

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

**Understanding the Sources of Hurt and Wounded Members in the Church
of Pentecost Norfolk**

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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Church hurt is an emotional feeling that disconnects a person from reality, and remains a neglected topic in many Pentecostal churches. In the church setting, hurt members who are broken inside often portray an attitude of wholeness on the outside, even if the physical, spiritual, and physiological atmosphere of hurt prevents them from fully connecting or interacting with others. That hurt eventually hinders their growth, the growth of others, and the potential of the whole church. In this thesis, the researcher investigates the causes of church hurt experienced by members of COP Norfolk, a US subsidiary of the global Christian organization, The Church of Pentecost (COP). The researcher engaged fifteen participants in interviews and seminars to understand better the nuances of the emotional pain experienced by these individuals. Among the findings is the expectation that Christians should ignore their feelings when hurt and how the fear of being judged prevents congregants from freely expressing their feelings of hurt. The researcher discovered that the culture of the most dominant Ghanaian population could also be one of the sources of hurt. As a result of this research, the root causes of hurt discovered will help incite honest conversations among the leadership and members of COP Norfolk that will encourage healing and forgiveness among hurt congregants. The research results will further bring the leadership of COP Norfolk to a place of awareness, providing an atmosphere that breeds authentic growth among members at all levels.

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Abbreviations

DMIN	<i>Doctor of Ministry</i>
COP	<i>The Church of Pentecost, Worldwide</i>
COP Norfolk	<i>The Church of Pentecost, Norfolk</i>
EEFOF	<i>Expression Encourages Freedom of Worship</i>
ACCSP	<i>Assumption, Caging, Culture, Silence, Privacy</i>
SPEAK	<i>Speak Respectfully, Practice Preaching, Evaluate Hurt Lessening Options, Adjust, Know Members Personall</i>

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The notion that one should not express or show hurtful feelings is held to be true in some Christian circles. This concept is consequently fictional since many are hurt in the church but cannot express it. Penny Pasque, a researcher into the culture of silence in churches, states, “Institutional structure unwittingly creates and perpetuates silence about these problems by not having adequate policies, or by discouraging, dismissing, or minimizing incident reports. Silence can result from powerlessness, denial, embarrassment, fear of retaliation, or lack of knowledge about actions to take. Though remaining silent is a survival strategy from some, it allows injustice to foment and become embedded in the institutional culture.”¹ When one experiences such a hurtful feeling, it may make them withdraw because they cannot express their hurt.

The researcher has had experiences of this nature while growing up in a Pentecostal setting. These experiences created a culture of silence making it unlikely the person will express how they are feeling. Professor Sandra D. Wilson expands on this point, “In our sin-broken humanness, we normally adopt defensive, self-protective thinking and behavior patterns when we feel emotionally or relationally threatened and wounded.”² To Wilson’s point, one can say that people are not only hurt within the church, but anywhere two or more gather. As a Pentecostal clergyperson, the researcher has come across many who were hurt, resulting in burn out or a loss of their zeal for ministry.

The word hurt or wound is used to describe a person's undesirable emotional reaction when a feeling of humiliation singles them out as the wrong one. Wounds or hurt could also be

¹ Penny A. Pasque, *Disrupting the Culture of Silence: Confronting Gender Inequality and Making Change in Higher Education*. (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC, 2015), Retrieved from <http://books.google.com>

² Sandra D. Wilson, *Hurt People Hurt People: Hope and Healing for Yourself and Your Relationships*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Our Daily Bread Publishing, 2010), Retrieved from <http://books.google.com>

viewed as the punishment that a person levies on themselves when another hurts them. The point described usually happens when the person in question puts a needless load on themselves.

Ultimately, hurt or a wound makes them unable to minister and be ministered to in the most befitting way. The researcher gleaned reasons why people experience hurt from Sheriyse Williams, who also researched hurt among black congregants. Williams relates most hurts among black congregants to leadership deficiency by stating that,

Another possible reason connected to trauma experienced by some African Americans in the Black Church includes unhealthy leadership traits. Narcissistic and authoritative leaders have the potential to generate toxic environments for congregants. Their insulting, demeaning, and aggressive demeanor has caused some congregants to become distant from God, resulting in traumatic experiences (Ruffing et al., 2018). In addition, congregants take on the pulse of their leader and become an extension of them, creating traumatic situations for some congregants in the Black Church as well. Mahlangu (2020) asserted that followers are discouraged from thinking critically or independently of their leader. Moreover, groupthink may cause congregants to support a toxic leader while betraying their peers.³

The insights above show that hurt people may also have an unconventional connection with God. Once people lose contact with God, they may not be well-disposed to treat others right, causing them to wound others or themselves. Many people assume that humans should be perfect beings who cannot and should not do anything wrong to hurt others or themselves. However, these ideas, as thought by many, may be faulty. The researcher posits that God's word and prayer should form the basis for lessening the effects of the hurt. Stephen Macchia, a publisher with the Gospel Publishing Group, writes on the characteristics of healthy churches beautifully puts this idea by stating, "Yes, the Scriptures and prayer are the bedrock of our existence as Christ's followers yesterday, today, and forever. When it comes to the word [sic],

³ Sheriyse Williams, *"Evaluating Church Hurt in the Black Church."* PhD diss., Walden University, 2023.

studying, reflecting on, and obedience to the Word of God and cultivating our relationship with the Almighty One in prayer is to permeate our experience and expression as Christians.”⁴

Therefore, the researcher seeks to bring awareness that hurt or wounds, used interchangeably, are inevitable if humans interact with each other. This awareness creates the need to focus on certain obvious hurtful occurrences. It should also drive the thoughts about the conditions, environments, and individuals that may cause hurt and wounds. After understanding these sources of hurt, the researcher believes a discussion and awareness of strategies to minimize hurt will begin in the minds of the concerned individual. Thus, the project will investigate the pains resulting from hurts COP Norfolk, a US subsidiary of The Church of Pentecost (COP) International, as a case study.

Hurts have not just been a subject of the present time but have existed since the inception of time. For example, consider the hurt Adam and Eve might have experienced after sinning and consequently being expelled from the Garden. This researcher uses the example of the Edenic relationship between man and God to buttress the point that when one is hurt, it could potentially make the person who feels the hurt experience an atmosphere of ostracization among many people. Clearly, though ostracization characterizes this kind of discipline, one could say that it was to incite restoration in the end. To this point, the proponents of church discipline, John Hammett and Benjamin Merkle note,

Conclude that Jesus and Paul teach the necessity of corrective discipline, but it emphasizes throughout that the motivation is living a meaningful life and the goal is restoration. Vivid examples of the practice of discipline throughout church history, with particular attention given to the prominence of discipline among Baptists in North America through the latter part of the nineteenth century and the subsequent decline. He acknowledges that Christians have found discipline difficult and irksome but have

⁴ Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1999), 21-23.

maintained it for one principle: Jesus commanded it.⁵

Further, after the fall in the Garden of Eden, though Adam and Eve were wrong, they might have had a bitter experience and consequently become predisposed to hurt. It is a fact that people get hurt because of the consequences of humanity's sinful nature. However, it is also a fact that there could be ways to minimize the hurt. Until the introduction of sin, people lived peacefully in the Garden of Eden. However, hurt became part of human life when sin entered the world.

When sin occurred, Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden. Sin created a separation between God and people opening the door to wounds and wounding. The New Testament also provides an example of a person who experienced several kinds of hurt for over a decade. The woman with the issue of blood had a health issue that caused her to bleed for twelve years. One can only imagine this woman's daily physical pain, not to mention the emotional impact of being treated like an outcast. The researcher hopes that after identifying some of the areas that create hurt and wounds in COP Norfolk, the project will identify methodologies to minimize the hurt that causes an Edenic-like environment within all the relationships in the church.

To help leadership determine the way forward, the researcher intimates once again that the study though does not focus on eradicating hurts completely, aims at providing some resources for COP Norfolk's growth. Since many organizations like churches mainly utilize systems and people for their growth, it will be necessary for leadership to explore prospects of systemic enhancement but more importantly human development. There is a tendency for leadership to look more at enhancing the system but neglecting the people who interact with the

⁵ John S. Hammett and Benjamin L. Merkle, eds. *Those Who Must Give an Account: A Study of Church Membership and Church Discipline* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 54.

system. Though the paper majorly discusses systemic reasons for hurts, it will be important for Norfolk COP leadership to begin looking into hearing the voice of the people during general planning activities. The reason for this suggestion is to afford leadership a balanced perspective while planning. The planning or decisions would rather be people-centered than system centered.

Ministry Context

Pentecostal churches are protestant denominations emphasizing the work of the Holy Spirit and His activities in believers. This idea normally shows in the liturgy of their corporate gatherings. Most Pentecostal Churches draw their inspiration from the upper room experience recorded in Acts 2. Therefore, the recent perception of people regarding Pentecost, especially in the United States, is often associated with the Azusa street revival. It is noteworthy to reference William Seymour's episode,

From Azusa street onward, there has been the sense that the Pentecostal revival was for all people and, so far, all Christians. Cecil M. Robert Jr. has often reminded fellow Pentecostals that Azusa Street William Seymour had expressed a vision for Christian unity: We stand as assemblies and missions in perfect harmony. Azusa stands for the unity of God's people everywhere. God is uniting his people, baptizing them by one Spirit into one body. This conviction about unity presupposes that Pentecostal revival is for all Christians.⁶

To the point above, this researcher gleans the idea that Pentecostalism does not only emphasize the presence and works of the Spirit; it is also a platform where there should be an openness to uniting people's viewpoints as it relates to their comforts and feelings about hurts. The most important point to establish here is that the Bible must be the yardstick for all activities and structures of the church. In the end, though Azusa is the bedrock of many Pentecostal churches, The Church of Pentecost traces its roots to an overflow of the Azusa street experience

⁶ Peter D. Hocken, *Azusa, Rome, and Zion: Pentecostal Faith, Catholic Reform, and Jewish Roots*. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016), 33.

to Ireland and the United Kingdom, which propelled the Apostolic church to send a missionary to Ghana, West Africa. Leonard Christian, a prolific writer states, “The antecedent which led to the founding of The Church of Pentecost in 1953 traces its roots to the missionary work of Pastor James McKeown, a 37-year-old Irish who in 1937 traveled to Asamankese in the Eastern Region of Ghana.”⁷ A researcher who researched the lifestyles of Pentecostals in the diaspora, Girish Daswani, many years after, suggests that,

While an ideology of rupture is central to understanding Pentecostal Christianity in Ghana, not enough attention has been given to the moral relationships and ritual practices that help sustain a Pentecostal transformation and its situational application in different contexts. By comparing the experiences of members of the Church of Pentecost (COP) in Ghana and London, Pentecostal transformation provides church members with an ethical framework that helps them cope with unhealthy relationships, witchcraft attacks, and migration, albeit differently. While promoting discontinuity, individuality, and positive change, it is evident that Pentecostal transformation raises concerns about continuity, communality, and negativity.⁸

Girish makes a profound observation of how people get hurt in most Pentecostal churches. The researcher will discuss this later in the project. To a large extent, Girish emphasized the fact that parishioners may have to take the time and effort to work on building stronger relationships, otherwise, it may cause more people to be hurt in churches. Attention was also drawn to the fact that many churches in the diaspora now are not able to articulate their hurts because they have gone through several portions of hurt.

Cultural differences are unignorable since the church has crossed the Ghanaian borders. The researcher agrees that “The phenomenal growth of The Church of Pentecost, its ubiquitous presence, clout, and influence in Ghanaian religious and social-political life, is something which

⁷ Leonard Christian, *A Giant in Ghana* (United Kingdom, Chichester: New Wine Press Ltd. 1985), 5.

⁸ Daswani Girish, "Transformation and migration among members of a Pentecostal Church in Ghana and London." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 40, no. 4 (2010): 442-74.

cannot be denied or marginalized. Besides the Ghanaian influence, its overwhelming global growth, unique spread method, and sustenance are worth noting. The reason is that the COP has dwelt on existing growth methods of churches and organizations.”⁹ This assertion forms part of why the researcher looks into the project; understanding the sources of hurt in the COP Norfolk is subtly addressed as a congregation. Headquartered in Ghana, West Africa, The Church of Pentecost (COP) is one of the fastest-growing Pentecostal churches in the world today. To buttress this point, the chairman of the COP, “Apostle Eric Nyamekye, also revealed that the global membership of The Church of Pentecost had hit three million, nine hundred and one thousand, four hundred (3,901,400) as of December 31, 2021.

Currently, The Church of Pentecost, one of the biggest global Pentecostal churches, branches in 135 other nations.”¹⁰ Since its inception in the late thirties, the astute pioneering work done by its founder, an Irish Missionary, Pastor James McKeown, has catapulted the church into a global organization with branches in 135 nations. Two former heads of the church, referred to as chairmen, Apostles Professor Opoku Onyinah and Dr. Michael Kwabena Ntumu, affirmed that “The spread of COP, the extent of spread and development in Ghana and its expansion into the world's nations baffles many missiologists, observers, and researchers.”¹¹ The vision reached the United States of America in the late eighties, and the year 2003 saw the church's establishment in Norfolk, Virginia.

⁹ The Church of Pentecost General Headquarters, *God's Faithfulness to The Church of Pentecost* (Mumbai, India: Quarterfold Printabilities, 2019), 14.

¹⁰ “The Modern Ghana News,” The Church of Pentecost Membership, Accessed August 28, 2022, <https://www.modernghana.com/news/1155852/the-church-of-pentecost-membership-hits-over-33mi.html>

¹¹ Opoku Onyinah and Michael Ntumu, *Into the World We Go: The Missionary Enterprise of The Church of Pentecost* (Mumbai: Quarterfold Printabilities, 2016), 14.

According to Professor Kwabena Agyapong-Kodua, the Pentecost University rector, “The growth pattern of COP contradicts fundamental organizational processes and strategies for enacting growth.”¹² However, the researcher agrees with Dr. Mbanyane Mhango, the president of Pentecost Biblical Seminary, in his description of Pentecostalism, “Although Pentecostals have historically distanced themselves from sacramental thinking, the claim that believers are sacraments resonate with Pentecostal thought and praxis. This strong position is because Pentecostalism accents Spirit encounters¹³ or experiences.¹⁴ These Spirit experiences are palpable or concrete. Hence, they shape and inform the sacramentality of believers, making all believers deem the Spirit manifestations seriously.”¹⁵ In context to the project, it means that being sensitive to the Spirit’s leading as Pentecostals should bring the church to a place where members are free from hurtful experiences. It also means that leaders and members should place themselves in a teaching mode so the Spirit leads while all follow.

Overview of COP Norfolk

The COP Norfolk District currently has about 330 members. Norfolk is a military city in Virginia, with several families that fellowship at COP Norfolk. While a majority are naval sailors, others belong to the US army, and the rest affiliate with the military in one way or another. One can describe a small portion of the church's population as civilians who are either

¹² Kwabena Agyapong-Kodua, *Factors Accounting for the Phenomenal Growth and Spread of COP Missions, Into the World We Go: The Missionary Enterprise of the Church of Pentecost* (Mumbai: Quarterfold Printerilities, 2016), 15.

¹³ Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (London and New York: T&T. Clark, 2008), 14.

¹⁴ Peter D. Neumann, *Pentecostal Experience: An Ecumenical Encounter* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 45.

¹⁵ Mhango Mbanyane, *Believers Sacraments – Manifesting the Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2021), xiii.

students or working adults. The researcher describes Norfolk as a melting pot of a systemically dynamic city because of its structural and revolving nature. Norfolk is surrounded by other smaller cities and has become a hub where people visit to conduct business. A few anthropologists got together to describe the city, underscored in the excerpt below, and three anthropologists described the city as being:

Hydrodynamic in terms of water level measurement makes it a hurricane-prone city. Hurricane Isabel was used to simulate two synthesized storms representing 50-year and 100-year return-period hurricanes. The Chesapeake Bay, which was used as a test case for future hurricane episodes, gave much awareness of the city's military presence. Norfolk is a naval base in its topography. The nearshore water body of Hampton Roads was included in the coastal modeling system (CMS), a suite of the surge, circulation, wave, sediment transport, and morphology evolution models. The modeling domain was a rectangular area covering the entire Naval Station Norfolk in the Hampton Roads and the mouths of the James and Elizabeth rivers.¹⁶

COP operates internationally using a centralized system of governance under a constitutional body called the General Council. The church connects through the chain of command from the local assembly, the district, the region, and finally, to the national level. In every country, the church is made up of districts, an administrative division of a group of local assemblies in a geographical location, which is headed by executive members. In addition, every local assembly has a presbytery that oversees its day-to-day activities. After decisions are made at the district level, the hierarchy ensures their implementation at the local level. The researcher provides a detailed explanation of the terms in the next chapter.

This structure allows the local assembly in Norfolk to tailor all its activities, programs, and culture based on the directions of the local leadership. This intelligible system of governance allows the church to take on a unique identity that spreads its model across all assemblies in the

¹⁶ Honghai Li, Lin Lihwa, and Kelly A. Burks-Copes, "Modeling of Coastal Inundation, Storm Surge, and Relative Sea-level Rise at Naval Station Norfolk, Norfolk, Virginia, USA." *Journal of Coastal Research* 29, no. 1 (2013): 18-30.

world. Therefore, it is said that when an individual enters any COP assembly, they should be able to identify it as a COP through specific landmarks. The day's liturgy, prayer, praise, and worship, and even how announcements are shared, would usually have identical nuances in every COP assembly.

COP Governance

The church's governance enables one to identify with the church at all times. The governing structure runs under three sustainable principles: self-governance, self-propagating, and self-supporting. The idea is deeply rooted in the church's aim to develop resources within its framework and stems from the founder's approach to grooming leaders. Apostle Professor Opoku Onyinah, a former church chairman, added to what has caused phenomenal growth, sustainability, and stability. In a lecture about the founder, James Mckweon chairman Opoku Onyinah says, "By this on-the-job leadership training strategy, he succeeded in putting some young people in shape for full-time pastoral ministry. When the church began to grow, some leaders emerged. McKeown often taught at General Council Meetings and conventions and left some preaching at church services to others. He often would attend a church service without informing the pastor-in-charge."¹⁷

The researcher affirms that the founder left a legacy of hands-on leadership, in-house grooming, and training bringing the church this far. These three sustainable principles form the bedrock of a robust centralized reporting system that flows through all the levels with formalized reports presented twice a year. The centralized system and culture allow the church to review its structures, policies, and procedures consistently. The system has also given a predominantly African-based church a road into many nations. Having reached many countries after its launch

¹⁷ The Church of Pentecost General Headquarters, *God's Faithfulness to The Church of Pentecost*, (Mumbai, India: Quarterfold Printabilities, 2019), 15.

over seventy years ago, one can conclude that those who have served in various leadership capacities in the church have done a yeoman's job. Maintaining high ethical, moral, social, and spiritual sanctity has brought COP this far. While the church has maintained an intentionally high standard in its polity, it is clear that some particular aspects and methods have hurt and wounded people. Jonathan Leeman commented on one of the reasons why many in the church face a lot of hurt. Leeman comments,

Ghanaian church history gives us a clear picture of the massive developmental contribution the Western missionaries have made to Ghana's social, educational, and economic life. However, although the Western missionaries did very well in meeting Ghanaians' social and economic needs, they could not make a significant and lasting impact on the religious levels. The reason is that they did not address the traditional worldview of Ghanaians, a worldview embedded in the belief in spirits. Therefore, this caused some African Christians to seek an African identity as far as Christianity is concerned. In light of the search for African Christian identity and mission theology, this article discusses how Pentecostalism has been used to decolonize Western missionaries' mission theology and practice in the Ghanaian context.¹⁸

Some hurt areas include how the church's African culture differs from the diaspora culture. Yet, most Western COP churches are sometimes unconsciously made to stick with specific activities and programs that may have little to do with a person's salvation. For example, until recent years, men and women were required to sit separately in church. This practice in COP originated from how men and women of the Ghanaian culture sat in formal meetings. On the contrary, churches in the diaspora have embraced this concept because the dominant westernized culture allowed freedom of seating even during church service since the inception of the practice.

Prayer remains another practice that has helped with the spiritual building of the church. There is no telling of this spiritual exercise's profound benefits. The researcher sees the control

¹⁸ Jonathan Leeman, *Church Discipline* (Nashville, TN: 9Marks, 2017), 35.

of such centers with certain guardrails as a breeding ground for hurt. Ole Hallesby, a Norwegian theologian, expressed his conviction that “Prayer arises of our helplessness and causes us to put our faith in God.”¹⁹ As the church continues to grow due to her emphasis on prayer, many have developed solid prayer prowess that makes them engage other members as well. They teach, lead, and pray along with them for tangible results. In the past few years, many started setting up prayer centers or camps where members were flooded with their prayer needs and seeking answers. As these activities continued, the church leadership realized some individuals were not correctly administering the teaching and leading prayer. The leadership, therefore, put regulations in place to avoid the spillovers of these prayer centers. The COP church practices document stipulated,

If the leadership had done nothing about the proliferation of the prayer centers, the number would have increased for it to become difficult to control. This control measure was because individuals who led these camps controlled their finances but were not certified pastors of the church. Because of the above, the General Council created guidelines to regulate their activities. In addition, area Heads were mandated to submit a progress report on prayer centers within their areas of jurisdiction.²⁰

The researcher appreciates that prayer has become one of those practices where the church receives its spiritual strength and vitality. However, the area of hurt that may affect many is where the leadership of the church brings specific policies that may prevent those with such prayer gifts from exercising them appropriately. Individuals operating such centers would be discouraged because the one size fits all approach may benefit the church as an organization in controlling the excesses but hinder gifts from operating. It will be suitable for such policies to take guidance from how the early church dealt with excesses. It will also be beneficial to deal

¹⁹ Ole Hallesby, *Prayer* (London: Intervarsity Press, 1965), 13-28.

²⁰ The Church of Pentecost, *Church Practices Document* (Wayne, NJ: Pentecost Press, 2021), 14.

with these excesses on a case-by-case basis rather than trying to use a one-size-fits-all approach. To this end, the idea of creating a holistic ministry that brings a good balance between mission and ministry will be helpful. Charles Ringma, a proponent of balanced ministry defines the concept as “The careful integration of the biblical vision of God’s idea and the role of the church in restoring peace to all life.”²¹ Therefore, the researcher believes, “Of course, there is no formula, and there is no substitute for hard work, urgent prayer, and radical dependence on the Holy Spirit. But there is a great deal that any congregation today can learn from the last few decades, which have seen a remarkable expansion of vibrant, thriving, balanced ministry.”²² If leadership adopts the holistic approach, it will reduce irregularities at these prayer centers. The approach would also help leadership to appropriately integrate ministry and mission through consultation and dialogues with the prayer center leaders.

Another aspect of the problem is the church's transfer of ministers. The transfer system within the COP church is where the leadership sends a pastor to head different COP assemblies. According to the Ministerial handbook of COP USA INC., “The Church reserves the right to transfer a minister to any Region, District, or outside the country under the necessities of the work, either permanently or temporarily. However, a reasonable period of not less than three months’ notice shall be given to the minister to enable him to make the necessary domestic arrangement.”²³ Because the church does not have a set time for ministers to be transferred, it potentially hurts the minister and his family and negatively impacts local church members.

²¹ Charles Ringma, “Holistic Ministry and Mission: A call for Reconceptualization.” *Missiology* 32, no. 4 (2004): 431-448.

²² Sider Ronald J., Philip N. Olson, and Heidi Rolland Unruh, *Churches that Make a Difference: Reaching your Community with Good News and Good Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 55.

²³ The Church of Pentecost U.S.A., INC., *Minister’s Hand Book & Welfare Policies* (Wayne, NJ: 2021), 26.

Additionally, the welfare policy states, "The duration of transfer shall be for an unspecified period; that is to say, the decision to transfer a minister does not depend on how long he has been in a station."²⁴

COP Polity

The structures, policies, and procedures enshrined in the church's polity have helped shape, instruct, and guide leaders and members to live lives worthy of Christ. This assertion connects with what the renowned author and leadership coach, Peter Scazzero said, "Putting skills into practice gives us a common framework for confronting the elephants in the room and wrestling with the difficult issues they represent. Using these skills also helps us to develop new vocabulary."²⁵ To the researcher, this point means that despite the polity creating hurtful experiences for members, developing new vocabulary could be channeled in a way that will bring restoration and peace to members. Hence, the formation of structures, policies, and procedures has solidified the church's advancement. Yet, to a large extent, COP's polity is jealously guarded by its leaders to ensure that the church maintains its sanctity and wholeness. Suffice it to say, in an attempt to fulfill the Great Commission adequately, the leadership of COP Norfolk may have to re-examine and craft the COP's current global mandate of possessing the nation's plan for uniformity. While conformity is key to achieving organizational success, one cannot overlook the fact that enacting specific church polity to build a robust and thriving Church may cause people to be hurt and inflict internal wounds on them. These unspoken and unseen wounds may impair the individual's service and commitment to God's work. On this point, Scazzero appropriately reasons that when "Unhealthy leaders lack, for example, awareness

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming your Inner Life will Deeply Transform your Church, Team, and the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 225.

of their feelings, and weaknesses, it limits how they view their past, it impacts their view of the present, and strains the experiences they have with others.”²⁶ The researcher thinks this point is crucial because a weak and emotionally imbalanced leader will lead inefficiently. It is therefore proper to reecho that “Everything rises and falls on leadership.”²⁷ On the contrary, well-balanced leaders will significantly benefit the policymakers by reaching out to lay leaders or members at the grassroots level when some of these policies are being made.

One can only imagine how the system may be devoid of hurt, supposing much consultation is done when policies are made. In that case, it will give leadership a holistic perspective on policies, procedures, and structural changes that will even help to set the right tone for COP culture, specifically COP Norfolk’s culture. If COP Norfolk adopts holistic ministry principles, it could reduce some of the church’s hurt. According to the authors David Bloom et al., the different demographics of the world’s population could be leveraged to reduce church hurt. The writers state that “As the world continues to grow, there is an increase in a direction into uncharted demographic waters with higher absolute numbers of elderly people, a larger share of elderly, longer healthy life expectancies, and relatively fewer numbers of working-age people.”²⁸ Therefore, it presents new opportunities as well as hurtful experiences due to people’s different lifestyles. It is noteworthy to add that the researcher uses the word lessen to establish the fact that an institution like a church with many individuals coming

²⁶ Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, 1.

²⁷ John C. Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You* (Nashville, TN: Thompson Nelson, 2013), 1

²⁸ David E. Bloom, Axel Boersch-Supan, Patrick McGee, and Atsushi Seike, "Population Aging: Facts, Challenges, and Responses." *Benefits and compensation International* 41, no. 1 (2011): 22.

together may have to constantly deal with hurt because of the amalgamation of different people with different perspectives.

Researching the church's polity while outlining a few suggestions to help lessen damages and internal or emotional wounds will help build a healthier church. However, it is worth noting that though the structures, policies, and procedures are put in place to help the members and leaders alike, their interpretation and implementation may differ from place to place, leaving the church system uneven. Therefore, an attempt to keep uniformity in the church's polity calls for intentionality and strategic planning. Barna affirms, "Doing more of what you're already doing won't take you to the next level. Doing more of the same and better won't get you there either. You'll need to integrate new strategies and tactics to climb to a higher plane of ministry impact and lifestyle purity."²⁹

Additionally, one could say that no ministry can thrive without people. Robert Welch, a church administration expert, notes, "The leadership of the church (the pastors) receives sailing orders from God through the Holy Spirit and Scripture. Pastors consult others in the church's leadership and then direct certain individuals whom the Holy Spirit has empowered to carry out the mission and objectives of the church. All are not helmsmen, but each has unique responsibilities in meeting the goals set before the church."³⁰ Therefore, a considerable echo is that when a church's polity focuses on what the church wants to achieve, devoid of human needs, it may hurt others. When it comes to hurt, it is essential to state that it is people who hurt people, but they do so through policies, procedures, and structures. In essence, sometimes, leaders hide

²⁹ George Barna, *Growing True Disciples – New Strategies for Producing Genuine Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2011), 10.

³⁰ Robert H. Welch, *Creating Efficiency for Effective Ministry Church Administration* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 4.

behind specific policies, procedures, and practices to hurt others intentionally. One of the new trends within the church that could create hurt is when a leader says something like, “*this is a new policy that leadership has enacted.*” Since the documents are not made available to members at all times, it becomes difficult to verify whether that assertion is true or whether the leader wants to use something to achieve their agenda.

One key factor that gives rise to hurt at Norfolk COP is the lack of understanding of how ministries should operate. The researcher believes that COP worldwide defines its various landmarks well, which helps it sustain its growth. The same structure is replicated at all COP churches, including Norfolk COP. For example, the structures form the church's foundation because they consist of the basic units of the whole church, while the policies will help them stand. For instance, one of the structures of the church is the five cardinal ministries which each member is encouraged to identify with at least one. These five ministries are the women, the men, the children, the youth and students, and the evangelism ministry. Each has specific organized programs to benefit members' spiritual lives, ensure growth, and increase their socio-economic welfare. In this regard, its leadership expects the five cardinal ministries' programs to be prioritized for maximum impact on its members.

