that Joan declare their sex. So, it is not enough to imagine the freedom to live outside of the gender binary, we must also create a world where doing so is safe.

Yet, the struggle for equality is as old as time. Countless people have worked, marched and fought for gender justice. The Earth has a very long history of oppression, discrimination and division. Morin contends that "the worst is not yet certain, and the game is not yet over. In the absence of any certainty or even probability, there is the possibility of a better world."<sup>191</sup>

The person I was when I was watching made for T.V. movies and trying to make it through an awkward puberty could never have imagined the life and body that I have today. Similarly, we must believe that the world is forever changed because we exist in

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<sup>190</sup> Slater, P., *The Chrysalis Effect*. Brighton & Portland: Sussex Academic, 2008.

<sup>191</sup> Morin, Edgar and Kern, Anne, *Homeland Earth: A Manifesto for a New Millenium*, 1999.

it. Never before has there been a verb like me or you and because of us the world will never be the same.

When we get stuck in our own prejudicial habits or traditions, “We must overcome our aversion to that which does not conform to our norms and taboos, our enmity for strangers, unto whom we project our fear of the unknown and of strangeness. The stranger should reciprocate, but someone must take the initiative.”<sup>192</sup> As we encounter others in the world, they will change us too.

### *Prophetic Anger*

Yet, our work cannot end with our imagining. We must remember that LGBTQ homeless individuals have very real emergent needs. Larry Kramer is an angry gay man. His first book, Faggots, angered the gay community. Arguing that the gay community’s defiance of monogamy was causing irreparable harm, the provocative narrative was later hailed as prophetic when the HIV/AIDS plague descended upon the gay community.<sup>193</sup> Kramer, and others in the ACT UP movement, used anger to expose the lack of political and medical support for individuals living and dying with HIV/AIDS. Their work resulted in public awareness and medical break throughs that saved the lives of countless individuals.

But, as the drugs became available Kramer saw the gay community slip back into the behaviors that put them at risk. In The Tragedy of Today’s Gay’s, Kramer returns to the familiar prophetic anger that he is known for:

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<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> *Larry Kramer: In Love & Anger*. Directed by Jean Carlomusto. Performed by Larry Kramer. HBO, 2015.

I have recently come to believe that gay men and women are tragic people. We are so wonderful but we are also so fucked up. So blind. So ignorant in ways to look after ourselves. So uninterested in the Outside World that is disappearing us when we thought we were making them pretty and giving them songs to sing. So without agendas. So without any idea how to utilize our wonderfulness. We know who the enemy is and we just stand here letting them shoot us over and over again.<sup>194</sup>

Kramer's harsh words are a stark contrast to the celebrating that many in the LGBTQ individuals are doing in response to the recent political gains that we have experienced. But, we need someone like Kramer to remind our community that much of the abuse, addiction, exploitation and sex work that lead to LGBTQ homelessness and/or exploit LGBT individuals living in poverty is taught, condoned and perpetrated by other LGBTQ individuals.

If we are to end LGBTQ homelessness, we must all become angry prophets like Kramer, condemning the destructive behaviors within LGBTQ community. Or as Kramer bluntly states: "People come up to me now on the streets to say thank you for what you do for us. I do not consider that a compliment. My response quite often has been a curt 'Fuck you! Why aren't you doing it, too?' I don't do anything that anyone else can't do. I just do it."<sup>195</sup>

Readers with varying layers of privilege may hear this call to prophetic anger as extreme or optional. Yet, those living on the margins, in pain or with mental health issues, are unable to stop yelling in the streets. Claudia Rankine, in her poetic expose

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<sup>194</sup> Kramer, Larry. The Tragedy of Today's Gays. New York: Penguin, 2005, 74-5.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid, 77.

about contemporary racial relations, argues that prophetic anger is useful even when it feels disappointing:

You begin to think, maybe erroneously, that this other kind of anger is really a type of knowledge: the type that both clarifies and disappoints. It responds to insult and attempted erasure simply by asserting presence, and the energy required to present, to react, to assert is accompanied by visceral disappointment: a disappointment in the sense that no amount of visibility will alter the ways in which one is perceived.<sup>196</sup>

As a black woman, Rankine's reflections draw upon a deep wisdom that comes from living life at the intersections of many diverse communities. Prophetic anger enables individuals living within diverse intersections to shout back at a world that consistently stereotypes and simplifies. She writes: "The fiction of facts assumes innocence, ignorance, lack of intention, misdirection; the necessary conditions of a certain time and place."<sup>197</sup>

When the world ignores the issues of racism, mental health, addiction and high housing costs and spins a story that homeless people deserve their fate because they are irresponsible, we must respond with prophetic anger. When it is acceptable for parents to abuse, abandon and kick out their LGBT youth when they come out, we must respond with prophetic anger. When stories proclaim "gay affluence" when disproportionate amounts of the community are homeless and hungry, we must respond with prophetic anger. When people lie and imagine that God is only able to love people who follow their rules, we must respond with prophetic anger.

