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Academic Excellence, Public Responsibility, and Theological
Formation

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Rooted in Love, Renewed in Relationship
*Reweaving the Relational Body Politic through Theological
Dialogues of Love, Power, and Public Health Justice*

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Introduction to Political Theology, Fall 2025
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We are not strangers to one another.
We are not fragments, scattered and alone.
We are a *shared body remembering itself*.

A holy interruption... a summons to return.

Let Love Flow Again.

Not as sentiment —
but as **structure**.
Not as **idea** — but as *design*.



Let Justice Circulate.

Through every system,
Through every barrier,
With every **breath** of change.



Let Belonging Take Root.

In our communities,
In our institutions,
In every **heart** ready to heal.

Until Policy Becomes Care in Motion.

Until *the Body Remembers*,
We *Belong to One Another*.



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Relational Body Politic Covenantal Public Health Framework

Outcomes: Trust • Health • Cohesion • Flourishing

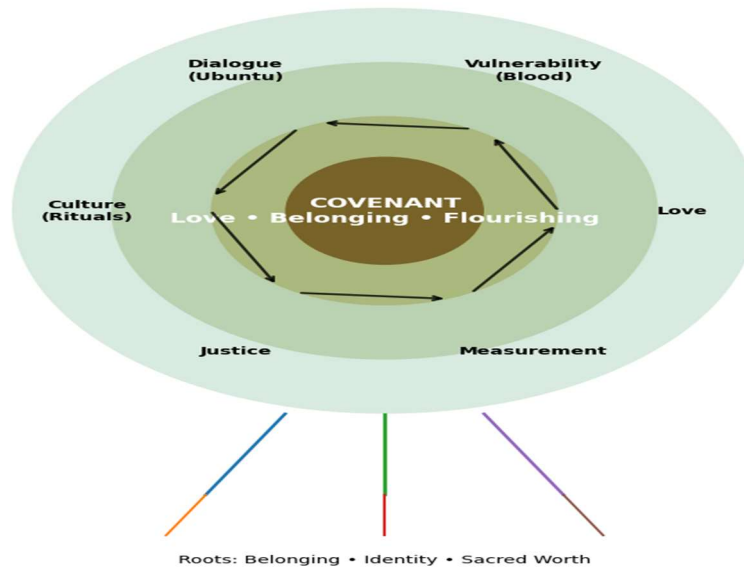


Figure 1. The Relational Body Politic: A Covenantal Public Health Framework

This figure presents a constructive public-theological model of health as a **relational, covenantal system** grounded in love, belonging, and shared vulnerability. At the center lies *covenant* operationalized as love, belonging, and flourishing which functions as the moral and relational core of the body politic.¹ Surrounding this core are six interdependent dimensions: (1) unitive and contributory love,² (2) shared vulnerability (“blood”),³ (3) dialogical governance (Ubuntu/Puo Pha),⁴ (4) communal moral imagination (culture and ritual),⁵ (5) justice-centered structural reform,⁶ and (6) empirical measurement of well-being.⁷

The circular flow represents “**moral cardiology**”—the circulation of care, trust, justice, and relational accountability across social systems.⁸ The root structure signifies the ontological grounding of public health in belonging, identity, and sacred worth,⁹ while the outer ring reflects empirically measurable outcomes such as trust, social cohesion, and flourishing, as supported by contemporary well-being research.¹⁰

The model integrates insights from Black theology, womanist ethics, African public theology, political theory, and social epidemiology to propose a **Covenantal Public Health Ethic** in which love functions as both theological principle and structural determinant of health.¹¹

Core Claim:

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Public health is not merely a technical system it is a **relational ecosystem**.¹² Its health depends on the circulation of love, trust, justice, and belonging.¹³

Covenant: Love • Belonging • Flourishing

Covenant names the shared moral commitment that binds communities together.¹⁴ It is the **heart of the system** the source from which all care flows.¹⁵

Six Dimensions of the Relational Body Politic: A Covenantal Public Health Ethic

Love (Unitive + Contributory)

Desire for connection + commitment to the good of others²
Expressed through care networks, mutual aid, and community life

Vulnerability (Blood)

Shared biological and social fragility³
Calls for equitable healthcare and life-supporting systems

Dialogue (Ubuntu / Puo Pha)

“I am because we are”⁴
Truth and policy emerge through relational participation

Culture (Rituals & Narrative)

Shared meals, storytelling, worship, communal practices⁵
Shapes belonging and moral imagination

Justice (Structural Equity)

Addressing inequality, corruption, and systemic harm⁶
Aligning policy with dignity and fairness

Measurement (Well-being Metrics)

Beyond disease: trust, happiness, belonging, life satisfaction⁷
Informed by global well-being research

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Moral Cardiology (Circulation of Care)

Health flows through the system as:

Love → Trust → Care → Justice → Belonging → Flourishing⁸

When this circulation is disrupted, the body politic experiences harm.