The men's ministry, for example, teaches men to sustain their marriage, keep it thriving, and equip them with the knowledge required to provide holistic socio-economic care for themselves and their families. But, for instance, if a ministry runs a program or leads with its plan, not considering the needs of that particular group, it could hurt the members. Additionally, members will feel hurt when the leader does not define the vision to the members in a way they can understand. Finally, members of a particular ministry will feel hurt when unsure of where the individual group is heading. David Horner, a pastor and an advocate for effective and successful

ministry, buttressed the point in motion when he said, “Part of the problem we face as pastors and ministry leaders is that we have few role models of a balanced life and ministry. To hear some of the most successful ministry leaders tell it, balanced is the enemy of passionate and effective service for Christ.”³¹ Therefore, having balanced leaders who will lead with a balanced disposition plays a vital role in lessening the hurt of members by not removing it entirely.

The last of the three foundational pieces of church polity are its procedures, which keep its policies running. One example of a procedure is the disposal of assets. For example, if Norfolk COP wants to dispose of one of their vehicles, the Norfolk leadership must apply to the national organization for approval. This application must be in tandem with the national leadership guidelines for asset disposal. On the other hand, a decision to purchase an asset must go through the local and district presbyteries, the regional executive, and then the national office. The desire to sell an old vehicle must put the car up for sale within their respective jurisdiction. If there is no interest in buying, the vehicle is put up for sale outside the church by the local assembly’s estate committee, which handles all of the church’s property. Before, the same process is repeated outside the church.

Sometimes, the district will sell the vehicle for less than the car's value because the person who expressed interest in buying it is a member. From the point of view of checks and balances, the idea might not be too troubling. However, suppose the district has to make several requests by sending letters to the national office through the regional office; the same bureaucratic procedure may affect the intended good of asset disposal. The researcher intends to communicate that the bureaucratic nature of the church’s structure can create delays in the disposal process, potentially hurting people. Since this procedure takes the form of a lengthy

³¹ David Horner, *A Practical Guide for Life and Ministry: Overcoming Seven Challenges Pastors Face* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2008), 14.

process, it may become a little laborious to hear back quickly from the top of the chain of command. In this light, though the proper processes of disposal and acquisition of assets are followed strictly, the bureaucratic structure of the church poses a problem. Could there be a more efficient way to do this without hurting the district that wants to go through this asset acquiring or disposal process?

Problem Presented

Since the church has navigated several cultural, ethnic, and color lines in its growth, it may be helpful for the national leadership to be conscientious in its missionary approach. This clarion call begs for improved ways of disseminating and explaining church polity well to current and future church members. These new methodologies will help existing members prevent obvious hurts and create an awareness of situations that might bring hurt to new members. It further suggests that, though methods could differ from one local church to another or one nation to another, the flow of a uniform environment and culture must be evident without neutralizing the gospel of Jesus Christ. Many individuals who have expressed hurt might have experienced it while interacting with the polity in one way or another. Therefore, cross-examination of the church's polity will enable the Pentecostal organization to minimize portions of its ethics that create problems for members in its home base of Ghana and abroad. Guillermo Maldonado, a televangelist, and author addressed this unrest by describing its effects when he said,

We manifest a mixture of good and evil treasures as we grow in grace. We reveal the incredible glory within us through the Holy Spirit. Other times, we display an aspect of the evil treasure, demonstrating that we need more of the Spirit of Christ to reign in such languishing areas. The spirit's ultimate work will be the removal of the corrupt portions

and cleansing of the body so that we may live in the newness of life.³²

It is fair to say that there may be people in the church that show signs of stifled growth or take certain entrenched positions on issues that prevent them from serving and ministering in alignment with God's leadership. A hurt person who ministers to others or is ministered to in any form may not adequately enjoy the benefits of being part of a church family. Ministering under these conditions may be distorted, protracted, or distracting. These uncondusive circumstances created may cause discord in the fluidity of ministry and could eventually create a problem within the church environs. The idea that a hurt person may not benefit from being ministered to suggests that relationships are destroyed when ministry polity is administered as a one-size-fits-all without consultation. In other words, a good way to formulate polity is to involve everyone that may be impacted after it goes into effect. In this context, the researcher postulates that when church polity for example in COP Norfolk, is administered without considering the position of ministers, members, or lay leaders in the church, it could potentially breed hurt. For example, an article by Sarah R. Jaffee et al. makes a conclusively fitting analogy,

Families in which only mothers experienced maltreatment were mainly similar to families in which neither generation experienced maltreatment, except that mothers belonging to the former group were more likely to have a lifetime history of depression and low levels of social support. Safe, stable, nurturing relationships between intimate partners, mothers, and children are associated with breaking the cycle of abuse in families. Additional research is needed to determine whether these factors have a causal role in preventing the transmission of maltreatment from one generation to the next.³³

These five authors who composed the article above juxtapose the word hurt with abuse in that when those who experience hurt have a fluid relationship where they can express themselves

³² Guillermo Maldonado, *Supernatural Transformation – Change Your Heart into God's Heart* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2014), 11.

³³ Sara R. Jaffee, et al, "Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships Break the Intergenerational Cycle of Abuse: A Prospective Nationally Representative Cohort of Children in the United Kingdom," *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 53, no. 4 (October 2013): 35.

freely without the fear of being judged or punished, it helps prevent further hurt. Without this freedom of expression, those who are hurt will hurt others too.

Invariably, it is the lack of understanding regarding hurt that prevents the leadership from making informed decisions when crafting policies, structures, or procedures within the church. It could result in hurt, just as in any place where humans interact. Though the researcher agrees that dealing with different people who congregate in one area is complex, proper precautions will lessen the hurt. Just as those issues erupt from the maltreatment of single mothers, there is a possibility that church members may feel hurt or maltreated when the polity overlooks specific genuine interests. Therefore, the problem is that COP Norfolk lacks an overall understanding of how different people handle hurt in different ways, which causes congregants to be more hurt and wounded.

Purpose Statement

The abovementioned problem suggests that members in COP Norfolk have not been provided the right resources within their context and this may contribute to the reason why many feel hurt. Therefore, the researcher aims to identify the causes or sources of hurt within COP Norfolk to define the project's purpose. Although, the church has a robust polity. Defining a goal will give a well-balanced outlook on some causes while proposing hurt minimization strategies for the project. This project section will identify five areas of interest that cause hurt, resulting in wounds within the COP Norfolk. The purpose statement will describe how people behave when hurt, what goes on internally while they go through the process, what to do to lessen the hurt, and finally, how to live past the pain resulting from the hurt. While defining the purpose of hurt, it is appropriate to mention that one can discover the true meaning of life when building healthy relationships.

Additionally, it is essentially true that hurt people may not have a perfect picture of life. "When you understand how critical relationships are to your life, you can see why the law of selectivity is an absolute necessity. Learning to be selective about people you walk closely with will accomplish at least two valuable objectives."³⁴ Many are selective in developing relationships because they want to avoid hurt in the church. It must be noted that being selective is not a panacea for avoiding hurt, because one cannot see the whole person. Secondly, one cannot see the whole person by being selective in developing relationships. Again, it must be noted that no matter how selective one is in developing relationships, the fallen human nature may illicit some type of hurt. Aubrey Malphurs, an expert in strategic planning, particularly for churches, brings this point out clearly. He said,

Change or transformation is at the core of Christianity.... Changing what we do at church is to change who we are inside. How we do church (worship forms, preaching style, teaching style, and so forth) directly impacts who we are as believers in Christ. However, we can fall into ruts in how we do church, negatively affecting how we do life.³⁵

More directly, some congregants are hurt even when they are selective of their circle of influence. The truth is that when congregants fail to understand that everyone has traces of imperfection in them, we will fail to lessen hurt in the church. In essence, hurt cannot be eradicated in the church as long as humans are found there. Discovering and learning about how people's actions as well as their temperaments will help to lessen the hurt in Norfolk COP.

Healthy relationships and the individual's acceptance of prevailing changes will help the believer walk in one's God-given purpose and fulfill it. Secondly, it will ensure that people will not underestimate the relationships in their lives. With these two points stated, it is clear that God

³⁴ Van Moody, *The People Factor – How Building Great Relationships and Ending Bad Ones Unlocks Your God- Given Purpose* (Nashville, TN: HarperCollins Christian Publishing Inc., 2014), 83.

³⁵ Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning – A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Publishing Group. 2005), 67.

does not work in and with people in a vacuum. It is also clear that God works with and through the changing times. Hence, as much as He desires the welfare of the chosen ones, it is His ultimate goal and expectation that healthy relationships amidst changing times do not hurt others but that His children live in harmony. Consequently, it is fair to say that instead of the creation of hurt, the church will enjoy healing and transformation when a healthy environment is created through healthy relationships with the requisite acceptance of the change. Therefore, this Doctor of Ministry (DMIN) research shall identify the sources of hurt and wounds leaders and members of COP Norfolk have experienced due to the church's polity while suggesting specific ways to address such problems.

Basic Assumptions

The researcher shall make the following assumptions to complete this research project. The research shall first rely heavily on the existing structures, policies, and procedures of the Church of Pentecost. Additionally, it will depend on the honor code of the members and leaders of the local church. This particular assumption seeks out genuine and truthful responses from all participants. Some questions could make participants shy or unwilling, but the researcher shall ensure that participants are safe. The participants' safety also encourages those who seek the church's interest not only for fame or personal gain. Those participants are willing to help the study and the church's growth.

The researcher assumes that participants will be honest in completing the survey sent to understand church hurts in COP Norfolk. Since the church and its leaders are willing to make strides for ministry improvement within COP Norfolk, the researcher assumes that the project will help to fine-tune church policy and polity, which will eventually lessen hurts and wounds. The interview responses and questions will also help emphasize areas that cause damage and

injuries and help the church gain awareness to propel positive changes which will encourage the growth of members and leaders.

Furthermore, the researcher assumes that church members will benefit from the discussed retreat sessions and post-hurt activities. The benefits will be seen when the researcher consistently performs a cursory check on members and leaders who were before the research. Perhaps, this activity by the researcher is one that a chaplain performs. The notion aligns with the views of Robert Crick, a retired U.S. Army Chaplain, and a Clinical Pastoral Education Supervisor. He intimates that "Chaplains behave justly, but they also advocate for care recipients when injustice is present. They bring awareness to unethical policies and unfair treatment of clients, inmates, soldiers' employees, etc."³⁶ In this case, the researcher shall assume a ministry of presence position to facilitate the post-hurt program enshrined within the framework of the project. The Ministry of presence encapsulates the idea of being there to help anyone suffering hurt in a way that better speaks to their particular problem.

Definitions

The Church of Pentecost (COP) has terminologies that are uniquely understood by its members. Therefore, the researcher shall use these in the project as prescribed within the context and provision available in the denomination foundational documents. In addition, participants who helped with the project also identified specific terminologies that are noteworthy.

Hurt. The word hurt shall be used interchangeably with such expressions as injury, damage, wounds, and others. Throughout the project, the word hurt shall connote a description that elaborates on a negative action from an individual when they feel a sense of shame. The

³⁶ Robert Crick, *Outside The Gates the Need for, Theology, History, and Practice of Chaplaincy Ministry* (Oviedo, FL: Higher Life Development Services Inc., 2011), 25.

shame could be so deep or invisible enough that appears like something is wrong with them rather than the other person around them. Wilson expands that hurt is, “The resulting wounds and injuries we usually call physical, sexual, emotional, intellectual, verbal or spiritual neglect or abuse. Most of these wounding neglect and abuse do not leave visible marks. Besides, even when these hurts create physical signs, bruises soon fade and casts come off eventually.”³⁷ The word hurt will describe individuals who may commonly use anger to deflect and disguise the guilt, grief, and pain that infringed on them emotionally.³⁸

The Church of Pentecost U.S.A., Inc., – Norfolk Assembly. Any new assembly established in any locality, county, or state within the United States must be registered with the church's name. All Assemblies of the established church shall exist solely under the corporate name – The Church of Pentecost U.S.A., Inc., and will be recognized and known.³⁹ Until otherwise stated, the term COP shall stand for the name of the Norfolk established Assembly and the church in general.

Tenets. These are the church's core beliefs that inform the public of the doctrinal stance of the COP. Some words are used interchangeably with the word tenet. Dogma, doctrine, and belief all stand for core beliefs. The category dogma encompasses those tenets that make us Christians. Dogma comprises concepts that are non-negotiable for the Christian faith. To deny a tenet within the dogma category would be to deny a tenet of orthodox Christianity.⁴⁰

³⁷ Sandra D. Wilson, *Hurt People Hurt People: Hope and Healing for Yourself and Your Relationships* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers, 2015), 19.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

³⁹ The Church of Pentecost U.S.A., Inc., *Constitution* (Wayne, NJ: National Literature Committee 2013), 3.

⁴⁰ Daniel L. Akin, Chad Brand, and R. Stanton Norman, *Perspectives on Church Government: Five Views of Church Polity* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2004), 1.

COP governance terminologies. These are terms used in governance, which are quoted from the constitution. Examples of a few are: International Executive, General Council, National Council, Appointments, Regional or Area Presbytery, District Presbytery, District Executive committee, Suspension or Discipline, Station, White Paper, and Transfers shall be used within the project.⁴¹

Practices of the Church of Pentecost. Every church has its foundational beliefs that guide its mode of operations and even shape its culture. They form the cardinal belief that every other practice hangs on. The practices “Are acceptable practices of The Church of Pentecost Worldwide but adapted to suit the situation in the United States of America. The roots of these church practices go down profoundly through the history of the church and have been compiled over the past years, having been shaped by spiritual, religious, historical, and cultural experiences of the leaders and members.”⁴²

Old Painful Files. This is the phrase used by some participants who described specific hurtful experiences that happened to them in the past few years.

Roundtable Events. This is the phrase used to describe diverse perspectives from various stakeholders and experts that come together to develop helpful plans for COP Norfolk.⁴³

Limitations

The researcher believes that several factors can limit the scope of the research. First, the local church does not entirely control some of the structures, policies, and procedures to be

⁴¹ The Church of Pentecost U.S.A., Inc., *Constitution* (Wayne, NJ: National Literature Committee 2013), 6-21.

⁴² The Church of Pentecost U.S.A., INC., *Statement of Core Beliefs Commitments to Good Conduct and Church Practice* (Wayne, NJ: Pentecost Press, 2021), 1.

⁴³ Guy Stallworthy, Kwasi Boahene, Kelechi Ohiri, Allan Pamba, and Jeffrey Knezovich, "Roundtable Discussion: What is The Future Role of the Private Sector in Health?" *Globalization and Health* 10, no. 1 (2014): 1-5.

followed. Second, the leaders or ministers affected by some aspects of the polity may be bound by its demands, though they may not subscribe to such policies. Due to some of the historical underpinnings of the polity, the COP may find it challenging to change them. Finally, because of the abovementioned points, the leadership may be unwilling to accept some mitigating factors that will help eradicate hurt and wounds among congregants. Therefore, it is likely that some participants may decline to participate in the research. Such participants, who may have served in the COP for many years, may entertain the fear of being branded or viewed as antagonizing the existing polity. This idea could also be limiting because they may not see the value or significance of eradicating hurt among members and leaders. After all, this is just how it has been done.

One factor that may also limit this is the idea that the researcher shall sample a group within the church to help with the project. Because of this, there may be other groups that may be missing. However, the researcher shall attempt to cover such missing portions to complete the project.

Delimitations

Since the research shall be conducted in the church through announcements, it may be helpful to see how volunteers speak personally about hurt and wounds. The selection of individuals will initially be random because it may allow the researcher to sample or choose from a broad array of people, both the leaders and the members. Those who have gone through hurts within the church context will express instances of such hurt. There are five groups for consideration. These are the minister, the minister's spouse, the minister's children, the ministry leader or lay leader, and the active member. These will be people who may have experienced hurt in one way or another. One way to control the demography is to conduct the research using

one location. Because the researcher identifies that the church seems to have a keen interest in strategizing and keeping its sanctity, the study will begin with leaders who enact the polity. It will then continue with those that they have affected. This point also means that the leadership may be encouraged to consider including one more group or ministry in the earlier five.

The researcher appreciates new ministries like chaplaincy, counseling, social intervention ministry (PENTSOS), chieftaincy, and evangelism coordinating teams.⁴⁴ The author shall make suggestions that will enhance these new ministries throughout the project. The leaders who put structures, policies, and procedures in place shall also receive viable suggestions throughout the project. It is important to mention here that though the project mentions human nature, behavioral style, temperaments, conflict resolution, and the development of human relationships, these topics were not included in the scope of the research. The general idea is to propose that there is and will never be a time when hurt is eradicated from any human institution. It is also not worth mentioning that fine-tuning polity will not eradicate hurt. The reason is that all these factors mentioned above like temperaments, personality, and relationships are all part of the fallen nature of man, and for that reason, believers will need to continue to rely on God's providence and help to help understand and ultimately lessen the effects of hurt within the congregation. Although it is true hurt cannot be eradicated entirely, the researcher identifies two strategies, SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), and DISC (Dominance, Influence, Steadiness, and Conscientiousness) as some among many resources that will help COP Norfolk leadership in their quest to understand and lessen hurt in the future. These strategies are not included in this research. They will be discussed in Future Research in Chapter

⁴⁴ The Church of Pentecost International, *Vision 2023 - Possessing the Nations: Equipping the Church to Transform Every Sphere of Society with Values and Principles of the Kingdom of God* (Accra, GH: Pentecost Press 2022), 32-49.

4. This is why it is imperative to understand that people who come to church have come to a spiritual hospital where Jesus is the ultimate healer. This statement means that the true source of healing for the hurt comes from one's closeness to Christ.

Thesis Statement

If COP Norfolk understands the sources of hurt and wounds of members, then it will allow the leaders and members to create viable methods of lessening its effects in strategic ways. Every organization grows when it makes constructive adjustments based on what impedes the growth of its members. Though people react differently to varied situations, it is important to note that getting to know what makes people get hurt plays a key role in its lessening. One such construction is the thorough understanding of people's hurts. After understanding the sources and causes of hurt, COP leadership will position the church in a place where congregants enjoy a spiritually nontoxic environment when worshipping God. After the research is conducted, the researcher hopes to shed more light on ways the church could adopt specific hurt minimization strategies. It will mitigate some of the pain leaders and members go through. This reason informs the researcher's passion for addressing some of the hurtful events and occurrences within the COP and, consequently, COP Norfolk. Since the centralized nature of the COP gives room for the local churches to shape the structure, policies, and procedures through the adherence of such from the General Council, COP Norfolk stands at an excellent place to begin this journey of mitigating hurts among leaders and members alike. These suggested strategies will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. If the COP leadership quickly uses a component within its structure that allows leaders to assess developmental progress every month, it may help with the hurt mitigation trajectory. Suppose such meetings become an avenue where a section of the forum determines the hurts members or leaders may have with an attempt to resolve or find solutions; it

will help immensely. Eventually, these points shall be discussed and elaborated on in Chapters 4 and 5. Just as in plant life, when pruned well, it enables fruit-bearing.

As mentioned earlier in the project, the thought that believing Christians cannot be hurt is delusional since they are human. June Hunt, a renowned counselor and the radio program host of *Hope for The Heart* state, "When you know you've been in the habit of majoring in the minors, you have choices. Typically, we learn painful lessons well. Because you brought this grief upon yourself, plan now to change your priorities. Balance your bad decisions with these good decisions."⁴⁵ Hunt suggests Christians should learn to bounce back when they fall into this abnormality called hurt. In that case, many, especially leaders, will serve genuinely without complaints and murmur. It is fair to say here that many who complain in the church are those who feel hurt in one way or the other. Consequently, due to the lack of awareness, many church members have become numb to others' feelings when they feel hurt.

⁴⁵ June Hunt, *Grief – Living at Peace with Loss* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers 2013), 45.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The idea of hurt in the church is not discussed much because many feel Christians should not show any signs of hurt or talk about it. Consequently, it is challenging to address any issues about hurt. The researcher observes that matters that hurt church members are usually internalized, and members find it challenging to discuss until an incident triggers their pain. An example of these triggers can be when a new non-Ghanaian congregant not of Ghanaian joins a traditional COP. In addition to being different from a group they are not used to, they will automatically not feel a sense of belonging. One glaring reason is that they cannot convey their hurt when the local dialect is spoken by native Ghanaian members who comprise most of the congregation. Because the church is a human and sacred institution, it is difficult for people to express inevitable hurts immediately after they happen because of perception.

Israel Galindo, a researcher into congregations and a professor at Richmond Baptist Theological Seminary, states, “The sacred narrative of the congregation includes a set of personal and communal rites by which the community is bound together over time. A congregation uses this sacred narrative to identify itself as a distinctive community of faith, with a set of beliefs, a particular character, consciousness, and identity.”⁴⁶ One can only imagine becoming part of an institution with such a robust identity. It may be difficult to express freely their hurts, even if noticeable because one could easily misunderstand them. To describe hurt conceptually, theologically, and theoretically, it is essential to state that a person's extent depends on their predisposition and the support or circle of influence. The expression of hurt presents an idea that conceptually shows a matrix of different issues, making it difficult for one to articulate clearly. How can a new congregant, for example, immediately question why leadership made

⁴⁶ Israel Galindo, *The Hidden Lives of Congregations – Discerning Church Dynamics* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2004), 34.

certain decisions when they may not have complete details? Galino adds, “The congregation’s choice of heroes and leaders directly influences another critical component of the formation process, namely, the interpersonal relations and interactions with members of the community who prescribe and reinforce appropriate identity behavior.”⁴⁷ Even if a congregant knows why this particular leader or decision is not genuinely helpful, they may be on the side of the minority because that particular congregation sees the leader's decision in question as heroic. It is fair to say that this kind of posture could bring about hurt for that congregant who finds it hard to express such feelings. The subject of hurt is least discussed in the church because Scripture projects an anticipated life of perfection for people who walk with God. For instance, in the discussion between Abraham and God in Gen 17:1, God told him to walk before and be blameless. The statement has been taken out of context by many people. Warren Wiersbe, a Bible commentator notes,

Enoch and Noah had walked with God, but Abraham was to walk before God, that is, live in the knowledge that the eyes of God were always upon him. The word perfect does not mean sinless, for that would be an impossible goal for anyone to reach. The word means single-hearted, without blame, sincere, and wholly devoted to the Lord. This idea does not suggest that God's people should settle for anything less than striving to conform to his will. His desire for us should be our aim and desire for ourselves. The secret of a perfect walk before God is personal worship of God. Like Abraham, every believer must fall before the Lord and yield to Him. If he is El-Shaddai – God Almighty, then who are we to resist His will?⁴⁸

Wiersbe sets a conceptual tone for consideration in that the perfect life described by the church and used as a template by many who sit in the pews is faulty. Unfortunately, this idea generally projects into how one relates to a hurt person in the church. That brother or sister who feels hurt

⁴⁷ Israel Galindo, *The Hidden Lives of Congregations*, 34.

⁴⁸ Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary Old Testament – The Pentateuch Genesis to Deuteronomy* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2001), 87.

may be expected to gloss over the reason for their hurt, and this does not usually help to process it thoroughly.

Another thought that comes to mind regarding hurt is how the church has ignored what Americans describe as the elephant in the room. Similarly, a culture of silence prevalent in the African culture does not allow people to express themselves when they feel hurt. In the story of Abraham, it took about twenty-five years between God's promise and the realization of the covenant. Although Abraham waited over two decades and likely experienced hurt during that period, there is no record anywhere glaringly from him. The only time there is a reference was when he slept with Hagar, which is discussed in this research. Many people cannot voice their opinions and feelings similarly, especially when participating in religious activities. For example, what often happens in COP Norfolk in an instance like this is people talk in the background and cannot voice their feelings openly on issues brought up by the local leadership. An author of a book on the African Elephant in diaspora churches states, "Having protocols is essential and helps bring order but can be harmful when done excessively. While adhering to strict protocols is an essential component of organizational structure, not making it fluid also makes it difficult for people, especially younger generations, to navigate it."⁴⁹ People hurt in COP Norfolk may feel the structure is complex and cannot openly voice their feelings, eventually hurting them.

The explanations above describe how a hurt or a wound is not just a physical condition; it can also be an emotional sore inflicted on another by intentional or unintentional means, which carries the potential of creating both implicit or explicit fear and resentment. The researcher accepts that God has not given people a spirit of fear and does not like believers to fear. Hurt is one factor that breeds apprehension in most church members. The researcher estimates that this

⁴⁹ Yaw Osei-Wusu, *The African Elephant – Why Millennials are Leaving the African Diaspora Church* (Kendallville, IN: Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data, 2020), 106.

type of anxiety could be caused by known and unknown hindrances. These concepts could result in fear and consequently cause pain in people. In this regard, the researcher seeks to produce a Doctor of Ministry project, which makes a unique and relevant contribution to existing literary and theological work in the field.

Literature Review

One such literature review is the work done by Dr. Sandra Wilson, a seasoned family therapist and the author of *Hurt People, Hurt People*, which brings to bear the severity of the results caused by hurt or wounded people. Some of the issues she highlights could easily fit the hurt and wounds that refer to people within COP Norfolk. Wilson further sheds light on understanding the intense damage caused by various degrees of hurt, which places people in a defensive mood, makes them self-protective, and finally forces them to lash out at others. She makes it even more practical when she says, “I can relate to their responses because I am one of those hurt people who has hurt people.... However, I've noticed a curious phenomenon: even when we see the result of this hurting and hurtful pattern in ourselves and others, we resist the idea that unseen injuries are real.”⁵⁰ This resistance may stem from where the hurt is situated or the status of the person inflicting the pain. For example, if the church's senior pastor is causing the wound, it becomes a sensitive matter that many will not want to discuss.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, leadership leans more toward systemic structures while being oblivious to human structures which are the main machinery for systems. It seems that, however that a system cannot be better until the people are better. To Wilson’s point as stated above, COP Norfolk leadership will make a lot of strides in lessening hurt by focusing on the enhancement,

⁵⁰ Sandra D. Wilson, *Hurt People Hurt People: Hope and Healing for Yourself and Your Relationships* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers, 2015), 15.

development, and growth of the people rather than engaging more in systemic expansion. To the point made in a better context, each systemic update should directly follow information garnered from the people as it pertains to the general health of COP Norfolk. At best utilizing the results gained from SWOT, and DISC assessments in systemic development will help COP reduce hurt by a greater margin. Thoughts on the benefits of these resources shall be discussed further in Chapter 5.

To highlight some of these thoughts, the *Journal of Global Business Insights* describes the benefits of SWOT. The authors intimate that “In a competitive environment, enterprises need to take advantage of any opportunity to optimize their business developments. A SWOT analysis is used more frequently than any other management technique. It helps managers to formulate competitive strategies in their business environments. As there is a great degree of uncertainty, businesses may use SWOT analysis to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats implicated in a project.”⁵¹ Likewise, in using SWOT, the church will have the necessary tools to set goals with minimal defects. SWOT analysis will consequently enable leadership to call out specific instances that make people hurt. Then lastly, it will help leadership make proper systemic determinations by setting priorities that enhance strategic systemic changes with the people in mind.

Further, Dr. Robert Rohm elaborates on the importance of utilizing the DISC model that, “The concept will allow, for example, leadership to unlock the mystery behind developing good people skills and creating better relationships. It will also enable the same to use what is learned in this introduction to reduce conflict, improve productivity and relate with others more

⁵¹ Ali, Mostafa, Benzaghta, Elwalda, Abdulaziz, Mousa, Mohamed, Mousa, Erkan, Ismail, and Rahman, Mushfiqur. “SWOT analysis applications: An integrative literature review.” *Journal of Global Business Insights* 6, no. 1 (2021): 55-73.

effectively.”⁵² Again, not belittling these emphases, leadership will benefit from the usage of the DISC model to help nail the point that two people will most definitely react differently to the same situation. Leadership will benefit from learning different ways of communicating with the members and vice-versa because of personality differences. It will finally help leadership infuse into systemic planning the fact that different is not necessarily bad but rather enables a better understanding of why people get disappointed, feel hurt, have unmet expectations, and the like.

Ultimately, hurting becomes a vicious cycle that could bring a person's emotional and psychological development to a standstill. The researcher believes that many ailments and ill feelings that people have may stem from various degrees of wounds. In this light, the researcher seeks to address three aspects of church hurt within the COP due to specific organizational methods used in building the church.

Hurt from Our Humanness and Imperfections

The first area within the church stems from our being humans with faulty or sinful tendencies, and naturally, this fuels hurt. To this point, one can understand that this forms why no earthly church can ever be perfect when it is made up of imperfect people. Human imperfection seems to be part of our world due to the fallen nature of humans, particularly the curse inflicted on humanity after Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden. According to the Gold Medallion Award-winning counselor and author Dr. Larry Crabb, "The personal problem that plagues so many usually stems from man's sinful nature. In this premise, the failure to follow God's principles for living is missing the mark of God's intentions and

⁵² Robert, A. Rohm. "A Powerful Way to Understand People Using the DISC Concept." *DiscoveryReport.Com* (2013): 1-8.

standards."⁵³ After the Fall in Genesis, man lost God's glory, which had previously given man the mandate to live as a perfect being without hurt from within and without. After the Fall, however, God's curse introduced an inherent component that caused hurt. At the same time, God also proposed a panacea to the cause of hurt in the personhood of Jesus Christ. A life short of the life of Jesus will therefore leave individuals wallowing in pain and hurt without an opportunity to heal.