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<sup>196</sup> Rankine, Claudia. Citizen: An American Lyric. Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf Press, 2014, 24.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid, 83.

With God(dess)'s help, our prophetic anger can bring justice to the world. But, we must not let our prophetic anger increase the PTSD that we have already collected. Rankine reminds us, "the world is wrong. You can't put the past behind you. It's buried in you; it's turned your flesh into its own cupboard. Not everything remembered is useful but it all comes from the world to be stored in you."<sup>198</sup> Prophetic anger is useful, but it also must end. Even Jeremiah stopped screaming eventually.

### **Solo Gratia**

*God(dess)'s anger is but a moment. God(dess)'s love lasts forever. - Psalm 30:5*

Just as God(dess) is able to hold in tension all the work that is left undone, while simultaneously and fully reconciling us through grace alone, we must share the grace that we have received with LGBTQ homeless individuals. It is not enough to feed hungry bellies. We must also provide the space for those who are interested to heal from spiritual abuse, to share their stories and to grow in faith.

Church and society have begun the atonement process. Many denominations have taken great strides to become more just and loving. They are beginning to accept LGBTQ individuals as congregants and pastors. But, we can neither fix all the harms of the past, nor forget the injustice. We can however, remind LGBTQ individuals that the grace of God(dess) is offered to all people no matter how often they have been lied to about it. God(dess) does not judge us on our worst moments. Rather, God(dess) tries

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid, 63.

everything: clay sculptures, floods, volcanoes, whales, prophets, trumpets, deliverance from slavery and even life, death and resurrection.

When others proclaim John 3:16 in an attempt to get us to follow the strict rules that govern their life and faith, we should proclaim boldly John 3:17: “[God(dess)] did not send [their] Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”<sup>199</sup>

This resurrected Jesus that appears to the disciples and others and feeds them fish, can be found in the hearts and hands of the volunteers and staff at faith-based meal programs. As we continue to care for this vulnerable population, I pray we will also raise our voices against faithful scapegoating of whomever becomes the next generations black sheep.

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<sup>199</sup> New International Version (NIV).

## **Appendix**

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## **Appendix 1: Human Subject Protocol**

*Pacific School of Religion, Doctor of Ministry Candidate: Rev. Megan Rohrer*

Project Title: Solo Gratia: An analysis of the faith and faith experience of LGBTQ homeless and hungry individuals living in San Francisco

Nature and Purpose of the Research: This project will attempt to quantify the faith experiences of the LGBTQ homeless in San Francisco and understand if participating in Lutheran ministries of presence have a positive effect on the faith lives of participants. I hope to learn: 1) if there is a quantifiable difference between the general homeless population and homeless LGBTQ individuals' experience with faith and faith communities; and 2) if the ministry of presence provided at Lutheran meal programs and the Night Ministry to LGBTQ homeless and hungry individuals helps to repair harm or abuse this population might have experienced.

My plan is to collect 100 surveys from unique participants including: 20 surveys of LGBTQ homeless individuals in the Castro or Polk districts while out with the Night Ministry; 20 surveys of LGBTQ homeless individuals at St. Francis Lutheran's meal programs; 10 surveys of LGBTQ homeless individuals at the St. Paulus Lutheran's Friendship Banquet for HIV+ individuals; and 50 control surveys of the general homeless population at Project Homeless Connect.

The Research Procedures: I will survey participants through written surveys they can either complete on their own or have conducted as an interview. Interviews will take place in a confidential space on the streets, at St. Francis Lutheran, St. Paulus Lutheran and Old First Presbyterian churches, and at the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium. To avoid triggering participants, tape recorders will not be used in this project.

Certain people will be excluded from the study, i.e., youth under 18, those who are intoxicated or actively under the influence of other substances, and to the best of my determination, those incapacitated by mental illness.

I intend only one interview per subject; the interview should last between 15 to 30 minutes. Participants will be assigned random numbers for their survey to ensure the results remain confidential.

Subject Recruitment and Selection: Subjects will be selected at random, from the pool of individuals that happen to be utilizing services at St. Francis and St. Paulus Lutheran meal programs, Project Homeless Connect and in the Castro and Polk Gulch neighborhoods.