When it flows, communities flourish.

Belonging – We are created for relationship⁹

Identity – Every person holds sacred worth

Theology & Ethics – Moral frameworks shape public life

Lived Experience – Knowledge emerges from community

Roots (Foundational Truths)

Outcomes (What Flourishing Looks Like)

Increased trust

Reduced isolation

Improved health outcomes

Greater social cohesion

Measurable well-being¹⁰

Key Insights

Love is not merely a value, it is **infrastructure**.¹¹

The measure of our health is the measure of our love circulating through **every policy, every practice, every person**

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Rooted Dedication

There are moments in a project where you can actually trace where something *started*—and just as clearly, where it got stretched, pressed, and grown into what it was always trying to become. I want to begin by offering deep gratitude to **Dr. Heesung**. Igniting Vibrant Ventures (IVV) is where this project first took root. The IVV space allowed the questions to show up before they were polished before they were fully formed. It gave room for curiosity, for wrestling, for naming something I could feel but didn't yet have full language for. What began there wasn't finished yet it was honest *and* it was alive.

And then, **Dr. Leonard**. That's where the work got **worked**. There was a "go deeper" that came at times regrettably (in those moments when I thought I was *done*), yet also joyfully and willingly received. Because it was that very push—**that insistence**—that would not let the work settle too quickly—that forced me back into the text, back into the questions, back into myself.

It looked like *all* day Saturday in the library.

It sounded like this isn't quite there yet.

It felt like rewriting...rethinking...reframing...again and again.

And somewhere in that tension between frustration and gratitude, between exhaustion and curiosity something shifted. What began as intuition had to become argument. What felt compelling had to become coherent. What I thought I knew had to be tested, stretched, and, at times, undone so it could be rebuilt with greater clarity and integrity. That "go deeper" didn't just refine the project it expanded my capacity to think, to write, and to hold complexity without rushing to resolution. For that, I am deeply grateful.

I would be remiss if I did not name **Dr. Lisa**. For giving the nod and not just the nod, but that gentle, *persistent push* to be creative...to actually use my creativity, including poetry as a way of expression. There was an invitation there, quiet but steady: to trust my voice, to lean into the poetic, the relational, the embodied parts of this work that don't always fit neatly into academic boxes. Not to abandon rigor but to expand it. To allow imagination, story, and spirit to sit at the table alongside theory and data. In doing so, poetry became more than expression—it became translation. It helped me take thoughts, concepts, and complexity, and render them in ways that could be felt, heard, and more easily understood. It gave language to what was sitting beneath the argument and allowed the work to breathe in a different way. That encouragement mattered more than I can fully name. Because it gave me permission not to perform, but to be whole in the work. And that, too, shaped what this project became.

And to **my classmates**...thank you, truly. For the conversations, the side comments, the "have you thought about..." moments, the gentle redirects, and the necessary challenges. There were times when a single sentence from one of you shifted how I was seeing everything. Times when a question opened something up that I hadn't considered. Times when affirmation reminded me to keep going when I was deep in it. This project/paper/passion carries those conversations in it. What has come together here isn't something I built alone, it's something that was shaped in community. In dialogue. In critique. In encouragement. In (re)direction along the way.

Where no one has gone before guided not by dominance, but by Presence: *the* Force as relational power, shaping systems of care, courage, and belonging.

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ROOTED IN LOVE, RENEWED IN RELATIONSHIP

A Covenantal Public Health Ethic

The health of a society is the measure of its love.
Public health crises are relational and **theological failures** —
revealing breakdowns in how we live, care, and belong together.

CORE THESIS

Health is not individual.
It is **relational, communal, and systemic**.
Public health is moral and relational infrastructure.

THE FOUR INTERWOVEN STREAMS

LOVE Structure, not sentiment Design systems of care and dignity.	BLOOD Shared Vulnerability Justice must flow.	DIALOGUE Participatory Truth Voice, listen, engage.	BELONGING The Measure of Health To be seen, known, connected.
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MORAL CIRCULATION FRAMEWORK



KEY MESSAGES

- Public health is a crisis of relationship.
- Belonging is as critical as medicine.
- Data without empathy is injustice.
- Justice is reconnection.

RELATIONAL HEALTH AUDIT

Ask of every system:

- Do impacted voices matter?
- Is trust sustained?
- Who is left out or unseen?

*Let love flow... Let justice circulate...
Let belonging take root.*

Robert (Bobby) L. Wiseman, Jr.

Public Health Theologian • Scholar-Practitioner

Advancing **Relational Public Health Theology** through care-centered systems,
community-engaged practice, and institutional transformation.

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