The Presbyterian minister Dr. Michael Milton observes that a person's response to the redemptive work of Jesus Christ starts when the believer becomes an activist. Milton further explains, "By an activist, he meant a person who does not show gratitude to the creator God, by applying some measured way the redemption he has received to brokenness before him."⁵⁴ To Milton's point, one can clearly say that Jesus produces the living water that brings freshness to those hurting through the Spirit. A person who understands how to engage the presence of the Holy Spirit in times of hurt will always find deep satisfaction.

Understanding Hurt

Hurts and wounds are slow killers. The researcher thinks that most people get ill while others fall into a depressive mood, with particular mood swings due to hurt. Others tend to be overzealous and yet remain inauthentic. Ultimately, many cannot deal with the challenge it poses due to the fear of the unknown. One Scripture that comes to mind is what Paul wrote to Timothy; "For God has not given us a spirit of fear but power, love, and a sound mind (2 Tim 1:7 New King James Version)." Thus, dealing with anxiety and coping with hurt are two sides of the same

⁵³ Larry Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling: A Model for Helping Caring Christians Become Capable Counselors* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 41.

⁵⁴ Michael A. Milton, *Silent No More: A Biblical Call for the Church to Speak to State and Culture* (Clinton, MS: Tanglewood Publishing, 2013), 60.

coin. In simple terms, people are hurt because they fear. Therefore, the first area to explore in the alleviating process is to consider the source of the problem. Williams, a researcher on church hurt among black congregants, throws light on some reasons:

The Black Church is also known for being a source of hurt and pain for some African Americans (Streets, 2015). One reason associated with the trauma experienced within the Black Church includes differences in denominational beliefs. For example, denominational views on sexuality, gender discrimination, marital separation, abortion, politics, and charitable giving have hurt some congregants (Dempsey et al., 2016; Shelton & Cobb, 2017). These views have led to the departure of some congregants from the Black Church. Another possible reason connected to trauma experienced by some African Americans in the Black Church includes unhealthy leadership traits. Narcissistic and authoritative leaders have the potential to generate toxic environments for congregants. Their insulting, demeaning, and aggressive demeanor has caused some congregants to become distant from God, resulting in traumatic experiences (Ruffing et al., 2018). In addition, congregants take on the pulse of their leader and become an extension of them, creating traumatic situations for some congregants in the Black Church as well. Mahlangu (2020) 3 asserted that followers are discouraged from thinking critically or independently of their leader. Moreover, groupthink may cause congregants to support a toxic leader while betraying their peers.⁵⁵

As Wilson shares, people often jump into solving problems but forget to look at how it all started. "For example, the Bible speaks of God as a 'loving Father.' We grasp the concept of loving and understand the meaning of father. But suppose our early experiences with a father figure were unloving. In that case, those two concepts seem contradictory, like an oxymoron, and can cause spiritual confusion."⁵⁶ Additionally, the genuineness of a person's relationship with Jesus is tested during this process. Though many around may not see, the individual in question may be questioned in the head by their inner voice. Wilson adds, "hurting is a kind of spiritual counterfeit that can deceive people if they don't have the genuine article of a personal relationship with Jesus. But that requires trust, which isn't easy for those with a distorted picture

⁵⁵ Williams, "Evaluating Church Hurt in the Black Church."

⁵⁶ Sandra D. Wilson, *Hurt People Hurt People: Hope and Healing for Yourself and Your Relationships*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers, 2015), 181.

of God as a heavenly Father."⁵⁷ If a person's perception of God is unclear, it may affect how they approach God to minister to themselves and others.

Emotional Hurt

As mentioned earlier, hurt is not visible until the person in question has the resultant wounds bruised. It is likely that though the hurt may not be seen by those around, "The damage is especially evident in four characteristics: low self-awareness, prioritizing ministry over marriage or singleness, doing too much for God, and failing to practice a sabbath rhythm."⁵⁸ Most emotionally hurt people exhibit some of the traits stipulated above by the researcher. In an attempt to define emotional hurt, Mark Leary, a researcher in the science of emotions and a psychologist, adds,

Many human emotions arise in response to other people's natural, anticipated, remembered, or imagined rejection. Because acceptance by other people improved evolutionary fitness, human beings developed bio-psychological mechanisms to apprise them of threats to acceptance and belonging and emotional systems to deal with threats to acceptance. Seven emotions often arise when people perceive their relational value to others as low or in potential jeopardy, including hurt, jealousy, loneliness, shame, guilt, social anxiety, and embarrassment. Other emotions, such as sadness and anger, may occur during rejection episodes but are reactions to features of the situation other than low relational value.⁵⁹

It is worth noting that some people in ministry who overwork themselves to the point of not resting may do so out of hurt. What may happen to such a person is that it may disturb the foundations of their relationships, as stated by Pastor Van Moody of the Worship Center in Birmingham, Alabama:

⁵⁷ Ibid., 187.

⁵⁸ Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader: How Transforming your Inner Life Will Deeply Transform Your Church, Team, and the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 27.

⁵⁹ Mark R. Leary, "Emotional Responses to Interpersonal Rejection," *Dialogues in Clinical Neuroscience* 17, no. 4 (2022), 436.

You have some relationship with everyone you encounter. Some relationships are incredibly personal, and some are strictly professional. Some are casual and on-the-surface relationships, and some are intimate and deep. But every relationship you have influences your life. There are no neutral relationships. Each one lifts you or weighs you down. It moves you forward or holds you back. It helps you, or it hurts you.⁶⁰

Furthermore, there may be that unspoken hurt deep within, which affects the individual because they have swept many hurtful feelings and experiences under the carpet. In the researcher's view, fear is a significant cause of hurt in many of these instances. David Goggins, the retired Navy Seal, recounts his story, "My mind was a broken record that kept slipping into darkness. The past had been bleak, and our sky-blue future had been blown. Each time my fear grew until it filled the room, and still, I could stop."⁶¹ Fear is an emotion that tends to create hurt among people. As a result, it will be worthwhile for COP to identify areas that could potentially cause emotional damage to people. Areas like transfers of ministers; the turning over from one pastor to another could create hurt between their families. During the transfer of ministers, if the outgoing and incoming minister's right relationship is not established, it could fuel competition between the two and eventually mar the church's growth. Once a minister takes over, the communication between both ministers should be fluid enough such that the work does not get stifled.

Signs of Hurt

One of the easiest ways to detect a person's signs of hurt is by detaching or avoiding communication. In the introduction of the term ghosting, Gili Freedman and two other psychologists explain,

⁶⁰ Van Moody, *The People Factor – How Building Great Relationships and Ending Bad Ones Unlocks Your God-Given Purpose* (Nashville, TN: HarperCollins Christian Publishing Inc., 2014), xiii-iv.

⁶¹ David Goggins, *Can't Hurt Me – Master Your Mind and Defy the Odds* (Austin, TX: Lioncrest Publishing, 2018), 49.

“Although ghosting (i.e., unilaterally ending a relationship by ceasing communication) has only recently entered the lexicon, it is a regularly used form of relationship dissolution. Two studies examined how implicit theories of relationships are associated with ghosting (i.e., ending a relationship by cutting off all contact). Previous research on implicit theories of relationships has identified two types of beliefs: destiny and growth. The present study examines how these implicit theories are associated with ghosting perceptions, intentions, and behaviors.”⁶²

While concluding that emotional hurt is not easily identifiable, it is noteworthy that there are indicators. For example, Dr. Norman Wright, the marriage, child, and family therapist, states, "The variety of experiences and relative degree of pain and difficulty a counselor has lived through will affect his or her level of understanding and capacity for empathetic response."⁶³ In addition, individuals involved in harmful activities can show manifestations of hurts that were not treated or mitigated. Dr. Kevin Leman, an international psychologist, says, "Mass shootings, racial and gender discrimination, gang violence, terrorism, diseases like Ebola virus, abuse, suicide attempts, and bullying are only a few of the sad realities in today's world."⁶⁴ To the researcher, man's sinful nature, a sign of imperfection, is the real cause of inner hurt. Therefore, when one discovers that this problem stems from sinful nature, a resolution to live a Christ-like life is undoubtedly the way out of that hurt.

Both psychologists, Drs. Henry Cloud, and John Townsend, underscore that "Many people do not take ownership for how they resist love. They have a lot of love around them but do not realize their loneliness results from their lack of responsiveness."⁶⁵ Many people can only

⁶² Gili Freedman, et al., "Emotional Experiences of Ghosting," *The Journal of Social Psychology* (2022): 1-20.

⁶³ Norman H. Wright, *The Complete Guide to Crisis and Trauma Counseling: What do You Say When it Matters Most* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2011), 32.

⁶⁴ Kevin Leman, *When Your Kid Is Hurting: Helping Your Child Through Tough Days* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2015), 35.

⁶⁵ Henry Cloud, and John Townsend, *Boundaries – When to Say Yes and How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 49.

give off love the same way they receive it. For example, a person who did not have the privilege of their parent's touch and human interaction when they were wet and needed a diaper change as a baby may find it difficult as an adult to express love immediately, even if the situation was obvious. Their view of love may differ from another who enjoyed a loving childhood where they were always shown love and attention when they needed a diaper change.

The Inner Life of the Hurt

As the researcher alludes to Wilson's book, it is clear that when individuals are hurt, they may resent it, showing their repulsive demeanor and behavior. For example, a husband will easily snap at their wife or kids, while a wife may shout at their children for minor offenses. A church leader may be seen as working for the Lord, but maybe murmur and complain because there is an inner hurt that may cause them to be unsatisfied and unjoyful. Scazzero wrote, "In the same way, once I recognized some of my shadowy tendencies to seek validation inappropriately, skim on the truth, and believe the worst about myself as an organizational leader, I was determined not to follow these self-defeating inclinations."⁶⁶ Scazzero explains further that hurt could even cause a leader to give unfair judgment because they did not receive the right kind of validation.

The inner life of a hurt person could be dangerously volatile, and the only antidote to it is when an atmosphere of presence is created. This idea by Robert Crick, a U.S. Army chaplain, underscores the fact that no man is an island. Just as God was present with the man in the Garden of Eden, "The story reveals a God who is attentive to all of his creation, especially a wounded mother desperate for someone to be present, to be a witness to her pain, and ultimately to hear

⁶⁶ Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader*, 67.

her cries."⁶⁷ It also suggests that God is concerned that a life of loneliness and hurt could create a vacuum in every individual. Because God is concerned about one's loneliness, one can conclude that lonely individuals or people living alone can create hurtful moments for others. Other congregants are wounded due to a lack of appreciation for their service. James Gills, popularly known for his writings on spiritual matters, summarizes,

As you serve others, sometimes you will find that they do not always appreciate your effort. There will be times you need healing for the hurt that results from a lack of appreciation. There will also be times when no one appreciates your efforts so that you do not become weary in well-doing (Gal 6:9). As you offer up your service to God as a sacrifice to please him, you will be consoled by the Holy Spirit.⁶⁸

When an individual decides to please God with their life through genuine service, inner hurts are minimized.

Going Beyond the Hurt

After a person has gone through a period of dealing with hurt, it is challenging to erase that state from their memory. But though the memories of the hurt might be present, the individual can move past it. They can do so by surrounding themselves with more positivity, living a life that encourages themselves to be better, associating with like-minded people who uplift them, and, if possible, avoiding environments that give room to hurt enablers to thrive. In addition, having a better understanding of the cause of someone's emotional pain and hurt will increase the chances of another person who desires to help heal that wound. Crabb posits, "To understand why we do what we do, we need to see that most of us operate from deficit

⁶⁷ Robert Crick, *Outside The Gates the Need for, Theology, History, and Practice of Chaplaincy Ministry* (Oviedo, FL: Higher Life Development Services Inc., 2011), 14.

⁶⁸ Gills James, *God's RX for Inner Healing- Biblical Wisdom Confirmed by Science* (Lake Mary, FL: Siloam Publishers, 2015), 94.

motivation, trying to obtain something we believe will meet our personal needs."⁶⁹ Going beyond the hurt is an expression that connotes freedom. If a person can conclusively say that they have gone beyond the hurt, then it is likely that they may quickly find a way to deal with it when a similar situation occurs. It is also to say that when they come across a person who may be going through a similar issue of hurt, they can use their example to pull them out of that predicament.

As noted, people who cannot go beyond the hurt may have a distorted view of God. A cursory look at David in the Bible gives an idea of a person who went through hurt in various degrees but understood and learned how to bounce back to accomplish his God-given mandate. A person who has gone through a hurtful situation can learn from David's attitude in overcoming emotional pain. On this point, Van Moody shares, "His life is not perfect; he does not get to do all the things he wants to accomplish for God or the nation of Israel, but he goes on to live long and complete an effective reign over God's people. Despite his sin, David's purpose was bigger than his problem."⁷⁰ Of course, as humans, we want to get to a place where we feel we are perfect without the need to go beyond the hurt. Still, learning from David, it is clear that one can accomplish much by allowing God to help them out of their prevailing situations so that they can be a source of help to others. It is no wonder then that David said, "I sought the LORD, and He heard me and delivered me from all my fears. They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed" (Ps 34:4-5).

Hurt or Wounds from The Church - A Spiritual Hospital

Many people assume the church should be a perfect place where no one can get hurt. But unfortunately, in COP Norfolk, just like all other churches, it is prevalent for people to have been

⁶⁹ Larry Crabb, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, 87.

⁷⁰ Van Moody, *The People Factor*, 125.

hurt and wounded through its day-to-day routines and activities. A list of factors that could culminate into hurt or a wound includes unfriendly jokes, differences in temperaments, divulging confidential information, false accusations, broken promises, disappointments in others, especially leadership, being selective, and the perception of being picky. Though the list above may not be exhaustive, in COP Norfolk, these are often prevalent. Due to the prevailing factors that could incite the above hurt, COP Norfolk leadership must not play it down or belittle members when they express their problems and pain. Such members may be trying to reconcile the thought of why they feel wounded in a place like a church that was supposed to be perfect. Michael Milton, A Presbyterian minister, and a retired U.S. Army chaplain, touched on this false notion of perfection: "There is growing evidence that is not an isolated incident but represents an unsettling trend regarding Christianity and civic discourse."⁷¹

Settling with the idea that the church is a spiritual hospital where all congregants have come for spiritual renewal will help individuals not to get extremely worried when they are hurt or wounded in one way or the other. So often, people think that the church should be this perfect place, so when the rubber hits the road, and the chips are all down to reality, they face a hard pinch from the hurt. For example, an usher at COP Norfolk walked a member to a seat against their wish during Sunday services. After the service, the individual concluded that there was division in the church because special seats were assigned to a particular group of individuals. Dr. Dale Robbins, the president of Victorious Christian Ministries, relates to this individual's point:

After all, we would suppose the church to be safe, right? However, unfortunately, the church has sometimes been a place where many have experienced wounds instead of healing. Statistics show that many persons who cease attending church do so because of

⁷¹ Michael A. Milton, *Silent No More: A Biblical Call for the Church to Speak to State and Culture* (Clinton, MS: Tanglewood Publishing, 2013), 67.

some offense or injury to their feelings. Sometimes these occur because of the insensitivity of the church; other times, people are at fault for being too touchy or sensitive to misunderstandings.⁷²

The researcher believes that the church is an imperfect place, and though the usher should not show any signs of partiality, a seat assigned to anyone at church should not be the reason for not attending worship services. From the researcher's perspective, to understand the individual who is upset about how they were seated, it is necessary to explain the ushering process the church has adopted to the individual in question. Once that happens, they may understand and get the pain and the hurt out of their system. For the church to succeed in lessening the pain that people feel, it must not assume the pain they felt is forgotten. On the contrary, there should be a conscious determination to do something about the hurt, regardless of how insignificant it may be. The church leadership should hope and strive in such instances not to entertain hurt among these church members.

As much as the researcher recommends that the church not make certain assumptions, it is essential for individuals who face hurtful situations to let others know about their concerns constructively. In contrast, the church must create a constructive environment to receive such comments. While the two suggestions could be utilized, it will be appropriate for leadership to revise some aspects of the policies, procedures, and structures so that those in the church will find calmness in their hurt. Those hurt must also be allowed to express their hurt to enable the proper strategic proposal.

⁷² Dale A. Robbins, *"How to Keep From Getting Hurt In a Church."* Dale A. Robbins. Accessed December 6, 2021, http://www.fruitful-life.net/documents/Church_Hurts_Parts_1_and_2.pdf.

Hurt – Poisonous Bite

It is important to note that hurt and wounds are real. Its impact on a person's life is like a poisonous animal bite. The infected person may not die quickly but may do so eventually. It causes people to resent and eventually lose their zeal and motivation to serve the Lord. In addition to the points mentioned above, man's sinful nature is the primary cause of hurt. Keeping in mind that the church has many imperfect people, it is essential for anyone who wants to deal with pain to start a resolution with these two points in mind. Finally, in addition to the above, hurts or wounds are emotional disorders that stifle spiritual growth. Therefore, it is essential, as Lindsay Gibson, a clinical psychologist, notes, "Knowing about differences in emotional maturity gives a person a way of understanding why people can feel so emotionally lonely despite other people's claims of love and kinship."⁷³

No matter how strong a person is, there may be times when they will get hurt or be wounded. If this happens, that individual must first allow God to work on their inner hurt and then find like-minded people who will help them slowly unwind from the pain. It is appropriate to state that the church in general and, for that matter, COP Norfolk does well in pointing people to God when they complain of hurt. As this section concludes, it is helpful to note that after God helps the hurt individual, there is a need to work it out with those who have created the hurt. This fact affirms Paul's statement, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Rom 12:18). Healing from hurt starts with the vertical relationship with God. It then ends with the horizontal relationship with all people.

⁷³ Lindsay C. Gibson, *Adult Children of Emotionally Immature Parents- How to Heal from Distant, Rejecting or Self-Involved Parent* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications Inc., 2015), 2.

Though mentioned in the Bible, hurts and wounds are subtle because most of those who experienced them found a way around them, perhaps by suppressing the enablers. Robbins adds,

It is said that such experiences occur because the church is an indispensable part of the believer's life. It is essential because it provides a place to worship, service, and learn about God. In addition, it is also a community where believers can practice love toward their brethren as the Bible requires; "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).⁷⁴

The researcher believes that avoiding hurt enablers can help to an extent but not enough to help resolve potential challenges. The most appropriate way to mitigate hurt is to tackle the problem from the root cause. Pentecostals usually over-spiritualize by praying over specific issues rather than practically addressing them. The statement does not remove the validity of prayer to resolve incredibly spiritual matters that cause hurts within a person's physical and emotional framework. However, there are many other factors to consider while resolving an issue like hurt in an individual. As part of the theological basis of this project, it is fair to say that when individuals are only made to pray on issues without practically and logically assessing the matter, it leaves a lot of room for hurt, which leaves a negative imprint on an individual's life. The researcher believes that the emotionally wounded must be encouraged to challenge the problem at its source, disarm its enablers' hurtful tools, and re-align its victims' mindset.

It is also worth noting that pains may be subtle because God came and rescued the situation by supernatural means. One can observe how God makes the hurting experience bearable and understood. In the case of Adam and Eve, God crafted a piece of leather to cover their shame. In similar events, God may have covered the case, making it less critical for those who experienced the hurt. It substantiates the assertion of many people in the church who put on

⁷⁴ Dale A. Robbins, "*How to Keep from Getting Hurt in a Church*." Dale A Robbins. Accessed December 6, 2021, <http://www.victorious.org>

a facade during their painful moments. The researcher holds that God sometimes allows hurt to fulfill two ultimate purposes: to humble the individual and empower them for unforeseen occurrences. Warren Wiersbe, the Bible commentator, describes Abraham's hurt condition as one God allowed. He adds, "It was grievous for Abraham to say goodbye to his son, but this was God's command, and he had to obey. Little did he realize that his obedience was preparing for an even greater test when he had to put Isaac on the altar. The word translated 'grievous' means 'to shake violently, like curtains blowing in the wind.'⁷⁵ It is fair to say that when God allows a hurt, there is a change that positively impacts the individual's life.

Additionally, people only see the result or end product and cannot dissect specific hurt issues with genuineness. God is undoubtedly supernaturally capable of stepping in and fixing these problems. However, when a man is hurt, there is the need for a dual resolution methodology, where God can play His role just as man does. It addresses Jesus' claim that man has to watch and pray (Matt 26:41). The aspect of worship connotes the God or divine part, while the watching part is man's responsibility. MacArthur, the renowned teacher of the Bible, adds to what Jesus intimates from Matthew's gospel, "The tenderness of this plea is touching. Christ is well acquainted with the feelings of human infirmities (Heb 4:15), yet without sin. At this very moment, He is locked in a struggle against a human passion which, while not sinful in themselves, must be subjected to the divine will if He is to avoid sin."⁷⁶ It could be affirmed that there is a theological keystone to hurt that one cannot overlook. However, in reality, broken bones can be dealt with through prayer and the human effort to work on issues that exposed them.

⁷⁵ Warren, W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2001), 102.

⁷⁶ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2005), 1178-79.

Consequently, one should note that God has been concerned about the world's well-being since the inception of time, just as He does for humanity. It is almost impossible to think of God as one who does not care when people are hurt. The psalmist rightfully alludes that God is our present help in times of trouble (Ps. 46:10). The researcher agrees with the psalmist that it is undeniable that God is global in His reach to humanity. Though the aforementioned remains true, it may appear that many, especially those in the pews, do not feel that way when they are going through hurts of all kinds, which may not be visible to people. This section will underscore some of the theological underpinnings of injuries, why the church suppresses hurt, and finally, address God's expectation of believers regarding discomfort in general and those in pain.

Often, people may come to church wearing a big smile and shouting as a sign of gratitude to God, yet they may have issues related to hurt in their hearts and emotions that cause them to get hurt and feel wounded. Many may ask, "If God is a good God, why does He allow such a thing to happen, or why will God send Adam and Eve, His beloved companions, from the Garden when they sinned?" Hunt alluded to this point by relating it to grief. "Emotional complications occur when natural processes of grief are blocked.... These self-incriminating thoughts reveal unrealistic expectations about suffering and a failure to understand the grief process and the slow restoration journey."⁷⁷ The researcher believes that serving the Lord is more gratifying when an individual stands in a place where the heart does not hold anything like hurt that may keep them from receiving from the Lord. Raquel Anderson adds his voice to the conversation of woundedness,

On the other hand, the organized physical manifestation of the church is operated by people who may be broken inside and are in the process of obtaining healing. As a moral and spiritual sanctity guided by the teachings of Christ that exist in the real world, the church is subject to all the failings and vices that embody modern life. It is often one of

⁷⁷ June Hunt, *Grief – Living at Peace with Loss* (Peabody, MA Hendrickson Publishers, 2013), 25.

the least equipped institutions that can effectively handle conflict and, by extension, the existence of Church Hurt. Undoubtedly, the church is a source of spiritual solace and moral guidance. However, like any institution/organization with members from different races, classes, ages, education, political opinions, and backgrounds, the conflict will exist, making church Hurt a recurring phenomenon.⁷⁸

The researcher perceives the life of Jesus as one that went through hurt in many hurtful experiences, particularly when he endured gruesome pain as he inched toward his death on the cross. According to Phil 2:5, one can conclude that Jesus leaving his comfort as one of the members of the Godhead and accepting to be transferred from heaven to earth while taking on the form of a man could incite some hurtful feelings. Ideally, when people face an uncomfortable experience where they leave one place of a normal state for another that is not quite as comfortable, they may experience hurt. The intriguing part of Jesus' hurt has more to do with how the prophets foretold it in the Old Testament and manifested it in the New Testament years later (Isa 53:1-6, Ps 22:1-5, Zech 13:7, Matt 27:1-65). Though one may look at this as pre-programmed or planned, when the real story appears in the New Testament, one can identify the gruesomeness of the actual event as experienced by Jesus. The moral of hurt is that bystanders or spectators could belittle the effect of the pain one may go through when they are not facing the experience themselves.

It may be worth exploring why people usually build up unnecessary tensions in the church that generate hurt. On a typical day, a person who may not understand or empathize with another may say, "This kind of situation should not hurt you!" The researcher identifies the question that the man on the cross asked Jesus as one that could breed hurt (Matt 27:35-44). It seems more hurtful because Jesus may have been going through excruciating pain for such an

⁷⁸ Raquel Anderson, "*How to Keep from Getting Hurt in a Church.*" Raquel Anderson. Accessed December 6, 2021, https://nsuworks.nova.edu/shss_dcar_etd.

agonizing question to be asked to deny the essence of his coming here on earth; If you are the son of God, come down from the cross. MacDonald remarks,

Two robbers flanked the sinless Son of God because hadn't Isaiah predicted seven hundred years previously that He would be numbered with transgressors (53:12)? At first, both robbers hurled insults and abuse at him. But one repented and was saved in the nick of time; he was with Christ in just a few hours in Paradise. If the cross reveals God's love, it also exposes man's depravity. Passers-by paused long enough to jeer at the Shepherd as he was dying for the sheep: You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! If you are the son of God, come down from the cross. It is a language of liberalism. In other words, remove the offense of the cross, and we will believe. William Booth said they claimed they would have believed if He had come down; we believe because He stayed up.⁷⁹

It stands to reason that though every hurt may be heavy on the victim, it can yield a better result later, depending on how the person in question handles it. Paul alludes to this statement, "Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory he will reveal later" (Rom 8:18). There is never a time that one can say they are hurt and have chosen to forget about or overlook the heaviness and toll it brought them. This assertion is why the body of Christ and humanity at large should take issues regarding hurt seriously and not for granted.

The story of the cross helps resolves the dichotomy that created the hurt. Although Jesus suffered on the cross, He proclaimed that it is finished as a sign that our safety, healing, and peace, to name a few, come from suffering or hurting, according to John 19:28-30. This understanding solidifies the notion because of the benefits reaped from the cross. Two possibilities may contribute to this assertion; the first is that the individual may have experienced the situation leading to the discomfort once in their lifetime and may not deem it an issue of concern. The second may be that, more than anything else, one of the missing human elements in the present day is the lack of empathy. The psalmist identifies the pain associated with Jesus'

⁷⁹ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 1234.

death on the cross in Psalm 22. Most Bible scholars have posited that though David was pointing to himself specific hurtful experiences, he was also projecting or foretelling the event of Jesus on the cross. The researcher underscores words and phrases that people may identify with when hurt in Ps 22:1-6. Such terms are loneliness, forsaken, cries of anguish, scorned, despised, rejected, and the melting of the heart. These words are just a few descriptive ways that many hurt may feel, so it is essential not to overlook those who are hurt. Pain is inevitable despite a person's spiritual state. If Jesus, our Master, and Lord, went through hurt, it must not be a subject that the church overlooks.

The researcher believes that Jesus' encounter with several people that were hurt added to his courageous act of submission to God and willingness to save humanity from destruction. He enthusiastically embraced and dealt with the seemingly hurtful situation, especially on the cross, so that he could save us. A similar story in Luke 8:43-48 about the woman who had the issue of blood epitomizes various degrees of hurt in our lives. The researcher seeks to explore such areas as they pertain to hurt within the context of this project. It is worthy of noting that there are also hurt discoveries and mitigation underpinnings regarding what Jesus did in helping to mitigate those painful areas of her life. The researcher underscores the importance of this story because three out of the four Gospels recorded the story. Only John omits it. The account penned by Luke brings out four kinds of hurt worth exploring. Luke 8:43-48 describes a hurtful situation a woman faced during this physical ordeal for twelve years.

Luke describes painful human elements and tendencies in his world. For example, Luke mentioned that the woman with the flow of blood had spent all her livelihood on physicians and did not receive her healing. The researcher imagines the kind of hurt this woman may have faced going through this ordeal. The story written by Luke postulates a predicament that identifies a

woman who experienced relegation, rejection, and ridicule due to her background, status, and present condition.

It is easy for the church to pay more attention to those who have a say and a voice on matters than those considered nothing. This assertion alone could create hurt for the woman. Her posture and attitude seemed so restricted that perhaps no one listened to her anymore. The researcher believes that when such people as this woman with the issue of blood, considered unclean, not allowed in any social gathering, forbidden by law, is found in the church, many would have treated her this way. It seems God is calling the church to be a place where people with such social statuses as this woman, whose name was not even mentioned, could be touched where it hurts to stop the bleeding. The story addresses a woman who believed in God so much that power went out from Jesus when she touched Him. God is interested in every effort possible to reach out to the hurting. The researcher sees four ways this woman was hurting and would like to discuss the best practices the church can implore to mitigate such hurts.

Physical Hurt

One of the ways the church hurts people is when members look down on those who may have physical deformities or illnesses. The church does this when members feel those with such deformities are a sign of the person's lack of faith. Sometimes it even appears that certain preachers make comments suggesting that those who may fall ill or have certain conditions do because of their lack of faith.

In the story of the woman with the blood issue, for example, excessive blood loss in humans can lead to several detriments to one's health. First, blood loss leads to a lifeless person due to iron loss. A condition like this comes with fatigue, dizziness, and many other side effects. For over a decade, this woman suffered from this illness, which likely hindered her from being

able to manage or participate in apparent chores or activities that required a lot of physical strength. Today, most people in the church suffer from physical hurt when they face pressure to be like others. Sometimes, instead of Christ being the standard, many within the church try to make humans the standard. The researcher concludes that when the church idolizes anything or anyone other than Christ, people within the church will experience physical hurt. The woman with the issue of blood trusted humans and had failed, as stated in 2 Chron 32:8 and Ps 20:7.