I will ask homeless individuals if they are interested in participating in my survey and exclude anyone from the study who is not able to articulate a basic understanding of their rights as a participant or of the purposes of the research study.

Previous Relationship with the Subjects: After 13 years of working primarily with LGBTQ homeless and hungry individuals and a regular presence at each of the Lutheran ministry locations it is possible that some of the participants will know me as a pastor who has served them food or ministered to them. However, as my role has changed and I am primarily the pastor of a congregation, I do not have any real power over the programs or lives of the individuals that I will be surveying.

Individuals who have had a prior relationship with me will be informed verbally and in writing that they have the choice not to participate in the research, to stop the interview at any time if it becomes uncomfortable, and to request that record of their interview/survey be destroyed.

Due to the transient nature of the population it is likely that most people completing surveys will not have a previous relationship with me.

Risks and Benefits:

- *Benefits:* In the long term, participants may benefit from advocacy work done after the survey results are release.
- *Risks:* Individuals who come out as LGBTQ and are seen participating in the study in a public location, may risk of violence and discrimination. Individuals who share information that reminds them of violence or difficult times in their life may experience post traumatic experiences or an onset of mental health issues. When necessary, individuals who are triggered by the study will be given support resources and harm reduction information.

Confidentiality: As described above, individuals will be assigned random numbers for their survey. Written surveys will be shredded after the information is entered into a password protected database. The data will be maintained either for two years or until after research materials have been published in a peer reviewed journal, whichever comes first. In the event of my death, my next of kin and church council president have been advised to destroy all of the password protected information on my computer.

I will notify participants verbally and in writing that if I learn that someone is a danger to themselves or others I will report this information. With this advance notification, participants may choose not to participate in the interview if they have any concerns for fears about the loss of confidentiality.

## **Appendix 2: Consent Form**

*Doctor of Ministry Candidate: Megan Rohrer*

*Pacific School of Religion*

My name is Megan Rohrer and I am a Doctor of Ministry (DMin) candidate at the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley. I invite you to participate in research I am doing for my DMin project. I am researching the faith lives of homeless individuals in San Francisco

You can help by allowing me to interview you on this topic and your stories will be invaluable. I have questions prepared but I am also very interested in hearing anything you have to add on this topic.

The questions in my survey will take 15 minutes or less to complete. The interview can be held in whatever place is best for you. If you so choose, you can fill out my survey or I can read the questions and fill it out with you. During the interview, you are free to not answer any question and you can back out of the interview and the study at any time.

I will assign you a number ("respondent #\_\_\_") so your name will not appear in the project and no one will be able to identify you by what you say to me.

My survey focuses on your experience with faith and faith communities, but if you share that you or someone else is a danger to self or someone else, I will am obligated to report the information. You may choose not to share information of this nature, not to participate in the survey or at any time withdraw your consent for your information to be used in my research if you have any concerns about the information you will/have reported.

While I will retain all intellectual and commercial rights to the interview materials (copyright), I freely consent to give you access to the materials pertaining to your interview.

I can be reached at (415) 731-1305 or at streetvicar@gmail.com.

*Thank you for your participation!*

I \_\_\_\_\_ voluntarily and \_\_\_\_\_ (please  
print name)

with understanding consent to be interviewed by Megan Rohrer as a participant in  
Megan's DMin project research on the faith life of homeless individuals in San Francisco.  
I understand that I am free to terminate the interview and/or withdraw from the  
research project at any time.

Please sign here \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Appendix 3: Survey on Faith and Homelessness**

*Doctor of Ministry Candidate: Megan Rohrer*

*Pacific School of Religion*

#### *Demographic Information:*

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Race(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Sex: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Do you identify as Transgender? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Sexual Orientation: \_\_\_\_\_ Straight \_\_\_\_\_ Gay \_\_\_\_\_ Bisexual \_\_\_\_\_ Other

How long have you lived in San Francisco? \_\_\_\_\_ years

How long have you been homeless? \_\_\_\_\_ years

#### *Faith Information:*

How do you describe your faith?

Do you attend church services? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, where:

Have you been hurt by people of faith or a faith community? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes,

What city was it in?

What kind of faith community?

What was the issue?

Have you received food, support or services from faith-based organizations? ☐ Yes  
☐ No

If yes,

Do you think the faith of the organization or volunteers changes the way the  
offer services? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, how?

Does your experience at faith-based meal, support and service programs improve your  
opinion of people and communities of faith?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I never had a problem with  
people or communities of faith

Would you like faith-based meal, support and service programs to provide more  
opportunities for you to talk about your faith? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, what kind of faithful activities would you be interested in?

What do you think faith groups should do to support homeless people in San Francisco?

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