Psychological Hurt

Experiencing a chronic illness with no cure impacts a person's mental well-being. The woman with the issue of blood must have questioned herself daily, wondering why she had to bear this pain for so long. She probably wondered why there was no cure for her sickness. Often, stressing over such issues can lead to people creating certain habits detrimental to their psychological health. Many people experience psychological hurt within the church when they repeatedly deal with the same problem. A predominant occurrence is when people talk about others in their absence. The researcher is fascinated by how many in the church habitually practice this bad attitude easily without remorse. That part of gossip that breeds psychological hurt often stems from when people's images are tarnished even before they know it. In the account of Daniel, one can see how the satraps and administrators tried to tarnish his image by reporting to the king. According to Dan 6:1-9, their goal was to destroy Daniel's reputation.

Daniel could have faced some psychological bruises because his compatriots made his divine mandate look like an ungodly one. In the same light, it is also possible that the woman most likely experienced psychological hurt based on how everyone could have twisted the story with the issue of blood. Among the reasons could stem from what others would have said about her. This kind of hurt is very paramount within the church. Sometimes though people mean well,

they may catch themselves talking about others, which may generate psychological hurt in the long run.

Economic Hurt

In our current dispensation, people have been blessed with different health insurance plans, which allow them to pay a small percentage of their hospital bills. Back in history, some of these privileges were not available. This woman, who faced the issue of blood for twelve years, is likely to have spent all her life's earnings trying to find a cure for her condition. Mark 5:25-29 reports that the woman had spent money and all she had under the care of many physicians but to no avail. Aside from money, she may have even used other payments, such as livestock or other property, to settle debts. The church faces the challenge of attendance now because many seek economic gains. COP Norfolk usually organizes Friday night prayer services, but only a few attend due to the problem. How many church members view church attendance compared to how it was in the past is different. Church leaders may have to look at ways of engaging members in programs to help ground them in research by Mark Chaves and Laura Stephens,

Although there is more to religious belief and practice than participation in organized religion. Media sometimes suggest that new and unconventional forms of religiosity are swamping more traditional practices and the collective expression of religion in the United States mainly equates to church attendance. When people who say they did not attend religious services in the past week are asked in surveys whether they participated in some other type of religious event or meeting, only 2 percent say yes. If other religious activities have increased, that increase is not much at the expense of traditional weekend attendance at religious services. For this reason, the level of participation in traditional worship services - church and synagogue attendance - and trends in those levels remain valuable, if mundane, windows onto American religion and its collective expression. For many years scholars of American religion agreed on two basic facts about church attendance: (a) on any given day, approximately 40 percent of Americans attend religious services, and (b) this rate has been stable since the 1950s. In this chapter, we review the evidence about the current level of attendance at religious services, and we review the evidence about trends in that participation. First, recent research has shown that weekly attendance in the United States is significantly lower than 40 percent.

Regarding the second, recent research has unsettled the previous consensus about stability in attendance over time. Although recent research has not definitively established that there has been a decline rather than stability, several significant studies point in that direction. Moreover, these studies are suggestive enough to question what previously appeared to be a settled matter.⁸⁰

Emotional Hurt

According to biblical history, it did not take much for a person to be labeled an outcast in an ancient society. People who faced ailments such as leprosy and other conditions that categorized them as "unclean" would be shunned from their communities due to the laws of the land. Such individuals were put on the streets or outskirts of the cities, while others wore specific attire that described their unfortunate plight or predicament. Biblical references are 2 Kings 7:3-20, Ps 37:25, Luke 17:11-19, and Acts 3:2. It seems the woman with the issue of blood was likely to face extreme loneliness and ostracisation for a large part of her life. She must have gone through periods of intense sadness, anger, and even regret.

The church sometimes identifies or relates to people in light of their past. At COP Norfolk, there have been instances where individuals who may have had specific issues in the past or may have been involved in something the church considered sinful feel threatened by the perception people have of them. The researcher appreciates that COP Norfolk has developed ways to prevent emotional hurt in people. A team has been put together to spend time counseling such individuals who are particularly labeled in one way or the other; so they don't go through emotional pain. A particular process could be explored to help congregants identify ways not to see people through the lenses of their past lives or what the church deems derogatory. A

⁸⁰ Mark Chaves and Laura Stephens, "Church Attendance in the United States," *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, 1 no. 1 (2003): 85-95.

concerted effort to help lessen all forms of labeling placed on people that may cause emotional hurt should be consistent, just like the counseling team.

Notwithstanding this point, the researcher appreciates and is conscious of how COP Norfolk has helped bring down some of the hurts that many in the church may have. There are several avenues that the church can explore to help people who go through the four categories of pain defined above. When the church becomes mindful of the sources of psychological, physical, emotional, and economic hurt, just as Jesus healed the woman with the issue of blood, several others will receive healing from their hurts within the church.

How to Deal with the Types of Hurt

When dealing with physical hurt, the church has been blessed with several people in the medical field and therefore knows ways to alleviate inevitable physical hurts. In addition, these members can provide medical advice, recommendations for remedies, and referrals to other medical professionals within the community.

For a long time, the predominant culture of the church made it difficult to assist people dealing with psychological hurt. Often, people suffering from mental health disorders due to trauma or those who have been through some fear were categorized as “demon-oppressed.” Some church members would even assume that the person was not praying enough, which resulted in their poor mental state. Thankfully, the church understood that mental health disorders are not always as spiritual as once assumed. Out of that newfound understanding, a counseling unit was established in the church. This counseling unit deals with members battling a variety of mental health illnesses. Economic hurt can be challenging in the church setting. Often, people fear being vulnerable due to fear of being judged. To help modulate this fear, the church established welfare committees to encourage members to come forward, hoping those in

need of financial assistance would come. The welfare committees within the church typically keep the names of those who request assistance confidential to maintain the trust of the church members. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many members found themselves out of work; some could not go to stores due to underlying health issues that made them vulnerable to the virus. To reduce church members' financial burdens, COP Norfolk dropped off groceries to individuals and assisted financially in any way that they could.

Dealing with emotional hurt is tricky for many people within the church. Congregational culture has taught the church to think that it must only pray about emotions and avoid sharing feelings. Because of this, many Christians tend to bottle up their emotions for extended periods. Unfortunately, the outcome of that is not always favorable. COP Norfolk identified this issue and created a program for women called "My Sister's Keeper." This program pairs women with one another and allows them to build a relationship for open and honest conversations. In addition, this program has given women a channel to pour out their feelings in a judgment-free zone, get advice from fellow women, and pray through any emotional hurt they face. The researcher agrees with the psalmist in Ps 147:3-4, "The Lord builds up Jerusalem and gathers Israel's exiles. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds." The goal of every church like COP Norfolk must be to make Jesus visible at all times and in all situations. As has been pointed out that hurt becomes infinitesimal when Jesus becomes the focus at all times within the church.

Theological Foundations

In the book of Genesis, one of the dichotomies that initiated hurt for the first man and woman was how God lovingly expelled them from the Garden after their disobedience (cf. Gen 3:22-24). To many, as was discussed earlier, it is troubling to see a loving God take those He loves out of the place where He would especially interact with them. However, it is essential to

note that though the picture may look like God punished His people, He also made a garment and covered their shame.

Biblical Underpinnings of Hurts – Loving Discipline

Assuming the man felt severely hurt, it is justifiable to claim that God found a way to relieve him from the bitter feelings. The researcher describes this seemingly painful experience as a bitter and correctional event because it is sad to see the man being cut off from the kind of relationship he enjoyed with God as described in Gen 3:8. Still, to God, he uses the occurrence of expulsion, to correct the situation. It is fair to say God finds a way to mitigate man's hurt by His nature. This assertion explains what the book of Hebrews says,

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. You have not yet resisted in your struggle against sin to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? Therefore, my son, do not regard the discipline of the Lord lightly, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son he receives (12:3–6).

The verses above recall and expound what is recorded in Prov 3:11-12. In like manner, the researcher of the book of Hebrews affirms that specific trials and sufferings in the Christian's life come from God, who uses them to educate and discipline believers through such experiences. Hebrews adds that such dealings demonstrate God's love for His children (cf. 2 Cor 12:7-10).⁸¹ The possibility of a man being infallible and capable of hurting himself and others play a vital role in the study. This fact is that God is concerned for everyone's well-being yet gives special attention to those who serve Him with a clear heart but are hurting on the inside due to something done to them. This point confirms David, a man God loved, indicated in Psalm 34:4 that God saved him from all his troubles after prayers. "As David points to the one he

⁸¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 1873.

described as poor in the audience, it may be a description of that person who has been hurt in many instances by others. The passage gives two glaring assurances; God's people must be sure that the Lord has and will deliver them, and after deliverance, he causes His angels to protect them, his beloved."⁸² The most critical point to the researcher is that God's ultimate desire for the church is to remain a place where the hurt and the lonely ones will experience rest and safety, as underscored in Ps 61:3 as well as Matt 11:28-30.

Wrapping up this section, it is apparent that the sequence of events in the Garden of Eden assumes that Adam or his wife were emotionally injured from their expulsion from the delightful place where they resided. God, concerned about man's welfare, found a way to help them and ease their pain. It is to say that God sees and knows when a man hurts and, therefore, plans to keep everyone safe and ready for His ultimate plan. The depiction of the Garden and the tree of life after the fall guarded by cherubim anticipates God's plan to restore blessing and energy to the human race in the covenant relationship.⁸³ In like manner, when people are hurt, God plans to bring them to a place of restoration.

The more one develops a godly relationship, vertical (with God) and horizontal (with man), the better one can deal with the hurt. This truth is God's expectation of us when another is hurt. In essence, hurt is prevalent among humans, and God wants Christians to be aware of it while providing the necessary help, just as He did with the first man and woman. MacDonald adds, "In love and mercy, God searched after His fallen creatures with the question 'Where are you?' This question proved that man was lost and God had come to seek. Second, it proved man's sin and God's grace. God takes the initiative in salvation, demonstrating the very thing

⁸² Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kolenberger III, *Expositors Bible Commentary Abridged Edition Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 835.

⁸³ Kenneth L. Barker, *Expositors Bible Commentary*, 835.

Satan got Eve to doubt His love.”⁸⁴ In a similar light, the hurt could cause a person to run away or hide like the first man and woman; but God wants us to pull them from that place to a place where they can be comfortable serving God. When such an atmosphere devoid of hurt is created, people can serve God much better. People can serve God better, but it also helps deepen their relationships. When the church has fluid connections, it also avoids pre-judgmental notions that many may have.

Additionally, since the church is made up of people from different backgrounds, there is a possibility of encountering the one bad nut problem. To the researcher, this problem may create a chance for a person or several different people who could rub off their imperfections, prejudgments, and negative experiences on the fluidity of a good church environment. Therefore, developing healthy relationships should involve intentionality driven by an in-depth conversation to mitigate hurt. The parable that Jesus gave about the weeds explains this point better in Matt 13:30, “Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time, I will tell the harvesters: First, collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.” Jesus paints a picture of how imperfect the church is. However, there is an expectation that though the imperfect ones in the church may cause people to hurt, when there is true discipleship, nurturing, and growth into the image and likeness of Christ, the sources of hurt could be discovered and thereby preventing eventually.

The Old Testament Hurt

In addition to the point above, other stories in the Old Testament throw light on the subject of hurt. For instance, the accounts of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar bring to light the

⁸⁴ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 37.

unfolding of a potentially hurtful situation. Using the story from Gen 21:8-21, Baker and Kohlenberger III explain further, “To deal with her barrenness, Saria’s plan of offering her maid to Abram to bear him an heir was acceptable within the social custom of the day. However, Sarai’s plan was one more example of the futility of human efforts to achieve God’s blessing. Although successful, Saria’s plan does not meet with divine approval.”⁸⁵

Abraham and Sarah, who had served God for a while, did not have a child. Instead, they collectively planned to use Hagar to have a child, and after she did, the decision hurt the family. This situation of hurt brought a divide in the family, such that Abraham had to let Hagar move out of their home with her son Ishmael. This picture vividly describes how the church treats people who may have fallen into sin and are out of line. Recently, at COP Norfolk, an unmarried lady got pregnant. COP, in an attempt to keep its disciplinary measures in place, deemed this act as falling out of line and therefore disciplined this young lady through *suspension*. Crick speaks to the researcher’s heart in a situation like this when he underscores,

Hagar was a woman, an enslaved person, and a foreigner. She had no rights, no privileges, and no home. She was used to providing a child for a family where she did not belong. Then, in a moment of desperation, she made a run for her the desert, and God appeared to her there. He comforted, covenanted with her, and named her unborn child. The name was Ishmael, or God hears a revelation of Godself to Hagar.⁸⁶

When it comes to situations like these, the researcher believes that the church should have a kind of ministry that reveals that God is close to the brokenhearted. In addition, the incident speaks to the fact that when there is separation or isolation, it could hurt people. Even though Hagar was enslaved to Abraham, it could not change the intensity of the hurt to the family. Bearing that enslaved people did not necessarily have a will of their own but hung on to one for their masters,

⁸⁵ Kenneth L. Barker, *Expositors Bible Commentary*, 25.

⁸⁶ Robert Crick, *Outside The Gates*, 14.

it could have created more hurt moving away from her master with whom she had a child and had lived for several years.

In like manner, there are instances within the COP framework or structure where ministers get moved around from one station to another station, which potentially causes hurt to the minister, their wives, kids, and the congregants. Aspects that stimulate this hurt are because the move is usually not announced. Thus, the minister in question does not have much control over such a decision, and the first time they learn about it is at the church's most important General Council meeting, where decisions are made. Therefore, though COP may have this enshrined in its procedures or framework to mitigate some of these apparent hurts, there may be the need to put a system in place to help these movements, which the church calls transfers. Though transfers could create pain and wounds in people, the researcher, being an avid benefactor, affirms that there are potential benefits if such transfers are managed well. For example, MacDonald speaks about the advantage of the transfer of Hagar and Ishmael from Abrahams's house, which was allowed by God. He comments, "Abraham grieved when he had to lose both Hagar and Ishmael, but God consoled him with the promise that Ishmael would become the father of a great nation. And yet the Lord made it clear that Isaac was the promised son through whom the covenant would be carried."⁸⁷

As much as the researcher admits that certain aspects of the policies, structures, and procedures may cause many wounds, the discomfort's intensity may be minimized if explained thoroughly. It is a glaring fact many in the church can help the hurt mitigation process by expressing an appreciation of how God relates to those hurt in Scripture. Osei Owusu, for example, adds a hurt mitigation idea in the church, "We need to intentionally make leadership

⁸⁷ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, 54.

positions appealing to the younger generation and get them involved. Letting them know that their opinions and questions matter without being delisted or labeled as disrespectful goes a long way.”⁸⁸ The statement above suggests that God’s approach to a hurting individual is collaboration. A theological perspective for a hurting person is to reach out, listen, and pull the hurting person as close as possible so that the hurt may be there and they don’t have a reason to worry much about it.

The New Testament Hurt

The story of the Samaritan, which many describe as the Good Samaritan, has to do with Hurt in Luke 10:25-37. The person in question, whose name was not disclosed, had a physical injury. Though that is the most prevalent issue, it seems he could have faced some problems with those who could not help him. To buttress the point above, it is also fair to say that one can experience the most hurtful situation when left in the dark. The unassuming Samaritan came to the rescue of this poor injured man to show Christians what to do with the hurt and wounded people in any way. It seems the researcher surmises the import of Jesus’ suggestion and in Paul’s three chord necessities from 1 Corinthians 13:13 of the Christian journey; faith, hope, and love, of which the greatest is love. MacArthur, a televangelist, intimates that scribes and Pharisees’ prevailing opinion were that one’s neighbors were the righteous alone. According to them, the wicked, including rank sinners such as tax collectors and prostitutes, and Gentiles, especially Samaritans, were hated because some people thought they were enemies of God. Jesus taught that anything called godly hatred is marked by a brokenhearted grieving over the sinner’s condition.⁸⁹ To the researcher, it seems Jesus’ definition of love should be emulated by the

⁸⁸ Yaw Osei-Wusu, *The African Elephant – Why Millennials are Leaving the African Diaspora Church* (Kendallville, IN: Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data, 2020), 105.

⁸⁹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 1298.

church, starting with a person with a changed heart. It must be clear that one with a change of nature within the church is not that person who is a religious figure; in other words, the priest or the Levite, rather the one who has a love of Jesus shining through their heart, exuding through their actions and attitude. Jesus expounds on this lifestyle in the sermon on the mount as stipulated in Matthew 5:16. The researcher echoes that most of the significant need for the hurting is genuine love. Without a doubt, the importance of the Samaritan story is an example of the church. When actualized, the hurt person interacting with another should experience the love of Jesus shining through their lives.

The story also prescribes a method by which a hurting individual can receive help. If loving someone means showing concern for their well-being, it does not mean fixing that individual's particular troubles. Though the Samaritan could not entirely help, he utilized what he had to help soothe the wounds of the injured. It seems the gesture is an excellent way to show care. Most travelers probably carried small amounts as a kind of first aid-kit when they traveled. The wine was antiseptic, the oil soothing and healing.⁹⁰ As suggested in the earlier sections, a critical point that initiates hurt centers around the human and the sinful nature that propels or fuels it. Perhaps the robbers that hurt this man did this because of their sinful nature.

Our sinful nature causes us to hurt one another. However, undoubtedly, God has given humans his nature in exchange for their sinful nature. Therefore, the panacea is to present God's nature which is found in the heart of the Christian when it hurts. A Pentecostal song fits this exchange perfectly. "He's taken my shame to the cross. He has taken my guilt to the cross. There is a peace I now have because of the cross of Calvary."⁹¹ The song, translated from the Akan

⁹⁰ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 1299.

⁹¹ The Church of Pentecost General Headquarters, *Pentecostal Songs Book English and Twi* (Accra, Ghana: Pentecost Press Limited, 2016), 679.

language, spells out the spiritual exchange that any individual who accepts the Lord receives for sinful nature. This change should reflect how the church treats people who are hurt. For example, when an individual falls into sin and has to go through suspension, many treat such individuals as outcasts. Yet, the Bible gives a clear pathway and goal for every discipline in the church according to Gal 6:1. Wiersbe comments,

The legalist is not interested in bearing burdens. Instead, he adds to the limitations of others. Like the Pharisees, they bind heavy burdens grievously to be paid and lay them on a men's shoulders. Still, they will not move those (Matt 23:4). The legalist is always harder on other people than he is on himself, but the Spirit-led Christian demands more of himself than he does of others so that he might be able to help others.⁹²

The welfare and well-being of the person should carry restorative sentiments rather than punitive ones. Therefore, COP Norfolk could create an avenue where members suspended could consistently receive guidance and counseling. Leaders who may have to vacate their posts due to one sin or the other could receive help to get back into the community, so they do not lose their faith in Christ. Therefore, suspension or disciplinary action is essential to bring all to repentance. The church will create a more healthy environment if practical steps are taken to help those who fall among us.

The new nature should first show those who profess to have a relationship with Christ despite the prevailing situation or condition. It seems our present-day culture, even in the church, has become more like what happened in the story. Many churches and individuals tend to place prestige and position first before the wounded or hurt. This point establishes that a wounded person may feel hurt more because they are going through an issue with another person above them. However, the story teaches the opposite. It almost seems as if charisma is placed before character by many people in today's society. This assertion may result from what most appeals to

⁹² Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 721.

the eye rather than God. God looks at what is in the heart of men rather than what appeals to man's eyes. The researcher puts charisma and character on the same pedestal because they complement each other. If the church is interested in mitigating hurt, there must be a conscious effort to perpetuate both teachings. Jesus clarifies what God's role is when it comes to hurt in the story of the Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). It is unblemished within the context of the story that God's position is to offer the nature of Christ to all who are hurt.

In the Samaritan story, the thieves robbed the man by hurting and wounding him, but Jesus shares that those wounded need genuine love, and this gesture shows in the demonstration of kindness shown by the Samaritan. These great traits are evident in the story where the Samaritan paid for accommodation, perhaps food, hospital bills, and incidentals, as suggested in Luke 10:33-35. The researcher believes such gestures remedy those who are hurt and wounded. The Samaritan first got close to the hurt; he continued to bandage the hurting or wounded area, poured oil on the wound, poured wine over the injury, and finally set them up on their donkey to a place where the wounded man could receive more help. The researcher's morality is a mirror one can look through to experience God's love. The Expositor's Bible Commentary highlights this point:

The NT parables aim to lead one to a decision; Jesus' question in verse 36 forces the law expert to voice his decision. In his question, Jesus focuses on the person who loved the Samaritan, who made himself a neighbor. This reversal of the expert's question provides the key to the parable's meaning and Jesus' teaching on love. Its object should not limit love, its extent, and quality care in the control of its subject. Furthermore, in this case, love is demonstrated in action in the act of mercy, and it may be costly.⁹³

Schematically, the general Christian rubric, for example, subscribes to prayers when choosing leaders, as was done in the early church when the disciples were about to appoint another to replace Judas, according to Acts 1:15-23. However, there was a practical approach after

⁹³ Kenneth L. Barker, *Expositors Bible Commentary*, 250.

the prayer: the researcher must complement all prayers. Osmer, the Princeton professor of missions and evangelism, notes that, in offering a theology of spirituality of congregational leaders, it is better to move away from the general description of the tasks of practical theology interpretation found among contemporary practical theologians. Instead, it yields to the threefold office of Christ, called reformed theology. This idea is where one can utilize a method that portrays the interrelatedness of the Old and New Testaments to provide a starting point for theological reflection on leadership in congregations.⁹⁴ To the researcher, though there are many scriptural inferences posited in the New Testament that address hurt, it seems to bring the person out of the valley into a place of safety. James puts this beautifully in James 1:2-4, “Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds because you know that the testing of your faith produces preservation. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” In essence, an idea that addresses what Jesus would do is what the researcher seeks to propose. In quintessence, the way to deal with hurt in the church is to, as prescribed in the New Testament, continually bear the fruit of the Spirit, which is the character of Jesus.

The researcher finds it startling that many Christians have a strong desire to do anything within their power to dispel certain languishing factors that militate against their lives yet are unable to do it. The researcher affirms when Christians put on the character of Christ, which is the fruit of the Spirit, it becomes an offensive weapon for the believer to ward off any device like hurts that people may have. Paul describes in Gal 5:22 the weapon that helps the Christian fight against hurts. This humble suggestion emphasizes or postulates that the New Testament proposes an idea that when the believer bears the character of Jesus, it is like an armory that helps in the

⁹⁴ Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology – An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company 2008), 27.

hurt mitigation process. Therefore, Christians can be sure that wherever they exhibit the life of Jesus, it mitigates hurt to a large extent.

Theoretical Foundations

The hurt theory generally looks more into assumptions, presuppositions, and stances. Hurt is less considered among many Christian groups because it encourages one to assume a welcoming and acceptable posture with any issue that produces hurt as long as it happens in church. It is noteworthy that there have been few scholarly writings on this subject of hurt, especially in the church; hence, the purpose of the present research. At best many who have written on this subject usually lean towards a method that will place more wounds on a hurting person. Wilson writes,

When people are hurt, they need hope to believe there is some help to stop hurting or hurt less. Therefore, a posture that pushes all to reflect more on solutions to human weakness is paramount. Wilson adds that a life-affirming voice to man's weaknesses is a key that turns hurting into joy. She is confident that when this reflection has taken its entire position, it should draw many to aspire and look to God while helping the hurt become more like Christ.⁹⁵

The call for the church to go back to the fruit-bearing life of Jesus is worth investigating. The researcher believes that when the proper lessening strategies are put in place, many people in the church's pews will be like Christ when He said He would give rest to all weary and burdened, as stated in Matthew 11:28-30. As challenging as it may seem to come to terms with the fact that people get hurt in the church, it is essential to state that Christ's method and plan are used to develop and mature a person into a fully equipped disciple and vessel who are helpful to His kingdom. Because COP is quickly growing, there is a need to reach into the structure and system and weed out some of the elements or factors that could cause hurt in people so that they won't break others. This suggestion challenges leaders and members of the COP to create an

⁹⁵ Sandra D. Wilson, *Hurt People Hurt People*, 13.

environment within the church where people feel free to worship without hurting. The proposal is to help change the statement that many make blindly, “This is how we have done it since the time of our fathers!” The researcher proposes that if a church's policy or structure has lost relevance and is creating hurt among people, it should be reviewed or revised so that many will not be harmed in the church. With this awareness, it is clear that the transfer of ministers, for example, or the review of leaders within the COP may need re-examination with the necessary adjustments made to reap the benefits more than the kind of hurt it may create. It is even possible that the preacher’s sermon for the day could hurt another. Robbins addressing this in the light of pain, said, “Obviously, every pastor preaches with the hope that everyone will take the message personally and apply it to their own life. If the shoe fits, wear it. However, a few always think the minister is pointing his sermon specifically at them. This stance is a common misunderstanding which causes persons to get hurt.”⁹⁶

A theory about implementing a committee or an avenue that mainly looks into helping those hurting within the church in one way or the other is necessary. When there is an avenue created to hear the person hurting, it is a step in the right direction that helps resolve the problem of hurt and wounds. In a much more practical way, Gibson suggests the absence of this avenue or environment to loneliness by stating, "Emotional loneliness comes from not having enough emotional intimacy with other people. It can start in childhood due to feeling emotionally unseen by a self-preoccupied parent or arise in adulthood when an emotional connection is lost."⁹⁷ The idea of being lonely in the midst of the crowd is not a pleasant experience. One of the world’s famous Bible commentators, Matthew Henry, alluded to this point when he expounded on

⁹⁶ Dale A. Robbins, “How to Keep From Getting Hurt In a Church.”

⁹⁷ Lindsay C. Gibson, *Adult Children of Emotionally Immature Parents* (Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publication) Chap. 1, Kindle.

David's expression of loneliness. First, he underscores that David makes a case before the Lord with the hope of ease from God. Second, he complains of his troubles' deep impressions upon his spirit. At this point, David had no hope, and his soul was wounded; he had no foundation; he was overwhelmed, sinking in despair, confused, and filled with agony.⁹⁸ When they may feel the pain of being alone, they will need an avenue to pour out their hearts and the willingness for others to hear them.

Over-spiritualization of specific issues among Pentecostals creates hurt. Since God works through human vessels, there may be times when human imperfections and weaknesses may get in the way of what God ideally intends to do and transmit. Therefore, the individuals who have the privilege of communicating God's bigger plans, like pastors, lay leaders, and church workers, must learn the skill of knowing the best way to share God's intentions in the most straightforward ways without imposing fear on people. Unfortunately, an observation is that many of the practices and spiritual disciplines within the framework of Pentecostals are over-spiritualized.

Though the undergirded truth is that God who spoke in the past still says in our time, there should be an obvious distinction between such practices or spiritual disciplines that have religious underpinning and those that God uses men as a method to accomplish a task. To the point posited above, what hurts the most is when particular decisions are framed so that one can't ask questions or ask for clarification. Such comments like, "This is the leading of God, or God spoke to me about this change," leaves room for people to continue hurting because no one in the church would want to challenge a decision from the almighty God. Perhaps, there should be a structural change that helps COP communicate some of these points and what can help the

⁹⁸ Matthew Henry, Matthew Henry's Commentary, 1245.

congregation. Even if this change process is shared at a high level, where the structure, policy, and procedures are explained briefly, it will help mitigate some of the hurt because the staff and lay leaders are allowed to contribute or participate in training environment changes. This suggestion points to the fact that training and development programs help create awareness within the church. It allows those hurting to know that the church admits that it is a human institution and that certain occurrences by attitude and lifestyles happen due to the humanness factor.

COP may lack a thorough investigation of the theories listed above. Reexamining some of its member's hurtful experiences will be a mitigating avenue. The approach seeks to bear some areas within the COP's structure, policy, and procedures that hurt both leaders, members, and laity. This theory will benefit such groups within the church to alleviate hurt in the system. Therefore, immediate action is a candid and practical approach. First, some of these structures have become unchanged landmarks in the church but have created hurts and wounds in people. The second point is that if these have happened for many years, then there is the need to inform and build mitigating strategies through consistent retreats, training programs, and quicker but polished ways of disseminating such information that can potentially hurt people.

One theory that seems to have taken center stage in discussion is the selection of leaders in the church. Apart from the review of leadership, which created a problem of hurting people, most COP churches appoint influential and wealthy leaders. Though just a few people have come up through social media to speak about it, there is still the possibility that this theory could breed hurt in people. Whether this theory is true or not, there is still the need for COP Norfolk to look into and safeguard its leadership vetting approach so this does not create hurt. Renowned psychologists, Gino, Francesca, and Lamar Pierce, seek to discover the inequity in

choosing leaders due to their societal influence. Their abstract posits a matrix of different issues regarding leadership choices.

Under what conditions do people act dishonestly to help or hurt others? We addressed this question by examining the influence of a previously overlooked factor, the beneficiary or victim of dishonest acts. In two experiments, we randomly paired participants and manipulated their wealth levels through an initial lottery. We then observed how inequity between partners influenced the likelihood of one dishonestly helping or hurting the other while varying the financial incentives for dishonest behavior. The results show that economic self-interest cannot fully explain people's tendency to help or hurt others dishonestly. Such dishonesty is influenced by emotional reactions to wealth-based inequity, even when the deception bears a personal financial cost. Envy evoked by damaging injustice led to hurting behavior, whereas guilt induced by positive inequity motivated helping behavior. Finally, inequity between partners and third parties triggered dishonest helping through empathy.⁹⁹

Therefore, it is essential that COP Norfolk looks into leadership selection and be willing to explain the import of why specific leaders are chosen if the assumption made by many is incorrect.

⁹⁹ Francesca Gino, and Lamar Pierce, "Dishonesty in the Name of Equity," *Psychological Science*, 20, no. 9 (September 2009): 1153–60.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter details the implementation of the thesis project for understanding the sources of hurt and wounds in COP Norfolk. The researcher gleans from Wilson's assertion that "The notion of the word hurt shall connote a description that elaborates an emotional reaction a person postulates when they feel a shame soul-deep enough to make them appear something is wrong with them. The feeling of shame makes them think they are worse than anybody else in the world."¹⁰⁰ This intervention plan promoted awareness of hurt and its effects while introducing the mitigation benefits to the spiritual environment, using COP Norfolk as a case study. In anticipation, the subject of hurt discussed in the church posited various strategies of mitigation and its attendant issues in perspective. Since hurt is apparent and yet subtle due to its nature, the researcher worked for the church to deal continuously with matters that border around man's spirit, soul, and personhood as it pertains to the subject of hurt. Additionally, the researcher planned to lessen the concept of hurt vigorously to help the church expand and reach many souls in the Hampton Roads area. In a recent episode with the Southern Baptist Convention, Alfred Polson addresses how the clergy members within the convention face hurt of a sort. Polson adds,

Clergy veneration or respect has declined to contempt for this group of leaders, who have become a target of shame, scandal, and obloquy within their congregations and the larger society (Molloy, 2011; Root, 2019; Speight & Speight, 2017). This harmful and suspicious perception of the clergy has either contributed to the moral abyss of society and/or the disrepute of those who were supposed to be the moral conscience of the same society (Tanner, Wherry, & Zvonkovic, 2013). With the study of leadership being rooted in academic and practical domains, it is necessary to revisit this once-venerated class of leaders and attempt to gain access to their experiences to understand better some of their woes and the reasons for their predicaments.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Sandra D. Wilson, *Hurt People Hurt People: Hope and Healing for Yourself and Your Relationships* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers, 2015), 19.

¹⁰¹ Alfred Jr, Russell Polson, "A Study of the Contributions of James Barnett Taylor to the Foreign Mission Work of the Southern Baptist Convention." *New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary*, 1, no. 2 (1998), 1.

To understand church hurt well, a comprehensive study of the subject was undertaken to address currently trending hurtful issues at COP Norfolk. First, the researcher identified some familiar sources of hurt, helping those who have struggled with such emotional pains to voice them out in diverse ways. Next, the researcher sought to uncover hidden hurt areas and further underscored specific helpful mitigation strategies. Finally, after emphasizing and sampling, the researcher envisioned those affected in hurtful ways undergoing a training program to help neutralize its effects.

As mentioned, hurt is a neglected subject matter due to stigma and the lack of awareness among many Pentecostals. Therefore, it is paramount that the church takes a clear stand so members who may have gone through hurt in one way or another can subscribe to the mitigation methods and plans as prescribed within the framework of the study. However, the researcher is aware of the stigma attached to the individuals who express their hurts openly, is very careful in initiating such conversations, and places a high premium on confidentiality. The researcher was intentional, clear, and upfront with the participants about the form, planned type of study, research design, data gathering process, source analysis, and data analysis processes. The researcher anticipated finding varied sources and developing mitigation strategies that underscore thematic views of the subject areas related to hurts. Though this project directly addressed hurt issues within COP Norfolk, the researcher expected that the thematic outcomes and principles benefit parachurch bodies and institutions dealing with such matters.

Intervention Design

The apostle Paul says, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor

10:13). Paul attempts to communicate with the certainty of the numerous challenges that church members can face, including hurt. He adds that God provides a way of escape or a panacea that helps to bring down or eradicate its effect. This idea essentially means that the church must be aware of such hurtful sources that could create discord in its spiritual sanctity, whether in the form of temptation or hurt. Paul encouraged his audience to come to a place of knowing that though there are ways to mitigate temptation, the individual in question must put effort into reaching the results. Therefore, COP Norfolk should develop an internal strategic method to help alleviate hurt among people. These mitigating strategies aim to bring healing, create a mild disposition for the pain, and create a serene spiritual environment where people can serve the Lord. Though the damages and wounds are not visible, a hurt person can only heal in an atmosphere where genuine love is demonstrated to the fullest. Therefore, it will be great to encapsulate the whole project in a love-like environment.

The researcher launched the project upon approval. He did this during one of the regular love retreats. COP Norfolk typically engages in such love retreats at least twice a year. The researcher anticipated that bringing the subject matter of hurt would create maximum awareness of understanding the sources, its effect, and mitigation strategies. In addition, the researcher utilized the following steps to help complete the research methods and project. It must be noted that these steps were not necessarily followed in sequence but served as a road map to completion.

Methodology Executive Summary

1. The student received IRB approval to ensure project protocols was followed correctly.
2. The writer sent an approval request letter to the executives, introducing the subject area and the benefits of researching hurts and wounds among members and leaders in COP Norfolk.

3. The student sent general announcements to seek volunteers, then picked focus groups and participants among volunteers. If I cannot reach such, I shall request specific individuals directly.
4. The writer introduced the research to participants and gave the reasons for the topic during the first meeting.
5. The researcher sent out a survey to the participants to analyze the research.
6. The student conducted interviews with participants regarding the subject of hurt.
7. The researcher scheduled the first seminar on the subject of hurt.
8. The researcher conducted interviews with participants for more feedback on the subject of hurt and mitigation strategies gleaned so far.
9. The researcher scheduled a second seminar on positive confession.
10. The writer conducted post-interviews with participants for more feedback on how positive confession helps to mitigate hurt.
11. The student gave a presentation to summarize the research and indicate some of the suggested mitigation methods from the analysis.
12. The researcher analyzed data received from participants that helped to identify themes.

It was the researcher's goal that after the steps above are completed, there will be viable resources to glean from this project to the leadership of Norfolk COP to help understand the hurt in the church and be able.

IRB Approval

The researcher tailored the hurt mitigation project toward helping COP Norfolk understand why people get hurt in church and provide mitigating strategies to help such people come out of such hurts. The primary reason for the IRB, which stands for Institutional Review Board, is to ensure that the safety of the researcher and those who engage in all interactions are safe. The board was fittingly established by educational institutions to review and monitor biomedical research involving humans and play an essential role in promoting and protecting the

right and welfare of humans. This approval process is worthwhile to the researcher due to the many issues that cropped up even in Christendom. Initially, the researcher thought this process might be obsolete but later realized it would help to give credence to the hurt mitigation project determined as safe. For example, it is unsurprising that many churches now have to conduct background checks on volunteer workers who care for children in the church. Though the congregants' children may not be in the sanctuary as many hours as in their schools, they could be endangered if the proper people are not in place to provide the appropriate care.

One may wonder why a hurt mitigation project of this nature must go through a process like IRB. The researcher affirms the validity of this process by referencing a story in Scripture. The text in Job 1:6 notes, "One day the members of the heavenly court came to present themselves before the LORD, and the Accuser, Satan, came with them." To the researcher, the text buttresses the point that many in the church remain oblivious to the fact that there are people in the church who have allowed their untouched old nature to affect the sanctity of the church. Just as the church is supposed to be a place of a highly reputable environment both spiritually and physically, all must come to a place of understanding that it is a spiritual hospital where congregants have come to receive the needed help of all forms. Please see Appendix L for approval from IRB.

After the approval process, the first step sought approval from the church board. Then, the leadership allowed the researcher to explore the possibilities of crafting a standardized way of dealing with the church's hurt and wounded. In the end, the church may take a stance to redesign its format so the policies, procedures, and structures don't cause hurt among members. Finally, in consultation with the church board through the church secretary, the researcher wrote a formal letter requesting to embark on this project to enhance the church's view of the polity.

COP Norfolk Board Approval

During the project's first week, the researcher sent the executives of COP Norfolk a letter titled, "Request to conduct a research study" (see Appendix A). The researcher sent the letter through email on February 13, 2022. The researcher followed the email with a phone call to the district secretary to explain the whole project, so it is easy to communicate the same to the board members. One of the cardinal reasons the researcher believes this topic will benefit the church is the theological impact a study of such nature on hurts and wounds will bring to the fore. Tim Sensing, a research expert, underscores,

The student's involvement in the degree, and particularly the project thesis process, highlight the student's functioning as a resident practical theologian who practices theology as a communal activity-faith relating to others, theology as a formative activity-faith shaping identity, theology as a critical activity-faith seeking understanding in practice, and theology as a public activity-faith expressing itself in the marketplace.¹⁰²

Sensing's point brings a direct underpinning to the subject matter of hurt, which the researcher discussed with the church secretary in great detail. The conversation with the church secretary addressed the benefits the church will ultimately reap when the research is completed. While considering the benefits of this study, the researcher looked at an extensive way the church can help the wounded and the hurting. As stated in an earlier chapter, practicing what we preach is crucial to mitigating hurts and wounds. A cursory observation of many professing Christians is that many cannot follow through with what they say. When this situation occurs, it eventually creates hurt. It is essential to mention that the researcher assessed old methods used by COP Norfolk to resolve hurt issues. Jesus clarifies the idea of using old methods or resolution in Mark 2:22 with an illustration that confirms this point. "If new wine were put into them, the

¹⁰² Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research – A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2011), xix.

pressure built up by the fermentation would bust the skins. The new wine typifies the joy and power of the Christian faith. The old wine depicts the forms and rituals of Judaism. New wine needs new skins."¹⁰³ The church will undoubtedly remain stagnant in growth if she keeps practicing certain religious practices that may have lost their effectiveness. Given this idea, the researcher speculated during the interview that there would be a fair mix of legalism and grace, opposing each other to avoid hurt. After the researcher listens to the participants through individual interviews and interactions, the church leadership uses specific old methods. This exercise will eventually initiate a discovery of new methods, which will help allow leadership to explore and make changes as they deem fit.

In addition to MacDonald's point, the researcher brought the secretary's attention to the fact that the process of this research shall dwell on how the Christian's utilization of grace through Christ is a critical component when it comes to establishing an understanding of the sources of hurt and the potential mitigation strategy toward the hurt and wounded. Sensing underscores that a person's faith can only be expressed when others can experience it. As the researcher engages participants, to understand the sources of hurt among members and leaders of COP Norfolk, the ultimate goal is to help reduce the hurt. It is on this premise Sensing adds that the "DMin project takes the concrete places where God encounters His people seriously. Sensing adds that this kind of intentional interaction helps to effectively engender transformation in congregants' lives rather than abstract and generalized approaches."¹⁰⁴ In context to the research, the church should endeavor to take on the attitude of Christ, who took upon himself the nature of man so he could empathize and relate accordingly. On the second note, when the church enables

¹⁰³ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, 1253.

¹⁰⁴ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 13.

members to enjoy an environment of less hurt, it could be said that it has taken on an identity that resembles Christ. In the chat with the secretary, the researcher underscored the church's advantage by approving the project. The project will help the church become an epicenter where Christians who are hurting and have certain internal wounds will have an opportunity to express them and receive their healing.

The project will also bring out some of these issues that are not obvious to leadership. The researcher draws inspiration from two biblical texts: "Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature, being made in human likeness" (Phil 2:6-7). Jesus affirms the second text; "The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, set the oppressed free, and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19). Christians enjoy the benefits they enjoy because of what Christ did, and if the church wants to take on this attitude, then there must be an intentional effort to place itself in the place of the hurting and wounded to understand them and help pull them out of the valley.

Sensing addresses the issue of understanding when he notes that an expression of faith must seek understanding. Perhaps it will be good to open up a dialogue between the secretary and the researcher so that the concept of hurt mitigation is well understood. Finally, the expression of one's faith should be expressed freely. The researcher identifies this point as faith with works or faith by works. One of the ideas in the researcher's mind anticipates the church to come to a place where the church publicly eschews norms, practices, and policies that create hurts or wounds. An example that comes to mind readily is when a person from another country visits COP Norfolk, there should be an effort or sensitivity that should drive the church to benefit

from the service. If the language is spoken and the day's liturgy fails to meet that expectation, it must be publicly expressed so the person in question does not take an impression of hurt out of the church building. After the discussion, the researcher will give the secretary a week to discuss these with the board and get the details to sync with the leadership's approval, after which the research process will commence.

Recruiting of Participants

On February 20, 2022, the researcher requested participants and volunteers to help with the hurt mitigation research. An email was sent to the church announcer after the approval note to the COP Norfolk church board was accepted to proceed. The researcher strategically chose the date to help initiate a conversation in the space of time where the church usually goes through transitions. The church usually holds a love retreat to set a new love tone for the rest of the year. Immediately after the love retreat, leadership holds meetings to review the work of lay leaders who have served for two years. The lay leaders take up responsibilities in the church but are usually not compensated. However, the leadership gives appreciation tokens and gifts to them during their services and completion. The term review in the constitution of the church means assessment. For example, suppose a person holds a particular office within a ministry or group. In that case, their work is reviewed, and at that time, the leadership will decide to replace them or allow another opportunity to serve for another two years. The rubric, in most cases, has been that the executives meet to make changes. The intriguing thing about these changes is that they surprise the incumbent and the new leader. Usually, there is no consultation with the person coming to the office or the one to be reviewed.

Many have expressed the pain that this method brought them in the past. Sometimes, some leaders' office terms may not have ended, but they may be reviewed, hurting the people in

question or those onlookers who believe in fairness and hope to see the same in the church. Apart from the first group of people mentioned, the researcher also envisioned that others might face hurt due to church activities other than leadership reviews.

As underscored in the earlier chapters, some members suffer from the behavior of others. For example, a person going through marital or family challenges may come to church and potentially hurt another. In addition, those that may even have mental health challenges may hurt others due to their challenges. The researcher, however, does not prescribe a total change to this kind of procedure used in the church. Instead, the researcher believes that a proposed hurt-mitigation method gets the incumbent leader and the incoming leader aware, so the process does not appear mysterious. First, the researcher selected fifteen participants willing to help with the subject chosen for research by sharing specific hurts or issues they may have after the announcement. After a few individuals showed interest, the researcher organized a quick meeting to define the research objectives with the participants.

Conducting Pre-Interviews With Participants

The researcher scheduled dates for the research to proceed. The researcher then submitted a calendar of research events to help participants plan well in advance by February 27, 2022. Please see Appendix B. To have maximum participation in the project, the church announcer made an announcement requesting those who may want to attend the program and love retreat. The researcher is interested in gathering participants from the love retreat to help ascertain the issue of the normalcy of hurt. The researcher believes that many who are hurt have neutralized this feeling for one reason or another. During these love retreats, the environment created or the impression many have is that most hurt in relationships, whether church-related or domestically

related are resolved. The researcher, in this regard, believes that it will help gather the proper hurt temperature of participants. Michael Kibbe, a research specialist, alludes to this point,

The entire task of theological research is to get you to have something to argue. If you choose your argument in advance, you will either ignore the research that pushes against your conclusion or risk getting to the day before your paper is due and realizing that you do not have a valid argument.¹⁰⁵

Just as Kibbe suggests, since there should be no assumptions, the researcher applied this research tool by casting out the net by reaching out to interested participants for the project.

The researcher bearing in mind the approval of the initial project proposal to the executives sent a series of first announcements through the church announcer on Monday, February 28, 2022. The announcements were followed by a church email announcement on the same date detailed in Appendix C. In addition, the researcher provided a virtual link to all volunteers who would like to be part of the research work. During this time, the researcher intentionally spoke to specific people who have been hurt within the church to see if they would be interested in joining the participants by utilizing the weekday Wednesday Bible studies (*Compass for Life*) and Friday prayer service (*Miracle Service*). Those who attended the meetings received a link or a paper version of an intake form to help set a foundation for the research. In addition, an electronic version of the indicated form shall be made available to those unable to participate in the in-person meeting. That form allowed potential participants to include their initials and indicate whether they would like to participate in the study. A sample is displayed in Appendix C. At this point, the researcher was mindful of the confidentiality and anonymity of the project and the individuals involved. Sensing states,

The usual practices for protecting anonymity are using pseudonyms and altering details so the places and persons cannot be identified. However, in DMin contexts, most

¹⁰⁵ Michael Kibbe, *From Topic to Thesis – A Guide to Theological Research* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2016), 45-46.

everyone will know the location, and even when the names have been changed to protect someone's identity, it is not difficult to figure out who is who."¹⁰⁶

It seems Sensing makes a good case for projects of this nature; therefore, the researcher used initials and pseudo-names to protect the participants' privacy.

At this point, the researcher solicited approval of their inclusion through a consent letter. Please see Appendix D for details. In addition, the initial plan was to convene a meeting with parents whose younger children signed up for the study. The researcher held this meeting with parents to explain why excluding minors from the project was necessary. This meeting with parents was an hour-long meeting introducing parents to the subject matter and the kind of study for the researcher. The virtual session in Appendix E lasted an hour, starting at noon and ending at 1. After that meeting, some parents who may seem interested were recruited to join the participating team. There was no need for the parents of the minors to sign the consent form to allow their minors to participate fully per the IRB rubric. However, a provisional interview questionnaire prepared right from the beginning of the project is in Appendix F. This rationale stemmed from the idea that most juveniles may have experienced hurt due to parental or church-related interactions. Gleaning from the rubric of the IRB, the researcher requested that parents of minors who showed interest in the research garner a few thoughts from their kids instead of engaging the minors directly. With a fair idea this time of all who would like to participate, the researcher shall construct a calendar showing the sequence of activities. In addition, an email announcement was sent to all members, as customarily done in the church, discussing the details of events. The researcher did this thoroughly to avoid additional hurt throughout the process. During this meeting, all participants received a pre-assessment form to ascertain the validity of the issue at stake for discussion. See Appendix G for details.

¹⁰⁶ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 36-37.

Conducting Two Seminars On Hurt

The researcher will organize two retreats for participants to utilize the hurt-mitigation plan. Sensing opened up a good discussion that the researcher shall use. Sensing says, "Interventions utilize projects of all shapes and sizes: retreats, classes, planning sessions, training exercises, homework, case studies, among others. The format of the sessions or activities of the interventions was spelled out."¹⁰⁷ This retreat was organized virtually by the researcher. These two sessions were held virtually because of the COVID-19 restrictions. The researcher sent a two-part video to all participants to help them navigate the idea of mitigating hurt. The two sessions were held at three-week intervals. It gives participants enough time to access the concept of hurt mitigation. The researcher conducted the first retreat on Saturday, March 5, 2022. The retreat was apportioned into two main parts. The first session of the retreat addressed the issue of hurt, its effects, and how it could be prevented. During this period, the researcher invited participants to write questions as they listened to the lessons on the hurt. Since the retreat was virtual and done on the participant's own time, the researcher shall call each of the fifteen participants individually to make sure that they have made time to listen to the training and cover the importance of the research. After the first training session, another training was held to assess the impact of the initial training. This meeting or retreat was held on Saturday, March 26, 2022. The researcher calls this session "*Power of Confession – The Power of the Tongue.*" Being a post-retreat or training session for the participants, the researcher envisioned that it would be a point where they articulate sentiments well but make room to let go of what may seem to be the root cause of the challenge. Given the nature and structure of this meeting, the researcher projected that participants should come together, and this time the meeting shall be held in

¹⁰⁷ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 182-83.

person at the church's fellowship hall. Some of the questions and activities during this meeting are as follows:

- A) A general question to help investigate how the retreat helped
 - a. Was the training or retreat helpful? Y/N
- B) Based on the kind of hurt, the participants shall be grouped into three to discuss their coping mechanisms after the initial training.
- C) Shall have a thirty-minute presentation on positive confession with a 20-minute question and answer session to wrap up the interaction.

During this second session, participants were given a list of books, materials, and other counseling resources to help mitigate hurt. Please see Appendix H. The researcher created the platform for those who identify with particular hurt to pick from the list of books or materials available. Finally, the researcher discussed the benefits of mitigating hurts within the church and let participants know that hurt is inevitable since humans are prone to it. The participants were further encouraged to address situations in the best way possible. As the Bible prescribes, "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone" (Rom. 12:18). Then, if possible, per the permission of the district executives, the researcher shall make a presentation to the church educating the entire congregation on how to mitigate hurt while inviting some of the participants who are willing to share a few thoughts; then, it will end with a Q&A session. The researcher sees this as an essential part of the project because it will not just bring the church to the point of awareness but will teach how to address the issues that border on the hurt. In addition, this session will help ascertain how well the subject matter is received.

Implementation of Intervention Design

The researcher collected valuable data from participants to help achieve the research goal. Though a survey will bring out specific noteworthy points and issues, having a one-on-one chat with participants seems more helpful. Sensing says, "All of us want our words to be clear and persuasive. It helps if those words are also concise."¹⁰⁸ As noted above, the researcher postulates that members of the church should not assume that everyone found in the church perhaps carries the mind of Christ, which will not ultimately hurt anyone. These post-interviews gave the researcher a better view of how the retreats and interviews helped shape the participants' mindset to where the hurt within and without can be mitigated within COP Norfolk.

One area the researcher envisioned the post-interviews covered was to seek out why many people within the church assume that congregants should not be hurt or why congregants hurt others within the church. The researcher probed more during the post-interviews at this point, though this was invalid. At this point, the researcher believes there is a need to pick and address the matter so that those who are hurt will not continue hurting others. With this thought in mind, the researcher added a biblical text to the post-interviews and had participants speak to it. As the apostle, Paul writes to Timothy, "Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds" (2 Tim. 4:14). Paul adds, "Among who are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan that they may learn not to blaspheme" (1 Tim. 1:20). The researcher concludes that Paul addresses the kind of hurt he felt in the light of the texts stated above, which affirmatively speaks to hurt within the Ephesian church. This idea posited by Paul brings up the thought that many people in the church have almost agreed that people do not cause hurt within, which is false. Still, this is not the case in this classic example

¹⁰⁸ Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 121.

here of Paul's advice to his son Timothy to be aware that people could cause hurt within the church. Therefore, it is the researcher's goal to ensure that participants and the members of COP Norfolk will not lose sight of the fact that hurt could come from within the church. However, there should be ways to mitigate it; hence, the issue arising from what Hymenaeus and Alexander did. Paul handed them over to Satan meant that those had gone to the extreme to cause some hurt within.

Paul suggests what the researcher believes to be a rather extreme way of dealing with such hurtful situations. However, he hopes to glean from other viewpoints during the post-interview sessions to show that a person's wounds hurt enough to be dealt with; otherwise, it may cause another to be hurt. MacDonald makes a point,

The apostle says that he delivered these men to Satan. Some scholars see a simple reference to the act of ex-communication in these words. They understand them to mean that Paul had put these two men out of the local church, and this action was designed to bring them to repentance and restoration of fellowship with the Lord and His people. The difficulty with this view is that ex-communication was a function of the local church, not an apostle. In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul did not excommunicate the incestuous man but counseled the Corinthians to do so.¹⁰⁹

If someone purported to hurt others within the church, such should be counseled, as Paul encouraged the church in Corinth concerning the incestuous man. The researcher believes that participants and members of COP Norfolk would have all reached the first part of resolving such issues about hurt when they were first able to discover what caused the pain and the people who may have been involved. The post-interview helped the researcher learn from participants what they are likely to propose as mitigation strategies for hurt. The training sessions on hurt and positive confessions will be fair.

¹⁰⁹ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, 2143-44.

Additionally, the researcher envisioned that participants would realize that the mitigation strategies should be one-sided after the post-interviews. The researcher means that the church often likes to settle hurt issues by establishing polity, which puts the individual who may be hurt in a position where they cannot talk much. In the text, the gesture shown by Alexander indicates that more hurt is caused when those responsible for the damage are oblivious about the situation or deliberately use gestures that will not allow others to get a complete picture of the hurt-causing problem. The text reads, "Some of the crowd prompted Alexander, whom the Jews had put forward. And Alexander, motioning with his hand, wanted to make a defense to the crowd" (Acts 19:33). In this case, the researcher would include the post-interviewing questions that will allow participants to address the issue of the culture of silence as it pertains to hurt in the church. The culture of silence within the church sometimes does not allow the hurt to express themselves, causing them to hurt more. The researcher shall reference an article written on the culture of silence problem in another church applicable to hurt. Excerpts from one of such articles read,

We started this in our 20s, and we are in our mid-40s. And we are starting from zero, and our former employer says he won't even pay our SSNIT; Social Security, and National Insurance Trust," he laments. According to him, the content of the Letter from Lighthouse in response to his letter written by Austin Gamey is a "complete betrayal." He regrets not having demanded a letter of employment when he began full-time ministry in 2001. He says he did not demand this letter because, like many of his colleagues, he had a father-son relationship with the founder, Presiding Bishop.... He says it was a relationship built on trust and reverence, and so many things were done based on that trust.¹¹⁰

The goal here is to create an environment that enables hurt mitigation with Christ-like approaches to help address the culture of silence that breeds more hurt.

¹¹⁰ "Darkness in a Lighthouse: Pastors Recount Abuse and Trauma," The Fourth Estate, Accessed July 27, 2022, <https://thefourthstategh.com/2021/04/23/darkness>.

Analyze Data to Identify Themes

The general intent of the project is to facilitate a discussion of hurt. This is an area of importance that the church and, for that matter, COP Norfolk has yet to address adequately. The researcher believes that an analysis of hurt and its attending mitigation methods through the lenses of the polity within the church's framework will promote the entirety of Christlikeness. The research shall analyze the information and data received into themes. At this stage, the researcher will place data collected side-by-side to help generate possible themes for the project. One of the critical elements to consider is what Kibbe notes,

Every single word, phrase, or paragraph in your paper should contribute to your thesis. If something in your paper doesn't contribute to your thesis, cut it out.... Remember that a research paper is not you thinking in a vacuum. Thus, your paper needs to demonstrate that you are aware of the conversation, that you understand the conversation, and that you can participate in that conversation."¹¹¹

Finally, the researcher hoped to group the project into categories that help summarize how to mitigate hurt in COP Norfolk. Eventually, the researcher envisioned that other churches and organizations could pick up this project, the methodology, and the principles stated so that anyone can apply them to mitigate hurt.

In conclusion, the following points summarized below give a point-by-point view of the analysis of the project thus far after the following intervention steps as indicated:

1. Obtain organizational permission
2. Recruit participants and have signed consent forms
3. Conduct pre-interview with participants
4. Provide ten sessions of training to participants
5. Conduct post-interview with participants

¹¹¹ Michael Kibbe, *From Topic to Thesis – A Guide to Theological*, 87-88.

6. Analyze data to identify themes
7. Come up with potential suggestions to help understand the sources of hurt and how to prevent them

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

The project utilized inquiry to understand the sources of hurt in COP Norfolk. The researcher will later initiate a hurt mitigation road map for COP Norfolk, post-project announcements, participants' choosing, testing their hurt temperature, running two training or retreat sessions, and conducting interviews individually with participants. At this point, the researcher wishes to develop themes that enable another to understand how to mitigate hurt. Therefore, the researcher shall look at the following themes for the analysis. The researcher notes that certain modifications to the proposals or suggested themes emerged during the post-interviews, while new ones surfaced during the interviews.

- Hurt defined
- Types of hurt in COP Norfolk
- The sources of hurt COP Norfolk
 - The sinful nature of man
 - The culture of silence
 - The polity problem
- Mitigation roadmap

It is incredible what a person can learn and unlearn through interacting and sharing experiences with others. The researcher carefully underscores five noticeable sources of hurt that occur or generate in most churches, mainly COP Norfolk. Though the list is not exhaustive, it is apparent that the themes form the primary sources of hurt not only in COP Norfolk but in most organizational or human setups like churches, as mentioned earlier in Chapter 2. The researcher

realized that the themes intricately stem from the errancy and imperfection of humans. Two professors, Valentina Rognoli and Karana Elvin bolster the idea that,

All of us have inherited a sinful nature, which makes us unable to live up to the mark of perfection intended during creation. According to Genesis 6:5, we shall suffer from 'our bent of thinking, which is nothing but evil.' Genesis 8:21 says that our mind is evil from our very youth. Jeremiah 17:9 says that our hearts are treacherous and desperately sick. What does all of this mean? It means that before the Fall, human natural inclinations and leanings were toward good. However, after the Fall, my natural inclinations and leanings were toward bad, wicked, and evil.¹¹²

To the point above, hurting others may be natural to every human without introducing a change factor. However, this fact remains glaring to the researcher that man's imperfect and sinful inclination is a chief source of hurt among the participants who engaged in the interviews. The participants revealed that COP Norfolk has individuals who face a condition of hurt because they have encountered a situation that bruised their hurt due to a sinful inclination like pride, jealousy, or revenge. Most agreed that these happened because of the human tendencies that create wounds.

The following are the sources of hurt at COP Norfolk: assumption, caging, culture, silence, and privacy. The researcher examines these sources mentioned above in detail later in this chapter. In addition to the backdrop of sources discovered, the research reveals a thread that runs through all the sources. The researcher's introduction of the phrase "listening to the other side" purports to be what most institutions lack. It denies an enabling environment that tones down a person's hurt. Listening to the other side, an idea proposed by the researcher affords the participants within the hurt awareness effort or process an opportunity not to assume. It also helps participants make suppositions about matters, issues, and problems by putting them on a neutral scale.

¹¹² Valentina, Rognoli and Elvin Karana. "Toward a New Materials Aesthetic Based on Imperfection and Graceful Aging." *In Materials Experience, Butterworth-Heinemann*, 5, no. 3 (2014), 145-54.

Many people make conclusions without hearing or paying attention to what could have happened before the final product or issues came about. To buttress this point, Katherine Pratt, an author, recounts a story about Lewis who, twenty-five years later, could tell the whole story, from start to finish, in front of his men's group. Pratt highlighted Lewis's point,

I wasn't sure what would have happened when I opened up about it, but I was terrified that no one would love me anymore if anyone knew this about me. Growing up in the Midwest, Lewis felt it was unacceptable to be abused, look weak, or be used. It was a defense mechanism to be more aggressive.¹¹³

Though many people make conclusions from what they see, this researcher draws inspiration from how God challenged the prophet Samuel to look or listen to the other side. To this point, many become afraid because of how others perceive them, which causes hurt in the church. The idea begs the question of why the church will look down on others or deem them, weaklings when they open up about what bothers them. In the same light, one can see how God challenged Samuel to go beyond what was happening. “But the LORD said to Samuel, do not consider his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

It can be deduced that the heart of every matter comes from a source, so it is essential not to look just at current occurrences to make conclusions. This projection informs the concept of listening to the other side, which suggests a position with a balanced viewpoint. Therefore, many people experience hurt, especially in COP Norfolk, because the church does not create enough hearing space. If hearing involves active listening, it is necessary then for the church to create a space for hearing and balanced listening.

¹¹³ Katherine Pratt, *The Gift of Forgiveness – Inspiring Stories from Those Who Have Overcome the Unforgivable* (Newburyport, MA, Penguin House Publishers, 2020), 81.

The researcher synthesized the many publications on hurt and concluded that most church problems stem from hurt people. Judy De Wit, a family and marriage therapist, proposes one of the sources of hurt in the church. It looks like the reason stems from the lack of understanding and disconnect between clergy and laity. De Wit notes,

As a young teen, the researcher once asked the pastor during catechism class what he thought would happen if someone found one of the doctrines of our church to conflict with the teaching of the Bible. He assured me that such matters would be scrutinized. He challenged the church and the leaders' belief that 'we do everything right around here.' The author wanted to know what would happen if it were not so. Our memories and experiences of the church we grew up in create powerful beliefs about what the church is and what it's supposed to be. I challenge you to take a few moments and consider what you remember growing up. The experiences shape your beliefs and expectations about what a church should be today.¹¹⁴

As stated by De Wit, the idea of church hurt comes up when members cannot express themselves freely. One would think that just as scripture says, there must be freedom where the Spirit of the Lord is, according to 2 Corinthians 3:17. It appears that people cannot even ask questions about their own life freely. In many churches, for example, after a sermon, it may appear disrespectful for a member to walk to the preacher and ask a question. At COP Norfolk, for example, many members ask questions when unsure of the full details after the pastor reads a Circular Letter to the church. Please see Appendix K for details of an issue that hurt many, especially those in question and members who did not understand, yet could not ask about details. The researcher also sees that COP Norfolk lacks enough documentation to support its stance on particular issues like marriage. Though the eleven cardinal tenets of the church articulate its stance on marriage, it becomes difficult for the leadership to make certain decisions because the issue of marriage may

¹¹⁴ Judy R. De Wit, *Forgiving the Church: How to Release the Confusion and Hurt When the Church Abuses* (Bloomington, IN: iUniverse Publishers), 2011, 4.

have varied nuances that are not clearly outlined within the tenets.¹¹⁵ The researcher agrees with researcher Perry Daniels who underscores that most churches may not fully address divorce, remarriage, and all issues due to insufficient policies and documentation. Excerpts of his research are as follows:

The intent is to encourage churches and their leaders to develop policies and outreach ministries that reflect the heart and spirit of Christ for divorced women. For many individuals, the church is a communal experience that provides celebration for happy events, help in times of trouble, and comfort in times of sorrow. However, the sociocultural context surrounding divorce in the United States has historically been one of disapproval on moral grounds.¹¹⁶ Acceptance of divorce has risen; however, conflicting religious dogma, practices, and biblical interpretations remain a source of strife for individuals needing spiritual support while coping with divorce.¹¹⁷

On this premise, the researcher picked participants willing to share stories from unattended perspectives to help guide the understanding of the sources of hurt and its mitigation project at COP Norfolk. The researcher underscores some themes summarized as problems by fifteen participants with pseudonyms within this session. These participants are church members or individuals affiliated with the church. The researcher picked these themes from the intake forms when they indicated they would love to engage in this dialogue to help with the project. A snapshot of the Intake Form can be seen in Appendix I. One glaring component of the researcher's quest is to create an awareness of the sources of hurt. It is almost impossible to know what others are going through until one gets closer through interaction and sharing.

It became evident when participants answered, "Have you experienced hurt in the last year?" It is gratifying to note that some participants went as far back as experiences from the last

¹¹⁵ "The Church of Pentecost," Headquarters, Accessed September 18, 2022, <https://thecophq.org/beliefs-tenets/>.

¹¹⁶ E. J. Krumrei, A. Mahoney, and K. I. Pargament, "Divorce and the Divine: The Role of Spirituality in Adjustment to Divorce," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 71 (2009): 90.

¹¹⁷ Elsie Perry Daniels. *"Spiritual Healing for Women Experiencing Hurt from Divorce."* PhD diss., United Theological Seminary, 2015.

three years. Some participants identified these experiences as “old painful files” that brought many unresolved hurts. Therefore, listening to the others through this exercise confirms what many have come to accentuate by saying, “You can't judge a book by its cover.” The phrase mentioned above gives credence that many in the church look at issues on the surface without getting deep into matters. Sadly, the interviews revealed how the church and the members had assumed many incorrect stances during their first interactions. Though people have different perspectives in life, it should be clear that the volume of a person’s perspective should not be too high in demand that it pushes them into a place of hurt. The researcher discovered that people get hurt because of unrealistic or exceedingly high expectations. The simple answer to this issue has to do with the human factor. When humans are involved, there will always be traces of imperfection, as discussed in an earlier Chapter 2.

Figure 1. Has a Church-Related Event or Occurrence Triggered Your Hurt?

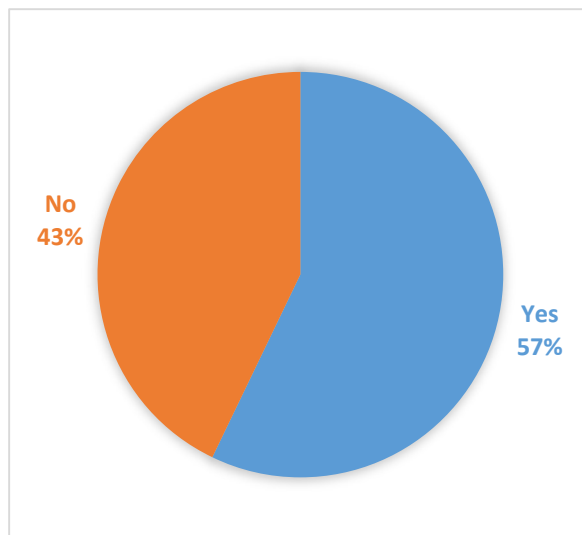


Figure 1 reflects those who responded “Yes” or “No” to hurt triggered by the church or in a church setting. Five percent of participants agreed that the church triggered their hurt. Since all fifteen participants indicated that their pain is usually triggered in the church, the assertion is true

that events or occurrences in the church sometimes stir up those emotions. One can safely say that the church environment can be an avenue for hurt regardless of its source. This point means that because people come into the church from all walks of life, their presence at any time can cause another to feel hurt. The researcher observes that even those who did not initially list a church hurt somehow zeroed in on a kind of hurt experienced in the church. In addition, the researcher observes that some participants addressed an issue of pain that originated in church but were unwilling to share it in detail. With all these nuances above in mind, the researcher underscores various ways COP Norfolk can mitigate hurt while pointing out that some hurts are not sourced from or created by the church. It is noteworthy that one can only deal with the matter of pain in the most superficial way if they don't get to the source of the problem by talking to those who have felt hurt for one reason or another.

Counselors Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju advocate for biblical counseling and affirm that hurt mitigation is possible when one explores practical and intentional mitigation methods. They add, "Pastors have to tackle problems practically by giving thoughtful advice for real-life struggles. But practical strategies by themselves are not enough. Counseling that is truly Christian will have much more: the person and work of Christ at the center of its theology and practice. Christ and his gospel must be the foundation, means, and end of our counseling."¹¹⁸ This point speaks to the fact that when issues are addressed, the discussion's foundation or goal should present the totality and practicality of Christ. This posture should ask or answer the question, "How will Christ manage or live with the case if he is present?" For example, participant Edward indicated, "When I felt hurt, one of the things I did not want to do was to have this transferred to my children though they were a part of the hurt process."

¹¹⁸ Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling – The Basics of Shepherding Members in Need* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 36.

Edward shared that he felt betrayed by the church when a decision on a financial project reached with the church's leadership was not followed through as anticipated. The participant added that the hurt that erupted in him could have easily transferred to his children and wife. The same participant, Edward, highlighted, "I did not want the children to have the same bitterness I felt towards the leadership, so I intentionally took this out of our conversation." He also mentioned that he intentionally put up imaginary mechanisms to prevent the hurt from moving to his children. Edward confirmed this when he noticed that one of his children involved in developing this financial project insinuated that the church stole the software they developed. The wounded father further indicated that while the issues constructed barriers, he needed to guard against other aspects of his Christian life, like his commitment to serving, preaching, and giving to support the church. He mentioned, "I quickly found a way to compensate my children, so they don't feel like they did not get rewarded for their work. I also intentionally avoided discussing this issue in their presence, so there are no traces of bitterness transference to the children." Through the conversation with Edward, the researcher affirmed that when people are hurt in the church, it affects how they connect and commit to activities. The researcher believes that hurt must not be taken lightly by COP Norfolk leaders and members.

Theme One: Assumption

Assumptions happen when people take a position and use it against others without giving them room or opportunity for expression. At the beginning of the interviews, it was quickly realized that the idea of assumption is a significant source of hurt for many people in COP Norfolk. Mary Smith, for example, cited an instance where she met a couple interested in renting a space in her building. In a dialogue, Mary was surprised at how the couple who came looking for a rented space started asking questions about her that were supposedly information that

people in the church could source. Mary recounted how they addressed the question, “Are you one with no interest in building a family?” Mary expressed a deep hurt with this issue when she surprisingly heard the couple discussing something discussed in church, which had to do with her walk in Christ. In Mary's words, “If this is what people think of me in church, I think I am better off staying at home rather than thinking I am among my brethren.” Mary's reaction showed that she was particularly hurt by the comment made by a person who does not attend church. The feeling erupted into mistrust because someone in the church made strangers assume a lifestyle for Mary, even before she met with them through their comments. Mary felt that the church must educate members on addressing specific issues outside, especially regarding matters they don't have complete details about. Mary added, “Instead of discussing issues on which they may not have complete information, members should be advised to talk about matters that may be profitable for evangelism and not hurt others.” Most of the participants indicated that there had been instances where they had faced a bitter experience due to assumptions.

Consequently, the initial intake form revealed that about twenty percent of most hurts in the church came from assumptions made by members when there are issues like marital disagreements, job-related pressures or inequities, problems among friends, peer pressure, and several others. The researcher can relate to how church members interact with one another, such as those who lost a job. It is fascinating how members learn some famous sayings very quickly and make them part of their dialect. Sometimes, a comment, like the popular church cliché, “When God closes one door, he opens another,” may not be helpful. Though one may appreciate and welcome a statement like this, another may feel hurt by the same statement. For example, Rachel Boye, now thirty-nine, who went through a divorce in her twenties, alluded, “I have always felt rejection when I face opposition because of my past marriage. This feeling brings me

to a place of insecurity, humiliation, and disgrace. It is like a wound that never healed but bruised again.” Assuming someone in church makes a comment that brings a reminder to Rachel after losing a job, it may build a painful emotion because it will ultimately remind her of her past rejection.

However, it is clear that, while these hurts happen outside the church, an incident or a particular communication within the church triggers an emotion. For example, Rachel explains how an unfortunate early divorce affected her to the point that it translates into an assumption. Rachel remarks, “I cried the whole night, and this has affected me such that even if I have to stand before people to lead in any way, the feeling I had during the divorce makes me think people have all kinds of thoughts about me.” Because the church assumes a particular posture for people and lifestyles, it becomes an open space for the assumption problem. It is more like a decision made on behalf of the other without their input. To this assertion, it seems the most appropriate way to interact with someone like Rachel is to be mindful of what and how to speak to her, so she does not get to a point where certain old hurtful emotions. It is evident that eventually, what has been happening inside will now show outside during a church interaction if caution is not taken. Those witnessing this may conclude that it is a church hurt, but that may not be the case. The researcher concludes that though the hurt may be church-related, the source could stem from a problem the person in question may have brought from another environment. Therefore, it is apparent that the assumption problem comes from where individuals in the church are left to take a position on matters because there could be many facets to the issues. The chart below shows what the researcher discovered from all the participants.

Figure 2. A Pie Chart of Kinds of Sources of Hurt in the Church

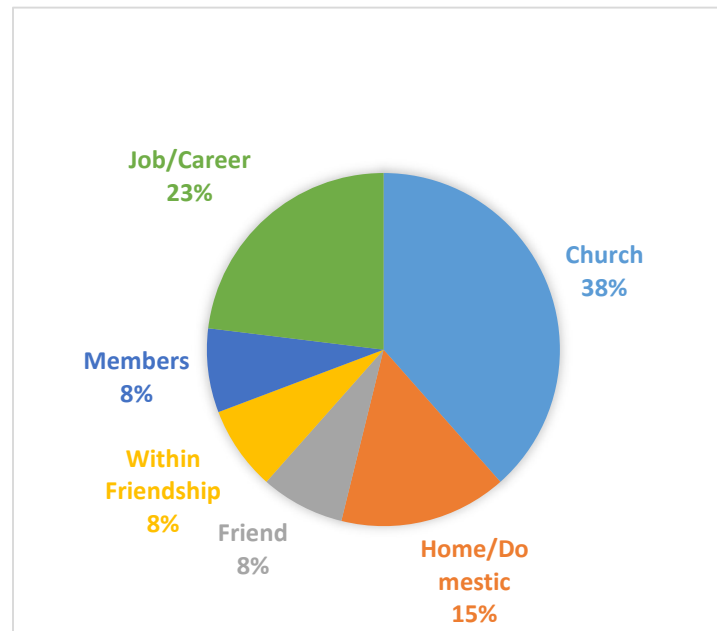


Figure 2 demonstrates the types of hurt the interview participants identified. For example, 7 percent of participants had not experienced hurt in the past year, 7 percent experienced hurt from church members, 21 percent experienced hurt in their job and careers, 14 percent experienced hurt from friendships, and 14 percent experienced it at home/domestic environments. In comparison, 35 percent experienced it within the church. As noted earlier, the likelihood of why a more significant portion of participants chose church hurt was that the hurt was fanned or triggered through a church interaction.

Additionally, the chart portrays that many of those who claim to be hurt in the church may not have a valid claim. It is apparent from the chart that a broken person may have triggering effects from the church or another community where they spend a significant portion of their time. Such results may come from past or outside influences rather than the real-time effect on their feelings. To the point above, the researcher discovers that a person's hurt can stem from what has already been happening in their lives outside of the church; it may become heavier

when someone brings it back to memory during church interaction. According to the Gospel of John, the researcher could liken the church to the pool of grace where almost everyone who went there sought healing for their particular need (cf. John 5:1-15).

As an earlier chapter indicates, the church is like a spiritual hospital where everyone expects recovery. Due to this fact, many believe that they should be whole once a person comes to church. Though this is not a realistic point of view, many make this assumption. MacArthur adds to the researcher's assertion, "It was custom at that time for people with infirmities to gather at this pool. Intermittent springs may have fed the pool and caused the water disturbance. Some ancient witnesses indicate that the pool's waters were red with minerals, thus considered medicinal value."¹¹⁹ It is noteworthy that since one person healed when the water was stirred, the church, with a concerted effort, can help minimize the hurt people experience by addressing them one by one when they surface.

Interestingly, the Intake Form revealed that most participants initially thought the hurt they experienced could not be resolved if it was church-related. Participants consequently underscored after the interview that it could be resolved or fixed after asking specific questions. The way to address the assumption problem is to create an avenue for dialogue. The researcher buttresses this point with figure 3:

¹¹⁹ John MacArthur. *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 1368.

Figure 3. Hurt Resolution Rate Graph

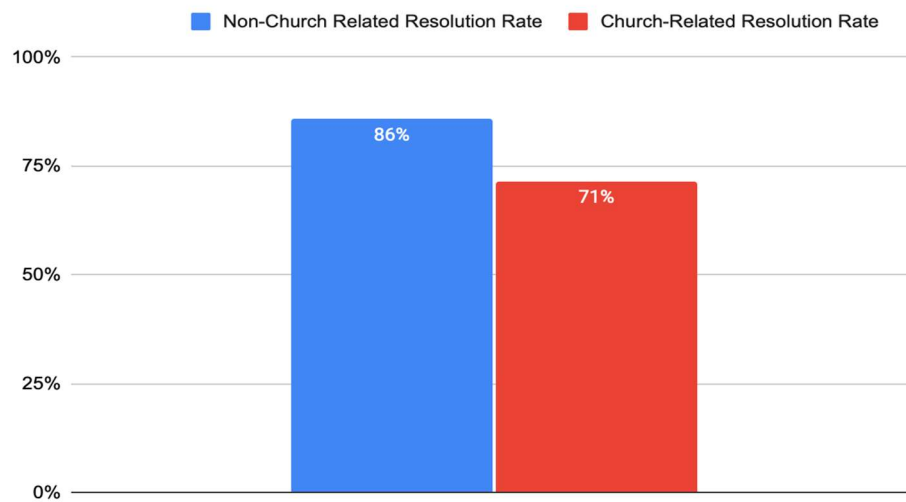


Figure 3 reflects the percentage of participants who believed that a non-church-related hurt could be resolved instead of a church-related hurt. When the injury was non-church related, 86 percent of participants thought the hurt could be quickly resolved. However, when the hurt became church-related, the percentage dropped to 71 percent. The graph also shows a 16 percent decrease in hurt resolution when the hurt becomes church-related. Looking at the information presented by the participants, it is likely that most people face church hurt because they have an entrenched position of resolution possibilities in hurtful situations. The researcher discovers that most of these positions picked by church members portray that even when efforts are made to mitigate such hurts, people may be hurt due to these entrenched positions. However, there is a hope that with this information received, suggestions made in Chapter 5 will help COP Norfolk, especially the leadership, moderate the hurt members experienced. There is also the possibility that when such information is publicized, members' attention will be drawn to the neglected subject of hurt, which will open more room for dialogue instead of silence about hurt. Many in

the church must have an opportunity to learn how to express their thoughts so that others who may be listening will appreciate their point of view.

Theme Two: Caging

Caging occurs when the hurt person does not have an opportunity to express themselves or have a standard outlet to vent without the fear of judgment. When a painful incident occurs, it may lead to caging. Most participants interviewed underscored that their hurt was either caused by the lack of forgiveness or the feeling of not being forgiven. Many participants agreed that they felt like they were in a cage whenever such a feeling occurred. The researcher is drawn to an inscription seen on a social media status while thinking through this problem, “Successful people have two things on their lips: silence and smile.” To this point, it is evident that behind the smiles or silence of people in the church comes the lack of forgiveness playing in the background, which is a significant part of why many feel caged.

Grace Beth recorded an incident where they got summoned to a leader's office to respond to a random allegation. At this meeting, Grace described the feeling as an unforgettable experience since the issue for discussion could have left no room for any dialogue. According to Grace, the culture of silence in church opens a door for people to be more embittered and consequently opens space for the caging problem. Grace added, “When a person cannot express their feelings or even ask questions, it could hurt and stir up a feeling of confiscation. Superiors should trust their members and show support to their direct reports even when someone complains. I believe this is why reporters always feel empowered to do what they do.” The researcher observes that for many, it seems there is an opportunity for those who like to tell on others or those who are not happy about specific issues but want to vent should not to be given a chance to do it all the more without listening to the other side. If this consistently happens,

people may feel empowered to concoct stories that may not be true just because they think they will have a hearing from the leadership.

Rachel Boye, who had a similar occurrence at the workplace, remarked, “When I tried to confront the work colleague who reported me, I noticed they had an intimidating posture, talk down attitude and demeanor. This approach did not allow me to engage in any meaningful dialogue.” It seems clear that the caging problem erupts when there is a dividing wall between the person interested in resolving the hurt and the one that caused it.

On the part of leaders within the church, Grace observes that issues that usually flare up in this kind of problem occur “when leaders who see themselves in the wrong, sometimes hush, but when others are in the wrong, they are quick to bring them out.” To the point just made, it seems that when leaders are in the wrong, there is a deliberate gesture not to address it just because they are leaders.

The researcher believes that when leadership owns up to errors and mistakes, it will alleviate the caging problem. The researcher adds that his father got a handle on this resolution method when he always owned up, managed, and accepted all errors made by apologizing in the family meetings. This practice, untypical in the researcher’s African home, helped his entire household become a place where everyone felt a welcoming atmosphere that enabled views to be aired without hesitation. Bishop Jakes, a televangelist, describes the damage created by the caging theme as “Caused by those who are busy tight-fitting to past wounds and harboring old resentments. Forgiveness doesn’t forgive the one who hurt you, nor does it trivialize the depth of trauma. Instead, it liberates you and your soul from living in the Amityville Horror house of memories and agonies that aren’t worth more time in your life.”¹²⁰

¹²⁰ T.D. Jakes, *Let It Go – Forgive So You Can Be Forgiven* (New York, NY: Atria Paperback A Division of Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2012), 33.

On the Intake Form, Ruth Ato indicated that hurt inside was one she considered domestic; however, when the researcher asked Ruth whether she thought the church had a role to play in this hurt, she responded yes. She explained that she got into the contract with the person in question through the church. She remarked, "The church is partially to blame because I received recommendations from some church members that the person in question was good and could perform the role the best way possible." Ruth later adds, "I thought this lady would be an encourager; rather, she was a complainer. She was supposed to show care while performing the assigned duties, but it was obvious that Miss K was only there for the money and was never satisfied with what was provided." It seemed like the person in question, described as Miss K, but felt she complained about everything in Ruth's home rather than showing care.

Given the above scenario, Ruth implied that the matter could have been resolved so as not to breed hurt. Ruth thought the discussion to determine a resolution should have been between her and the person in question so they could articulate what made them feel hurt. Instead, they were told to forget about the hurt and move on. Ruth underscored that the steps to resolve the matter were made in a robust African cultural environment, making it practically impossible for free expression. Culture plays a huge role in the issue of hurt in the church. The researcher believes that church leaders and members should separate topics from culture to get better results. To wrap up the findings reflected in figure two, Grace makes a profound point about those affected by the caging problem because the mindset is channeled this way: "There is a problem, but I am not going to talk about it." Many face this kind of problem the researcher identifies as the caging problem because there is simply no outlet for expression or, better yet, room to examine the problem.

Theme Three: Culture

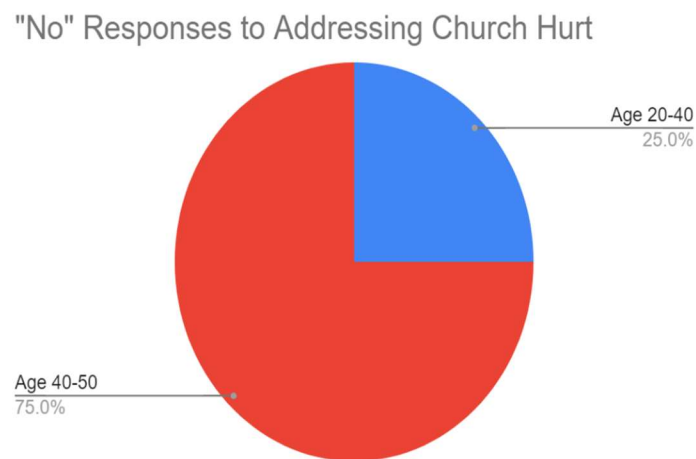
A cultural problem explains the way of life or thinking pattern of the most dominant culture in the church that influences its polity. Someone said once that people worship well in the kind of culture they understand. For COP Norfolk, culture plays a significant role in everything the church does. Since membership of COP Norfolk is about ninety percent Ghanaian, most relations, activities, and events held may have a significant Ghanaian cultural influence. The researcher recognizes that a church's polity is shaped by the culture of the most prevalent class of its population.

At COP Norfolk, the researcher discovered how culture informs how participants articulate their thoughts on the issue of hurt. Though the participants were aware that conducting these interviews was anonymous, it appears that when it came time to answer the question, “Do you think the leader's attention needs to be drawn because of the hurt they have caused?” Though varied, participants' answers showed a massive disconnect between articulating the hurt and whether it required leadership's attention.

Gina Wanda was asked about the hurt she had felt when a church leader divulged an incident meant to be handled confidentially. Gina responded, “I think there may be a reason why the leader in question put this information out, though I was hurt.” There is a considerable disparity between the feeling of hurt and the researcher's need to address this. In another instance, when Edward was asked a similar question, he said, “I don't think it is necessary to address this issue with leadership because I have chosen to forget about it.” To the researcher, as mentioned in previous chapters, it seems there is a culture of silence that plays a significant role in how members of COP Norfolk view leadership. Therefore, these lenses make it challenging to bring some hurtful sentiments out for discussion.

The researcher identified that the ages of the participants played a significant role in how they would want to address hurts. Most participants between the ages of twenty and forty strongly believed that the leadership or the church must discuss these hurtful issues with the people in question. However, those above the age of forty seem not to have any strong urge to have the matters addressed. Figure 4 shows how the varied age groups impact church members and the extent of their hurt.

Figure 4. Responding No to Church Hurt



In addition, Figure 4 breaks down the age range of those who responded “No” to wanting to address the church-related hurt. Again, 75 percent of participants who did not feel the need for the church hurt to be addressed were above 40 percent, and the remaining 25 percent were between 20 to 40.

Though the point above glaringly shows that various interactions could be affected by participants’ ages, it is clear that it will help in the researcher’s desire to lessen hurt in various ways. Furthermore, it is evident that most participants seem to be afraid of the issue's outcome and, for that matter, will not want to address the concern. Finally, the researcher outlines specific

aspects of church culture that could breed hurt in people. It is noteworthy that culture, as already mentioned, shapes and informs how a group of people interact and react to situations. Therefore, the researcher places the church culture into two categories concerning its role in hurt. These are the culture of respect and respect for authority, and the culture of milestones and rites of passage.

Culture of Respect and Regard for Authority

The researcher argues earlier that COP Norfolk has a consideration culture as part of its bedrock. This culture postulates an environment of respect, which sometimes leaves no room for dialogue. A classic example is Grace's call to the office to answer an allegation. The crux of the summons was her inability to correct the couple's wrong choices while present at a wedding as their guest. The researcher identifies the issue under debate where people within the church may sometimes act out of respect but are hurting inside if not allowed to express themselves. Sometimes, certain assumptions and presuppositions about people through the lenses of culture may not be entirely correct.

The researcher suggests this faulty approach could breed hurt when someone is summoned to an office where they cannot engage in a dialogue. Rachel described this as a no-dialogue environment because "The church lacks the building of true relationships with each other." Rachel adds that "when the church environment strives to build authentic relationships with each other, it will reduce the intensity or the feeling of hurt. Even if one is summoned to explain why something happened, it will not breed hurt in a case like that." Further, Rachel recounts a similar incident at work where a senior colleague gave a false report on work ethic. Since there was no genuine relationship, it created a hurtful feeling for her and marred their work relationship and environment. Therefore, if Rachel has to work in the same workspace with that senior colleague, it will only have to be because they have to work together and not enjoy that

time together. In a similar light, it seems many in the church tolerate each other in the name of being Christians but work in an environment of hurt. In a nutshell, a healthy culture thrives in a place where individuals live in harmony. Therefore, an environment should be free from hurting conditions that may distract from fulfilling the right cultural atmosphere.

The Culture of Milestones and Rites of Passage

At COP Norfolk, the leadership and members emphasize how people transition from one point of life to another. The following are the most talked-about areas.

Culture of Marriage

COP Norfolk has a more significant percentage of military personnel and college students. Because the age component of the people is relatively young, usually in their twenties to early thirties, the adult population keeps bombarding them with marriage questions. For example, Maryann Abban intimated, “Though I am not done with school, I keep getting the question, when are you getting married?” The researcher surmises that if proper relationships are built with the students, and the young sailors and soldiers, it will be much easier to ask questions and go further to teach about getting ready for marriage rather than creating pressure. As stated in the Bible, adults are to offer guidance like Paul writes to encourage his son in the faith, “In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching, show integrity, seriousness, and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us” (Titus 2:7-8). Teaching becomes a straightforward process to handle when the relationship is profound.

In another instance, Mary Smith, who left an abusive marriage, expressed how she felt forced to remain in the union though she was hurting. Mary adds, “I think proper training should be given to those in leadership in learning how to address people like myself who are within the

church going through challenging times.” To the researcher, it is evident that many within the church must understand what the Bible says about divorce and remarriage; however, leaders should be able to add skills to grace when addressing people in such situations. The leadership of COP Norfolk must be mindful here that people handle situations differently, especially in marriage choices. Authentic relationships will therefore help address each isolated case of the marriage culture.

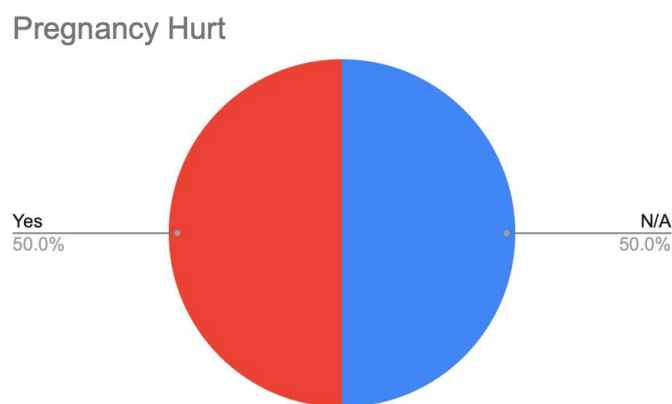
The Culture of a Childbirth

At COP Norfolk, the leadership and members are generally happy to hear pregnancy news. However, the researcher realizes that the discussion places undue pressure on those married for a period without any children. Gina recounted how she felt pressured by the leadership and members after being married for a while without a child. She indicated how a member spoke disrespectfully to her, “Why are you so interested in dressing and wearing big hats? It will be good to concentrate on how to bear a child.” Gina felt hurt by this statement made by one she considered a friend just because she did not have a child.

Ruth, who also had long complications with childbearing, added how someone would hold her by the hand and pull her to the front when the leadership asked people with various needs to come to the altar for prayer. Ruth remarked, “People are not sensitive to these issues at all. Sometimes I get asked the question, is this your child? You need to get your child soon.” Though it is good to be concerned, the church should be educated to be more sensitive on this matter. It will also be good not to have such women feel they are in this situation alone. With this idea in mind, prayers and such concerns should be spread evenly between such women and their respective husbands.

Gina also commented on how one time she felt her husband was distrustful when another male-male publicly said to him, “We are all men here except this other man who has to increase his game.” Being sensitive to our environment and knowing the people around us beyond the church facade will help minimize some of the hurts created in birth culture.

Figure 5. Pregnancy Hurt



As shown in Figure 5, 50 percent of participants who participated in the interview expressed that they had experienced pregnancy-related hurt before. To the researcher, though, it seems that the percentage of pregnancy hurt is in two halves; it may be helpful for leadership to teach how such sensitively driven pregnancy issues will not create hurt.

The Culture of Death and Grief

The researcher observes that one of the areas the church has not been sensitive to is during such times when people are grieving. At COP Norfolk, the leadership does well in encouraging the family and praying with them; however, it is noteworthy to mention that the methods used for each individual must be different, so the attempt does not rather hurt instead of comfort. It is of utmost importance to the point posited that an understanding that grieving does

not only happen when people pass on but also any loss or detachment could result in grief.

Granger Westberg, a pastor, and a psychologist explain the concept of grieving most profoundly:

Faith plays a significant role in the grief of any kind. But not in the way some people think. They often believe that a person with solid Faith does not grieve and is above this. Moreover, these people imply that religious Faith advocates stoicism. They might forget to quote the two words from Scripture 'Grieve not.'¹²¹

On the contrary, Christians understand that when people are allowed to grieve well, they become stronger. References from 1 Thessalonians 4:13 and inferences from how Jesus wept in John 11:35 give us a clue that grieving is not out of the context of believers.

There have been instances where people have lost a loved one or job, and others who may not understand the complete quantum of the situation say, "The Lord knows why he took this job or this person from you!" To the researcher, though it makes a lot of sense to encourage from the perspective of God's Word, it must be clear that many don't see it that way when they are grieving. It is like God has taken away something they love. The researcher concludes that some of these events in our lives bring us to a place of humility. The researcher finds this quote by Gerals D'cunha intriguing but relatable, "When a bird is alive, it eats ants; when the bird dies, ants it the bird. Circumstances can change at any time. Don't devalue or hurt anyone in this life. You may be powerful today, but time is more powerful than you."¹²²

When the researcher asked Maryann to describe her feelings during her father's passing, she notes, "I felt disappointed, helpless and the feeling was just like my worst fear being realized. Though people did and said what they thought was right, some comments increased the

¹²¹ Granger E. Westberg, *Good Grief: A Constructive Approach to the Problem of Loss* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 2.

¹²² "Ege Eviv Quotes," Good Reads, Accessed September 18, 2022.
https://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/18549244.Ege_Avc.

hurt.” Many church members feel they need to say something when they are in the company of a person grieving. She added by sharing how her grieving got worse when one of the visitors came around to tell them how lucky he was alive and how death is actual.

Maryann was utterly devastated when the man pulled a culture card. “Why are you not in a mourning dress?” Maryann had a shirt in her late dad's favorite color, which was not good enough. The man asked, “Why are you not in black or red as the others?” Maryann said people should remain present instead of talking or making a point. The researcher believes it is best to pay more attention to the gestures, tone, and language before addressing the need; that way, the best solution is given.

Theme Four: Silence

Silence is a major theme because it is an inherently more significant portion of why many feel hurt in the church. This problem explains the posture that a person cannot say anything for fear of being punished or relegated by the person in authority. The researcher finds it interesting that many people keep silent even if there is a need to speak over matters. During the interview, Grace pointed out that sometimes the culture of silence is initiated by the leadership posture. When leaders are in the wrong, they will not speak about it. Some leaders will also take offense when a congregant attempts to bring up an issue that does not make them happy. In COP Norfolk, the silence problem or attitude stems from the aspect of a culture where the adult or the one in leadership does not err. Grace adds, “It surprises me when a person in leadership is in the wrong; they hush. This approach seems to come from the customer's always-right philosophy. It is time to take the bull by the horn and call it a spade. When people are not allowed to express themselves, it creates a sense of resignation.”

The researcher identified the culture of silence in leadership reviews and the transfer of ministers. Grace said,

I have always thought these changes were very mystical and came from the Lord! However, knowing there is a human face where discussions are held to effect these changes, it may be appropriate to engage in certain discussions with the people in question to avoid hurt. Leadership should find a way to mix rationalization and the work of the Holy Spirit intervention.

The researcher believes it may be unrealistic to posit a mechanism where such reviews and changes are discussed. Still, initiating a discussion to bring a balance may be beneficial. The researcher shall continue this discussion in Chapter 5. Minister's transfers impacted Daniel, one of the Pastor's children. He said,

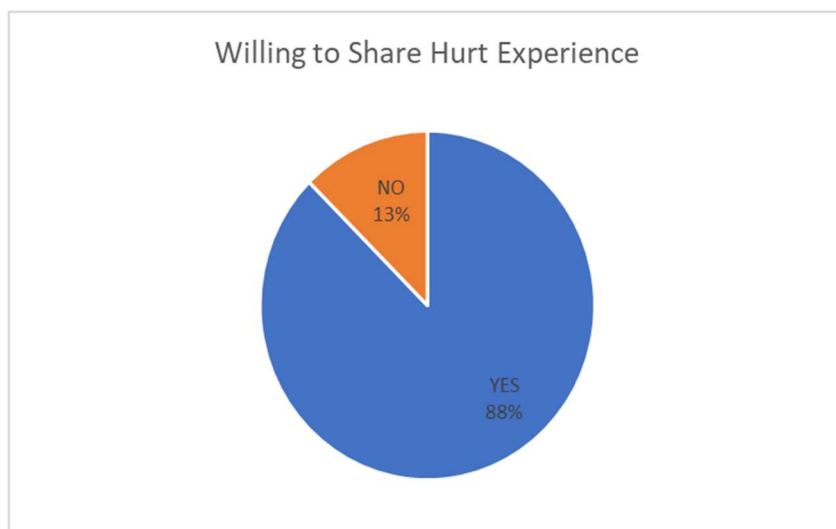
There are many benefits I enjoyed when my parents were away on their missionary journey. However, one aspect that made me not talk much was when I had to share resources in the same house with eight other children. As a result, I could not enjoy myself much as a child because I knew the condition of the house.

Daniel indicated that it was evident that there was no need to ask since the resources at home were not enough. It was also apparent that not being a biological child was almost sure for him to be an afterthought when sharing resources. The researcher recalls a similar incident where he had to remain in the care of his grandmother during a transfer. They had to share the resources though insatiable.

The culture of silence is prevalent when the environment or circumstances prevent the person from fully expressing themselves. Though one may argue that having everyone express themselves could erupt into a noisy environment, it is gratifying to note that the environment improves when people are taught to bring out their hurting issues constructively. researcher posits that the best way to get rid of hurt is by addressing the worry the person in question has. When the hurt person speaks about the hurt to another who is capable of offering the needed help, the

hurt can be lessened. Figure 6 describes how the silence problem affected participants' willingness to share their hurt experiences.

Figure 6. Those Willing to Share their Hurt Experiences



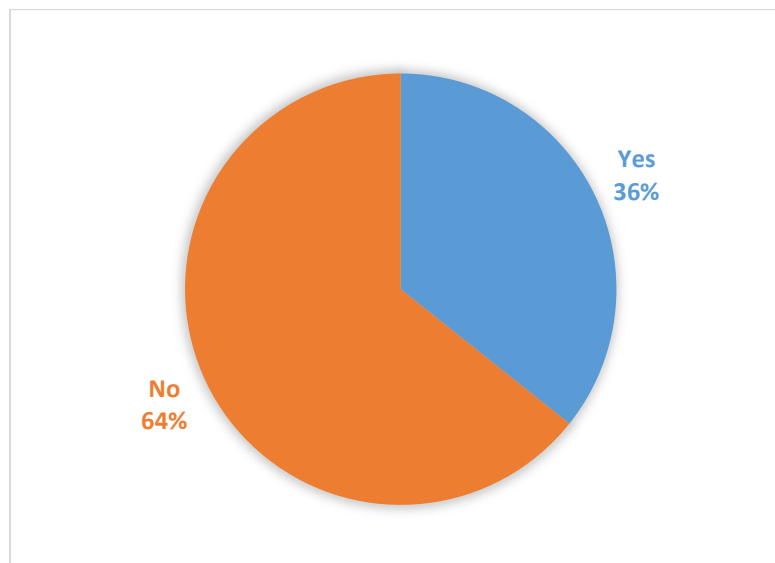
The pre-interview Intake Form asked participants whether they would share their hurt experiences with the researcher. Figure 6 depicts the percentage of people willing to share and those who were not. According to Figure 6, about 13 percent were unwilling to share their hurt experiences, while 88 percent were open to sharing their hurt experiences. The chart suggests that most people hurt in COP Norfolk will express their feelings if leadership allows an opportunity for expression. In addition, the researcher believes that most people in the church will feel relieved from their hurt if the leadership provides an outlet for such occurrences.

Theme Five: Privacy

The researcher describes this theme as the disconnection between the member's private life and church membership. There is a fine line between what is supposed to be private and what could be public. Leaders face many problems when they have to decipher between the two. The researcher had a conversation that seemed to fit the privacy theme. One of the parishioners lost

their job and gradually fell into financial hardship. After a few attempts by the leader to decipher what was happening, the person in question disclosed they wanted the conversation to be kept private. Because the resolution found a financial resource to help with the issue, the leader had to inform the leadership, known as the presbytery. At this point, the issue ceases to be private; however, the goal of a financial need could only be met when the church leaders decide. This kind of disconnect or disparity is what the researcher calls the privacy problem. The researcher buttresses the privacy problem with the response of participants willing to disclose their identities. The response from the participants portrays that many people would like to relate but still keep specific issues about their lives private. Though such have joined a big fraternity of believers, they seem to always keep to themselves. The researcher caught on quickly when some participants did not want to show their identity by answering the question.

Figure 7. Those Willing to Disclose Their Identity



Participants provided varied answers when asked whether they would be comfortable disclosing their identities. Figure 7 shows the percentage of respondents willing to share their identity and

those who were not. As shown above, 36 percent had no problem disclosing their identity, while 64 percent preferred to remain completely anonymous.

Church Policies and Welcome Package

A guest who has become a church member now narrated her welcoming experience. Miss Anabelle Burnette gave her perception of how the church and the leadership could improve customer service skills in the future. Anabelle later addressed the privacy problem succinctly. It must be noted that though Anabelle was not part of the participants, she makes some good points applicable to this type of problem. Annabelle notes,

I'm not sure what the current policy is, but it can feel intrusive when new people must provide personal information on intake church forms. Such information should be voluntarily made without the person feeling pressured or coerced. Additionally, the info should also be kept private. For example, information such as addresses and phone numbers need not be required on the first day of attendance; Or maybe the people who have access to such information need to be regulated. But God loves a cheerful giver. I remember being taken aback by a call from a random church member. It had not even been a week after I visited the church that this call was made. I asked how this person got my number and was told they found it in the church directory. After that, I was reluctant to continue the fellowship at that location because I didn't feel comfortable. I understand the pressure to grow the church by acquiring and retaining new members. However, I would suggest that these Intake Forms include options of publishing or keeping certain information private.

In addition to her statement, Annabelle indicated that another new member policy pertains to people having to stand and introduce themselves. She said, "Many people do not like being put on the spot and may not even stand to be acknowledged." The researcher leans more towards a suggestion made to announce and welcome the new members rather than putting them on the spot by calling them for an elaborate introduction. The church leadership could explore the following:

1. Make a generally warm welcome comment to all newcomers
2. Direct them to a meeting place after church where they could meet the welcoming team. For example, the leadership could consider the following:
 - a. A trained representative or leader may be asked to answer any questions while giving such guests a brief description of the church.
 - b. A welcome packet could be a fridge magnet, a coffee cup, a key chain with the church name, or another appropriate gift. As mentioned, the leadership may develop different ways people could feel comfortable rather than the former.

Summary of Results

The enormity of hurt, as defined in the project, creates an unhealthy environment for the church, and this does not help members and the church grow the way it should. Hence, the researcher underscores the above source as the key to motivating the church polity that ultimately creates hurt. Assumption, caging, culture, silence, and privacy are the five themes. It is noteworthy that participants reiterated how helpful it is to understand the sources and how to lessen the effects after the two training sessions.

Mary Smith's story illustrates this point well when she indicated that she would fall into panic mode. Still, after the training sessions, since she understood the realities of hurt, she has come up with coping mechanisms that have helped her overcome that challenge. Mary later stated, "Such excellent training should be incorporated into the new member handbook and perhaps the new member orientation to help give a good idea of the prevalence of hurt in the church context." Though the researcher is mindful that the themes provided are not exhaustive, they are significant factors that give credence to why people feel hurt in COP Norfolk. In

summary, assumption, caging, culture, silence, and privacy, define the acronym ACCSP. It is the identifiable way that defines the sources of hurt among church members in COP Norfolk. These sources of hurt, as listed above, provided the researcher an opportunity to think through what COP Norfolk can do to deal with hurt amidst the prevailing yet inevitable challenge.

First, when a member faces a situation that creates hurt due to an assumption, it can alter the authenticity of relationships in the church. For example, the early apostles assumed that Paul had not converted to the Christian faith. The apostles could not grasp this truth until Barnabas confirmed Paul's conversion (cf. Acts 9:27). The researcher is concerned about the extent of hurt one can have when like-minded Christians assume for them. Without Barnabas, Paul's ministry could have been marred.

Second, the researcher addresses the caging theme, which explains the lack of an outlet for a person to defend or explain themselves but faces knocks by people or leadership. In the example cited by the researcher of how the church disciplines members who fall into sin, there is a possibility that the caging theme may prevent the church from looking at the other side. Since there are two sides to every issue, the church is blind to the absolute truth in the matter when there is no openness and willingness.

The third theme addresses some significant roles culture plays in hurting members. The researcher likens the cultural theme to the adage that fire could be a good servant but a lousy master. This theme explains that though culture is good when it is not correctly exercised, it may hurt many. For instance, when the church becomes stringent in propounding culture in all situations, members may face hurt.

Privacy theme is the fourth issue discovered through the research. It underscores the dichotomy between a person's private life and their public membership. To what extent can the

church pry into a person's life without hurting them? Though the church believes that once a person has taken membership, there is nothing private about them, there is the need to respect specific preferences that are not necessarily sinful. For example, how should the church view it if a parent is not interested in publishing a group picture taken by the children's ministry because their child is part of that group?

The last issue discussed is the silence problem. The posture infringed on another, making them voiceless even when they could voice their views. When people are not allowed to express themselves, it breeds suspicion and weariness and eventually causes them to hurt.

In concluding this section, assumption, caging, culture, privacy, and silence themes form the sources of many hurtful experiences. They require attention from the COP Norfolk leadership to minimize the hurt. In the next chapter, the researcher introduces SPEAK as a key and sure way of lessening hurt among members in COP Norfolk. SPEAK is an acronym for speaking up respectfully, practicing what is preached, evaluating the options for mitigation, adjusting to the hurt, and knowing the members personally.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The project derives the themes of doubt listed in Chapter 4 from the interviews and analysis of the participant's interactions. These closing thoughts help bring to light an understanding of the sources of hurt. The researcher hopes that COP Norfolk's members and leaders will consider these suggestions carefully to start the conversation on hurt awareness, its effects, and, ultimately, its lessening. The researcher agrees with the novelists Lemony Snicket and Tim Curry on the benefits of making attempts when they discovered that "What looks like a series of unfortunate events may be the first step of a journey."¹²³ Because churches, organizations, and institutions rarely discuss the subject of hurt, the researcher is particularly enthused about sharing some of the propositions of these underscored strategies, which could lessen such hurts. This chapter shall therefore focus on the following three areas:

- A. What policies, practices, and structures should the Church change help lessen hurt within the framework of the five themes discussed in Chapter 4?
- B. Creating maximum impact, a comparative evaluation of the post-interviews vis-à-vis hurting members in Norfolk COP.
- C. General hurt-lessening remarks

Research Implications

As already indicated by the researcher, the polity is a combination of policies, culture, practices, and structure. Polity is an "ongoing process that builds a corporation-inspired model; endorsed by a discursive practice that constructs an ongoing crisis condition through repetitive

¹²³ Lemony Snicket and Tim Curry, *A Series of Unfortunate Events* (United Kingdom, Egmont: Harper Collins Publishers, 2004), 2006.

and mundane activities."¹²⁴ Ian Gogh, an expert on policies, explains clearly that refining policy is to shed light on services the church can provide to avoid hurt. Ian adds that "refining the polity will help foster the smooth transition into benefits while not disadvantaging the less privileged group in the congregation. The benefit, therefore, will clearly distinguish between excellent and inadequate services necessary for the well-being of the members."¹²⁵ Against this backdrop, this researcher appreciates the excellent work of the founding fathers and those who have taken on various leadership roles in steering the affairs of the COP worldwide with helpful polity thus far. However, while such polity has helped over time, the researcher sees a disconnect in how people eventually get hurt because the church does not sufficiently communicate certain aspects of its polity.

The COP Norfolk follows the centralized system of government. Within the framework of the system, leadership institute polity from the headquarters in Ghana, West Africa. To do that, COP Norfolk reports to regional Leadership in Woodbridge, VA, which also reports to the National Leadership in Wayne, NJ. The Church of Pentecost leadership has done well coming up with publications and materials which inform members about what they need to do and how they can do them. The researcher commends the leadership for providing three different materials describing polity. The Constitution, Church Practices, and the Finance Handbook are the three materials that spell out the nuances of the church's policies. Special credit goes to the Leadership of COP USA INC for revising the general ministerial handbook incorporated with welfare policies, which could be a fourth official document indicating the expectation of members and

¹²⁴ Toni Ahlqvist and Sami Moisio, "Neoliberalisation in a Nordic State: From Cartel Polity Towards a Corporate Polity in Finland." *New Political Economy* 19, no. 1 (2014): 21-55.

¹²⁵ Ian Gough, "Recomposing Consumption: Defining Necessities For Sustainable and Equitable Well-Being." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A: Mathematical, Physical and Engineering Sciences* 375, no. 2095 (2017): 379.

leaders altogether. With all four documents above, this researcher recommends a training program to help every member understand their responsibilities to meet the expectations.

While making such recommendations, it is also worth noting the possible bureaucratic nature of the Church of Pentecost worldwide, which could challenge how the polity's chain of command communicates information. In addition, there is the possibility that one local church like Norfolk COP may receive their copies and start operating before others. The idea, however, fits the definition of Max Weber, a specialist in the definition of bureaucracies argues, "That the ideal organizational structure could be created with the principles presented, but its aptitude to workability stems from the human phenomenon."¹²⁶ This point made by Weber underscores the idea that polity sometimes looks better without humans who will implement it adequately. To buttress this point in context, if leadership makes polity through writing without any excellent communication, the polity may sit on the shelves and collect dust without proper implementation. This point echoes why the researcher believes leadership should consider the materials and publications with the implementers. The researcher, therefore, advances recommendations to help stakeholders have real-time access to the information on the polity. Though not in any particular order, these recommendations will ensure members are not oblivious or left in the dark regarding the themes listed in Chapter 4.

Policy Recommendation to Address Theme: Assumption

Many people assume things when information is not fluid enough. Information not being fluid here means when information does not flow properly through the appropriate channel, many can interpret it the way they deem fit. Edward Hall, an expert in assumption research, said, "People so readily generalize that they often 'know' in advance what they are going to like and

¹²⁶ Funda Civek and Esra Özkahveci, "A Conceptual Assessment Of Weber Bureaucratic Theory and Human Resource Management." *Adiyaman University Journal of Institute of Social Sciences* 39 (2021): 364-94.

what they are going to dislike. They judge distance from each other and teach it to those who don't have the correct information."¹²⁷ As a result, Charles Lord and Cheryl Taylor add, "They develop assumptions and expectations, which determine their future evaluative responses."¹²⁸

While appreciating the excellent work done by the COP international leadership, this researcher sees two issues. The first is that the changes made to policies may not be readily available simultaneously because they may come from different offices. Second, members' orientation to the updated material may not be spelled out very clearly, for example, which office is responsible for making document changes. In the minister's handbook and welfare policy, there is little or no mention of how to integrate new members into the congregation. Especially for a church like COP Norfolk, which is a revolving door, leadership must employ intentionality in incorporating new members into the church. When leadership goes this route, it will help the church accurately account for all the members.

To resolve the first potential source of hurt, the researcher recommends that leadership finds a centralized location. Two options are a website and a mass distribution portal to which technically educated members will have access. This recommendation will help accomplish the goal of disseminating information immediately when available. In addition, the avenue where such updates or amendments are coming from must be defined so that members will not just make assumptions when interacting with such policies.

¹²⁷ Edward T Hall, "Silent assumptions in social communication, In *People and Buildings*," *Routledge*, 1, no. 1 (2017): 137-151, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315126197>

¹²⁸ Charles G. Lord and Cheryl A. Taylor, "Biased Assimilation: Effects of Assumptions and Expectations on the Interpretation of New Evidence." *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 3, no. 5 (2009): 827-841.

Policy Recommendation to Address Theme: Culture

Culture is a group's way of life. The researcher points out that the role of the minister's wife is not spelled out clearly in the minister's handbook. Anyone who explores the handbook will see more of the minister's roles than the minister's wife. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the dominant culture usually informs the lifestyle of the people. One can assert that the role of the pastor's wife not placed in the material could come from this cultural inference. Next, Leanne Dzubinski researched gender roles. He comments, "Role incredulity is a form of gender bias where women are mistakenly assumed to be in a stereotypically female role of an administrative assistant, nurse, wife, or girlfriend. There is a negative impact on women when one assumes a male leadership role, such as CEO, professor, lawyer, doctor, or engineer."¹²⁹ In the same regard, when the church leadership fails to define roles in the handbook, it is likely to create tension between, for example, the pastor's wife and the women's ministry leader.

The researcher's second potential issue is how the leadership does not clearly define cultural milestones like death, birth, and marriage in the handbook. For emphasis, the researcher addresses the subject of death, which most Pentecostal pulpits do not often discuss. Leaning more toward this conviction, Nigel Llewellyn, who boldly researched the subject of death, adds that death is both a moment in time and a spiritualized process related to a physical transformation. This idea mentioned above means that life physically stops but spiritually becomes a mystery that brings social questions. Nigel continues,

Such a complex picture demands flexibility for anyone that has wished to know about death since time immemorial. For example, the idea of dying is not accurately captured by data on death rates plotted on a graph. The major reason for the other is that everyone

¹²⁹ Leanne M. Dzubinski, "When People Assume You're Not in Charge Because You're a Woman." *Harvard Business Review Digital Articles* 673 no. 1 (2021): 1.

finds death difficult; as the seventeenth-century poet Henry Vaughan wrote: Yet by none art though understood.¹³⁰

Such many sometimes inexplicable reasons make it tricky for anyone to understand.

Nevertheless, the idea informs why the researcher proposes that the handbook should spell out death-related issues.

Though the researcher commends the leadership for the excellent work done in the handbook, it fails to capture the gradations to take when a minister dies. Another portion not underscored is the steps members should take when they learn that a minister's death or family member was also not captured. What are some of the words to speak to such people? The researcher noted that some words used when people die might add more salt to the hurt many grieving people in the pews have, as indicated in Chapter 4. But, on the other hand, to the supposed consolers, those words may be just what people use. It may be good for the handbook to itemize what appropriate words to use in the event of death.

Policy Recommendation to Address Theme: Caging

This source of hurt is where the person going through the challenge does not have the opportunity to express themselves for fear of judgment. The researcher sees that the policies' handbook has more to do with ministers than members. Even with that in mind, the leadership only dedicates a tiny portion of the handbook to ministers' grievances.¹³¹ The researcher recommends that the church leaders revise or update the welfare policy handbook to address issues such as dealing with members' grievances. This challenge will mean moving and leading

¹³⁰ Nigel Llewellyn, *Art of Death: Visual Culture in the English Death Ritual – c. 1500 – c. 1800* (Chicago, IL: Reaktion Books, 2013), 15.

¹³¹ The Church of Pentecost U.S.A., INC., *Minister's Hand Book & Welfare Policies* (Wayne, NJ, Pentecost Press, 2021), 50.

the church leadership out of its comfort zone. Pentecostals, particularly Norfolk COP members, are accustomed to receiving guidance from leadership without asking many questions. Research conducted by Judith, Mwenje into leadership styles in Zimbabwe showed that the statement above holds that most Pentecostal churches follow the leading of their leaders. Judith indicated,

“The founders mentioned holding regular meetings and conferences and visiting the different branches regularly for solid leadership. The founder later said, ‘As a leader, I don’t just sit and watch my leaders working. I have to plan and hold leadership meetings regularly where I always impart the spirit in me and the vision I am carrying. Suppose a leader does not meet his leaders regularly; error sets in, which destroys a church. My teachings are in line with the vision that I am carrying.’¹³²

The researcher believes it will help engage a cross-section of people to capture most of the painful areas for most members. The researcher agrees with Joan Marques, a motivational writer, and novelist,

When leaders dare to step out of their comfort zones, they ensure a dynamic workforce and teach this workforce the advantages of making bold but responsible decisions. Leaders and members alike will enjoy lasting excellence for their organizations when they step outside their comfort zone. Stepping out of one's comfort zone is a major challenge because people prefer to do things the easy way whenever they think they can get away with it.¹³³

The researcher proposes that COP Norfolk is encouraged to develop a template for what may work at their particular assembly through roundtable events. The researcher uses the term "roundtable" to describe diverse perspectives from various stakeholders and experts that come together to develop helpful plans for COP Norfolk.¹³⁴ These roundtable events will help to generate a policy for members, which the researcher believes will address many of the sources of

¹³² Judith Mwenje. "An Investigation of The Leadership Styles of Pentecostal Church Leaders in Zimbabwe." *African Journal of Business Management* 10, no. 3 (2016): 55-74.

¹³³ Joan Marques, "Stepping Out of the Comfort Zone" *Leadership in Action*, Vol 28, no. 2, (2016), 23.

¹³⁴ Guy Stallworthy, Kwasi Boahene, Kelechi Ohiri, Allan Pamba, and Jeffrey Knezovich, "Roundtable Discussion: What is The Future Role of the Private Sector in Health?" *Globalization and Health* 10, no. 1 (2014): 1-5.

hurt because the material proposed for the members will cover that aspect. The researcher notes that COP Norfolk has an internal welfare policy handbook that minimally addresses some issues that create hurt. The secretary of the church, Elder Sylvester Adjei, confirmed that leadership uses or refers to this welfare policy booklet when needed. It will be helpful for leaders to make this information accessible to all members with real-time updates provided whenever they make changes or updates.

Policy Recommendations to Address Theme: Privacy

The researcher does not see anywhere in the polity, practices, structure, and policies that directly speak to privacy. It is undoubtedly prevalent that because of how people operate, it is hard when someone feels another is prying into their sacred space. Members should appreciate that they have joined the brotherhood of believers where they share all things commonly with care and passion, just like the early church. This idea of sharing and accepting commonality means that people within the church do things with an open heart. The Scripture informs the church members of COP Norfolk of how the early church functioned. During the initial orientation, members who come to COP Norfolk and other campuses should teach about communal or united living power. Acts 4:34-35 speaks clearly to this idea posited by the researcher; "That there were no needy persons among them. From time to time, those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and the leadership distributed to anyone who had need." When members have this mindset, like in the early church, they may not feel hurt when it feels like people are prying into their space or privacy.

Alan Kreider, a historian, adds to this submission that "Some have addressed this question by emphasizing the clash of ideas. During the church's early centuries, Christians

developed their thinking to a formidable extent. They learned to deploy their ideas differently as they engaged in conversation and debate with adherents of other religions."¹³⁵ To the researcher, those who suffer hurt in one way or the other due to the theme of privacy may want to take cues from what the early church did to prevent the issue of hurt. They opened up to share their difficulties and needs so they could get help.

When the church does not know an individual because they have kept to themselves, it projects an environment where no one knows about the victim's needs. The researcher recommends that the ministries create smaller groups where members can share and get to know themselves better so they can share easily in case of difficulties. These smaller groups should have assigned leaders who report to the ministry leader for proper dissemination. As mentioned in Chapter 4, an excellent way to do this is to train or teach members in that small group bonding styles and different temperaments or personalities. The last but not minor recommendation for the section COP Norfolk is to replicate this idea at all ministry levels. The researcher notes that the women's leader Deaconess Caroline Burgess confirmed that the women have started what they call *Sister to Sister*. The women's leadership has created smaller groups to help members bond properly. Leaders for those small groups are to check on each other weekly. The researcher believes this effort is reasonable; however, a better structure should enable sharing of all such information received during the checking-up process with leadership for accountability.

¹³⁵ Kreider Alan, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 4.

Policy Recommendation to Address Theme: Silence

The researcher identifies that the theme of silence is not as well explained clearly in the COP polity material or handbook. The researcher surmises that the prevailing unspoken culture keeps people from saying anything, even when they are hurt enough to say it. The researcher thinks that the church is one of the places where many face awful experiences when voicing their opinions and hurts. Research on people who face bipolar disorder through some religious activity supports the abovementioned claim.¹³⁶ For example, if a political statement made from the pulpit by a preacher offends someone in the pews, how do they get it addressed? The researcher finds Michele Margolis, a political writer's statement worth noting about "how politics is beginning to shape people's identities while pushing some away from the pews."¹³⁷ It will be difficult for a person hurt by a political statement to voice out when it comes from the pulpit, especially in a Pentecostal setting like COP Norfolk, where members don't ask questions after a sermon. The researcher recommends that COP Norfolk assigns a leader or a group of readily available leaders to take comments or questions about the church that hurt people. There could also be a suggestion box where members who feel hurt can put their comments or questions and contact information so the appropriate leadership can contact them.

If possible, beyond the problem-solving rubric of addressing issues and contentions stated in Matthew 18:15-17, the researcher recommends that COP Norfolk creates a department with professionals where people can go and voice their concerns to receive direction and problem-solving suggestions. While adapting to this initiative, the leadership shall require the department

¹³⁶ Eva T. Ouwehand, et al, "The Awful Rowing Toward God": Interpretation of Religious Experiences by Individuals with Bipolar Disorder." *Pastoral Psychology* 68, no. 4 (2019): 437-462.

¹³⁷ Michele F. Margolis. *From Politics to the Pews: How Partisanship and Political Environment Shape Religious Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 12-13.

to train members using the “Australian Health Model of problem-solving as a template to help those who may be battling with issues that made them feel hurt.”¹³⁸

To conclude this section recommending Church polity for COP Norfolk, the researcher believes that making strides for addressing the problems from the source will benefit COP Norfolk and its members. Israel Galindo, who has researched thriving congregations adds,

The secret life of a congregation's spirituality is a binding force that informs the local church's beliefs and practices. This hidden life force influences how a congregation approaches its worship of God and understands the purpose of gathering for corporate worship and the expectations it places on its pastoral leadership.¹³⁹

The following section examines the post-interviews with its attending suggestions or proposals that will help understand the sources of hurt with possible recommendations.

Research Applications

As the researcher frames his recommendation for how its members could benefit, this section seeks to determine how the project results can help in the ministry context. Since the previous section addressed participants’ experiences and hurt perspectives, the current section uses those to determine how such influences can impact the ministry in the larger scheme of things. Ernest Stringer, a research specialist, says, “The final section places those experiences and perspectives in a broader context. In effect, it presents briefly what has been discovered and explores the implications of those findings.”¹⁴⁰ COP Norfolk will need to look at these hurt sources and devise contextual actions that will lessen the impact hurt has on the church. Perhaps

¹³⁸ "Department of Health Western Australia Department of Health," Accessed October 2, 2022, https://www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/N_R/Problem-solving.

¹³⁹ Israel Galindo, *The Hidden Lives of Congregations – Discerning Church Dynamics* (Herndon: VA, The Alban Institute, 2004), 112.

¹⁴⁰ Ernest T. Stringer, *Action Research*, 4th ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publication, 2013), 20.

the leadership and members could hold a consultative meeting to synthesize the issues gleaned from post-interviews. A typical example is what is in the diagram below:

Figure 8. How Would You Describe the Possible Impact of Church Hurt on Members?

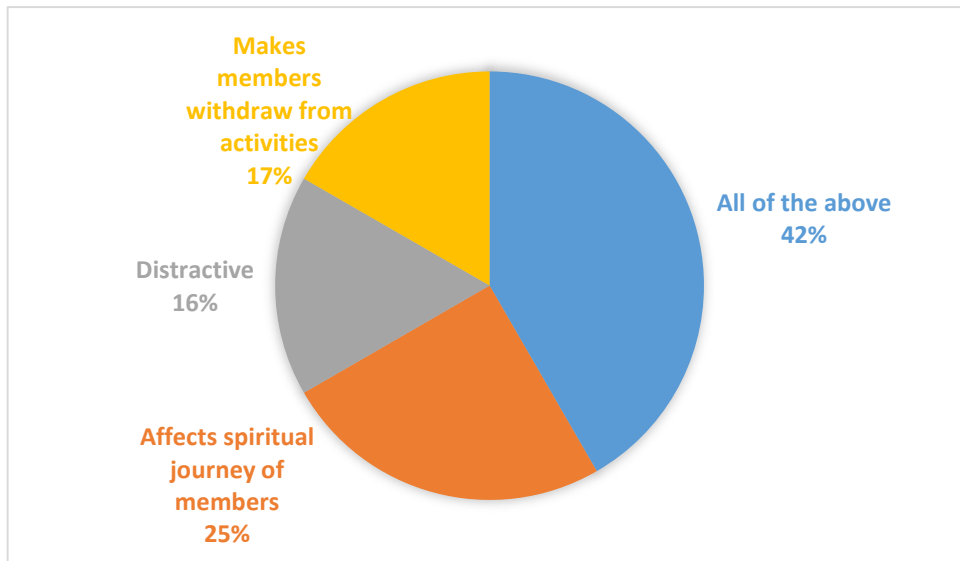
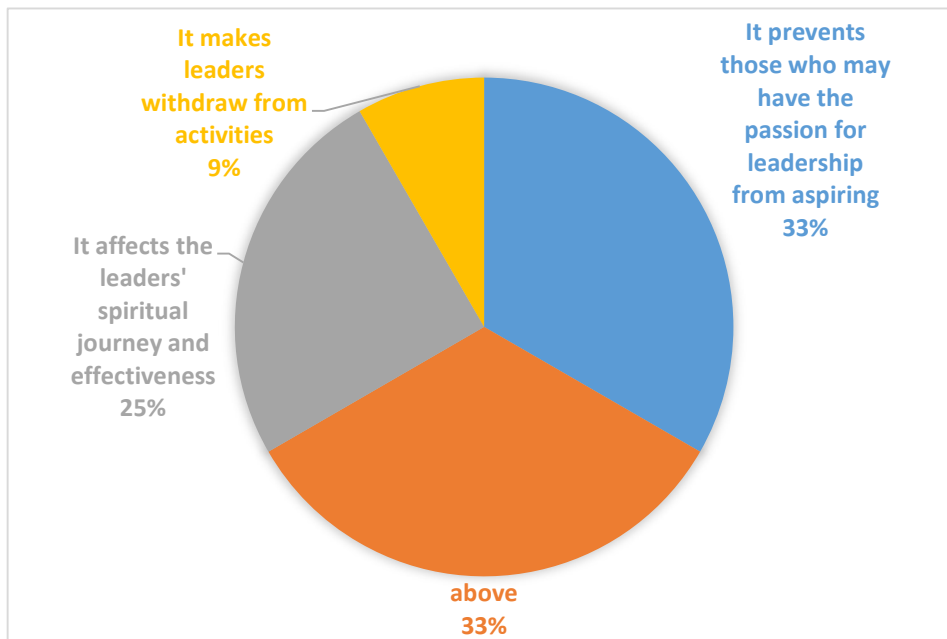


Figure 9. How Would you Describe the Possible Impact of Church Hurt on Leaders?



The post-interview questionnaire asked the participants to select what they believe are potential impacts of church hurt on members and leaders. For members, the answer choices were as follows: Distractive affects members' spiritual journey, making members withdraw from activities, or all of the above. Out of the participants, 9 percent believed that church hurt could be distractive for members. 18 percent said that it makes members withdraw from activities, 27 percent were convinced that church hurt could affect the spiritual journey of members, and 45 percent believed that church hurt impacted members in all the ways mentioned. When asking participants about the impact of church hurt on leaders, they were given the following answer choices: Prevents those who may have the passion for leadership from aspiring, makes leaders withdraw from church activities, affects the spiritual journey of leaders, none of the above, or all of the above. 8 percent believed that church hurt makes leaders withdraw from activities, 25 percent said that the spiritual journey of the leaders would be affected, 33 percent stated that church hurt would prevent those who have a passion for leadership from aspiring, and 33 percent said that church hurt would impact leaders in all the ways mentioned above. Despite the disparity in percentages seen in figure 9, it could be concluded that church hurt has several impacts on both members and leaders.

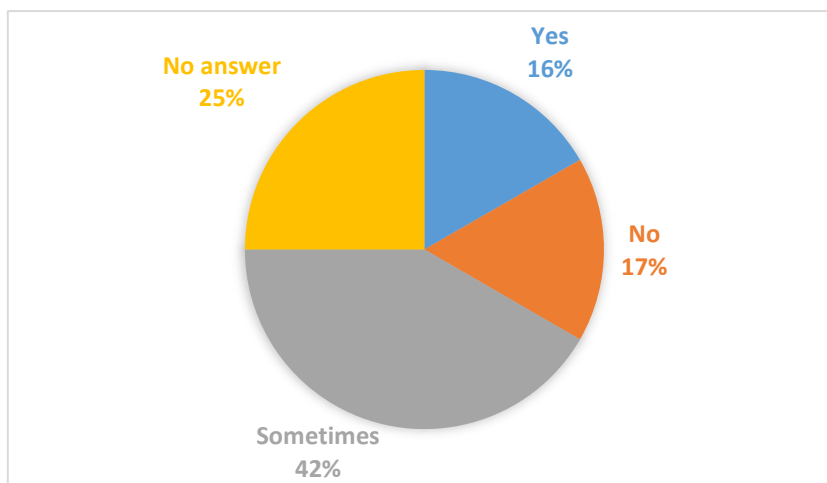
One can infer that when people are hurt, they detach entirely. Secondly, when people are hurt though they are present, the level of their presence is below the norm. Based on this premise, the researcher wishes to posit specific mitigation strategies for the COP Norfolk leadership. For example, someone remarked at church, “As soon as I see this leader standing up there, I close or resign from service.” It almost confirms what Edward said about his hurt when he felt the leadership failed to follow through with a discussion on a financial database contract. Edward mentioned, “When this hurt happened, I shut off anytime I hear about church finances or

observe some of the leaders involved. It affected my commitment to do anything in the church and my financial contribution until I let it all go." This idea underscores that hurting people hurt others and could also damage the system or the organization. In addition, Daniel described his feeling of hurt during the interview, "I knew I was not going to get what I wanted, so I did not even bother to ask but rather stayed hurt with the need."

Therefore, it will be suitable for COP Norfolk leadership to create an environment where people will not keep bottling their hurts within but voice them out with proper resolution plans. A venting place or avenue where leaders and members can share how they feel, especially the areas of hurt, so they can receive godly counsel. It may be helpful for leadership to consider creating, empowering, and making the counseling department visible to stand with such people that may need an avenue to express their hurtful experiences.

Consequently, as posited above, the researcher surmises that these remarks create lots of breaks in the flow of relationships. Figure 10 shows how not speaking out hurt could affect individuals. If the church has even a third of members who are hurt but will not speak up, there could be a danger to the fluidity of relationships, which must be addressed.

Figure 10. Lingering Hurt Memories in the Mind and Heart



Participants were asked the following question in the chart above: “Assuming the hurt you had has been resolved, do you have any trace or memory in your mind or heart?” Out of the responses, 44 percent of the participants thought about it sometimes, 33 percent thought about it more frequently, and 22 percent didn’t record having any trace or memory.

Lessening Strategies

Since this project opens up a discussion of understanding the sources of hurt and creating awareness, the researcher calls for future studies, particularly into how a person's age can affect how they express their feelings. When people can express their feelings, it is observed that it helps reduce their hurt. The researcher submits to the COP Norfolk leadership to consider EEFOW, an acronym that means “expression encourages freedom of worship,” as one of the ways to lessen people’s hurts. The stronger the intensity of expressing one's hurt vocally, the better the freedom. The basic ways people express themselves are categorized into words, facial expressions, body language, clothing, actions, and how they interact with possessions. The researcher recalls Maryann's statement, “On days when I feel emotional down, I dress very well to cover my emotional state.” This point made by Maryann is why the researcher proposes a more thorough way of deciphering a person's hurt feelings. Though one can determine by the voice how a person voices out their opinions, thoughts, or hurt in the church, there should be more probing.

As stated in Chapter 4, people are usually expressive or vocal as they age. During the interviews, participants below thirty years were more vocal, while those over thirty years were economical with how they articulated their pain. This assertion led the researcher to list and discover several hurt-lessening strategies with the acronym SPEAK to be considered by the COP Norfolk leadership. SPEAK is an acronym for speak respectively, practicing what one preaches,

evaluating options, adjusting to hurt, and knowing members well. The researcher gleaned from Paul's writing to the Ephesians when he spoke about the benefit of using the body or ascension gifts Jesus gave to the church. The ultimate goal of the gift is to speak and act with excellence. "But when we speak the truth in love, we grow in all things" (Ephesians 4:15). MacArthur adds his voice to what Paul said, "Evangelism is most effective when the truth is proclaimed in love. This growth process can be accomplished only by a spiritually mature believer who is thoroughly equipped with sound doctrine. The truth can be cold without maturity, and love can also be cold when people express sentimental feelings."¹⁴¹ There is, therefore, a clarion call for leaders at COP Norfolk and members to aspire for the kind of maturity with its requisite love that ensures that conduct by way of their speech will not create hurt for another person. The researcher explores the proposed acronym SPEAK in actionable points below:

SPEAK Defined

The researcher believes that the idea of graciously bringing to the fore what hurts and finding the best ways to resolve such hurts is ideal to be considered by the COP Norfolk leadership and church members in the hurt mitigation plan. For reflection, one Scripture that comes to mind is, "Your speech must always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt so that you will know how you should respond to each person" (Col. 4:6). The following are recommendations to explore:

Action 1–Speak Up Respectfully

During the interviews, the researcher observed that hurt could create an adverse emotional state of resentment and a negative disposition for many when it is not addressed. Lordina was disappointed with the church's polity of minister transfers and said, "I am very

¹⁴¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, 1694-95.

disappointed in the kind of ministers brought specially to the west coast. Those are not usually mature. It could also be that such persons are thoroughly screened or have gained political favor in leaders' eyes!" When the researcher attempted to probe a little further, it was observed that there could have been a sensitive matter, drawing the participant's attention to the fact that their situation may be individual rather than generalized. When the rhetoric changed to what could be done about this situation, Lordina remarked, "If we can only have the opportunity to express some of these immature behaviors that go on or be heard, we can help fix the situation." This remark shows that there was no outlet for the participant to air her views other than during the interview.

The researcher also felt the transference of negative energy that had boiled up over time needed to be taken seriously. Based on this premise, the post-interview questionnaire asked, "What are some ways the church can engage the members so that hurt can be mitigated?" It was evident that the responses given showed that those who felt hurt or have known others that have expressed hurt needed an outlet to express these hurts. Figure 11 shows how the different participants expressed an interest in an outlet.

Figure 11. A Call for an Avenue of Expressions in the Church Without Feeling Judged

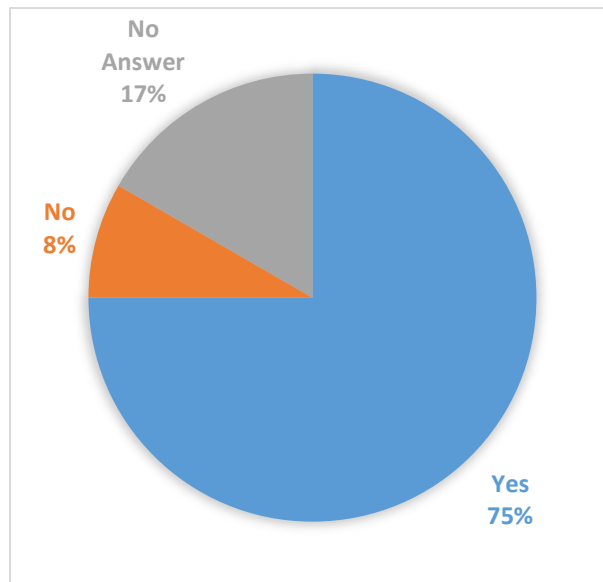
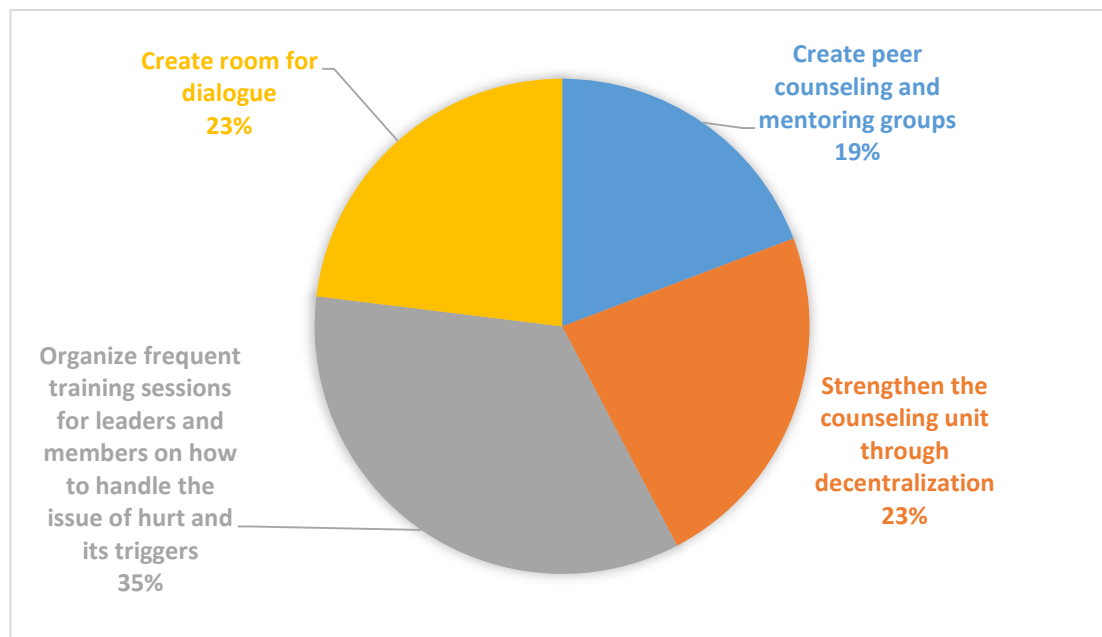


Figure 12. Ways to Engage Members in Expressing Their Hurtful Experiences



As depicted in Figure 12, upon completing the interviews, participants were asked whether they believed the church should create an avenue for members to express their hurts the post-interview questionnaire. 11 percent responded that they did not think the church should

create such an avenue and did not find it necessary. However, a majority of the participants, 88 percent, stated that the church should most definitely create an avenue for their members to express their hurts in a way where they would not feel judged.

Participants were then asked to select ways to believe the church can engage its members to mitigate hurt. Figure 11 depicts the various responses that were received. For example, 18 percent said that the church needs to create room for dialogue, 18 percent asked that the church strengthen the counseling unit through decentralization, 15 percent said that peer counseling and mentoring groups should be created, 25 percent stated that frequent training sessions should be created for leaders and members to learn how to handle the issue of hurt and its triggers, and 21 percent said that small recovery groups or meetings where people can share freely should be created. In all, it appears that based on the responses, it will be appropriate for COP Norfolk to consider some of these suggestive methods to help mitigate hurt.

Once the avenues like counseling and the establishment of peer-mentoring groups are created where people are not afraid to speak yet are afforded specific parameters to air their views without disrespect, there will be a sweet flow of God's Spirit. It must be noted that when such opportunities are created, people tend to step out of the boundary, which is why parameters should be made. Dr. Cloud and Townsend affirm, "Sometimes a lack of parental limits, coupled with a lack of connection, can produce an aggressively controlling person. We all know the experience of going into a supermarket and observing a four-year-old in total control of a mother."¹⁴² Because words carry power, according to Proverbs 18:21, the COP Norfolk leadership should spend time teaching the congregation how to speak the truth to correct, restore, and rebuild while doing it boldly. When people take what is spoken seriously, knowing what is

¹⁴² Henry Cloud, and John Townsend, *Boundaries – When to say Yes and How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 81.

said cannot be taken back or erased and, therefore, can cause hurt; it will help. Leadership and members should become aware and consistently monitor how to communicate unclear portions of the church's culture, polity, and events. When done consistently, the leadership will see growth in many areas of the church.

Action 2—Practice What Is Preached

Many are hurt in the church due to how we say one thing and do the other. The researcher has always asserted and gleaned from what Dr. Luke shared in Acts 1:1, as he narrated all the apostles' works. It is essential to mention here that Luke brings out a great idea and a challenge to conclude that a person cannot live a life worthy of emulation without mirroring the life of Jesus. In addition, it will undoubtedly be abnormal for one to preach or teach and do something else.

The church must emphasize the graciousness of being and do just like Jesus. However, it is essential to note that the change process is not rushed but gradually embraced. Luke begins the book by stating, "In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen" (Acts 1:1). As Luke engages his audience in describing how the disciples lived their lives, mirroring what Jesus did, he intricately mentioned some of the imperfections and errors that gradually and graciously turned into good. If the leadership can stress that even those who preach could fall, it will help each person within the live congregation live one day at a time, acknowledging that the fullness of his grace makes the imperfect perfect. It was not surprising for the researcher to learn that participants showed astonishment to know that some members still lived contrary to what the Bible teaches. This fact shows a clear picture that the church is a spiritual hospital. It shows how imperfect the church is.

The researcher would like to make the claim, just as indicated earlier in Chapter 4, that the church must be considered a spiritual hospital, where all members have come for healing. If that is the case, it will certainly not be a surprise when someone behaves undesirably within the church. After establishing this fact, it is undoubtedly helpful for the leadership to put measures in place to advance the “practice what is preached” goal.

When the researcher spoke with Mary, she made a point that falls in line here. Mary indicated, “There should be more enlightening and education for members to handle sensitive issues. Since there is none righteous and we carry our sinful nature, the church needs to drum home the need to be compassionate and empathetic.” The researcher agrees and gleans from a suggestion made by Mary as to the proper steps to take when it comes to practicing what is preached. COP Norfolk leadership should ensure that the entire congregation can relate to the idea of empathy and sympathy.

The idea of learning boundaries is essential. In this case, when members come into the church, they should learn about the strata system, chain of command, and how to relay information so they don't fall out of place. In this case, leaders should be trained to be open-minded and welcome such who may have a question on their minds. Mary pointed out, “I am very much in favor of how the church incorporates discipline into its practice; however, there should be revisions to some details.” The researcher realizes that the church does not adequately utilize all the aspects of discipline. The most used method of discipline is the suspension of a member who sins. The leadership may explore what the researcher calls private discipline with close counseling or supervision. The leadership could consider how the disciplined person is made to sit in the back of the church and may sometimes not be allowed to stand before the

congregation. It may be good to revise this act so the person in question does not feel ostracized by their brethren.

Lastly, the researcher believes that in the church's quest to discipline members, the leadership could provide consistent, requisite counseling and discipleship classes so members will grow and mature into the Christlikeness trajectory. The chart below shows participants hurt by how matters were handled within and outside the church. To the researcher, it is essential to underscore that many people are injured in several ways; therefore, it is vital to work through the process so it does not create more hurt. The more intentional the church leadership becomes, the better the growth or growing trajectory process becomes available; however, it is impossible to have one hundred percent of mature members within the congregation if this intentional process of counseling and discipleship is taken seriously. The researcher appreciates that the church has started building robust counseling units at all levels, local, district, regional, and national, to enable leadership to assess how members are growing. The researcher appreciates this effort by the church leadership in facilitating a process of this nature.

Figure 13. Source of Hurt

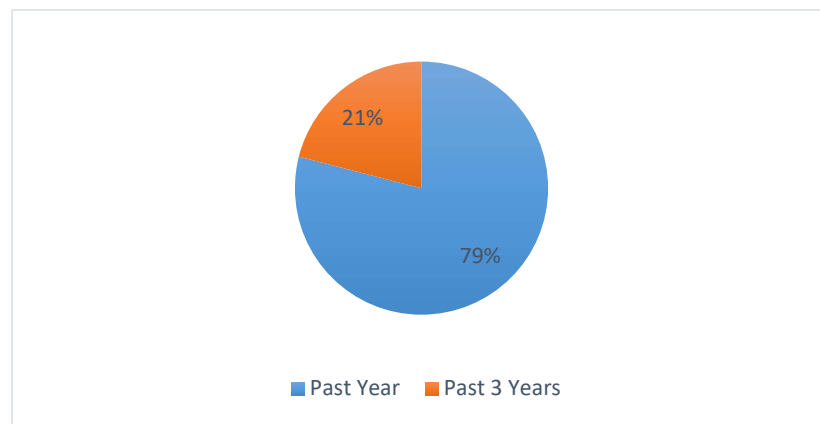


Figure 13 displays the various sources of the hurt. For example, 7 percent of participants stated that their work leadership was the primary source of the hurt, 7 percent stated that several members of the church were the source of the hurt, 43 percent said a person or person in question caused their hurt, and 42 percent said that leadership within the church caused their hurt.

Action 3-Evaluate Options for Lessening Hurt

When it comes to hurt, the researcher perceives it as one that is deeply placed in an intangible part of the heart. Because of its intangible nature, it makes it so negligible. It adds to why many get hurt in the church without knowing. The chart below describes how fifteen participants went through different kinds of hurt within the last three years without anyone knowing.

Figure 14. Year of Experiencing Hurt



In Figure 14, all participants experienced some hurt in the past three years. The chart shows that 79 percent indicated they had experienced hurt in just the past year, whereas 21 percent experienced hurt in the past three years. COP Norfolk's leadership remains resolute in abiding by policies and church culture. Much like other sister churches, it is unusual for the church to bend some of the landmarks that fuel its policy. The researcher has heard a quote from leadership several times, "The church can bend the practices but not the doctrines." This

statement makes it almost impossible to think of how the leadership can evaluate specific options to help mitigate people's hurt in the church. According to the researcher, if the process does not negatively impact the biblical underpinnings of the church, the leadership is encouraged to go to lengths and breaths to ensure that our practices and doctrines are well explained. Hence, members and leaders understand why those are instituted.

Mercy described an incident where she faced the challenge of moving a church member and roommate out of their apartment for non-payment of rent for several months. This particular issue does not speak directly to the doctrine or practice and plays a considerable role in the dichotomy of reactions. Mercy said, "When it came time for me to send her out, the impression garnered from the church members was as if I had committed the worst offense ever. At that point, nobody remembered the times I had to pay my portion of the rent and add her portion to it." When issues like these happen in the church, people quickly pull a quote rather than look at the whole matter in context to what the Bible says.

The researcher submits humbly to the leadership of COP Norfolk to do well in distinguishing between what is a fair practice and what is biblical. Members should be taught to appreciate fairness against sin, so the church does not place itself in a place where many are hurt. In this case, bringing someone on as a roommate and as people who attend the same church is lovely. One can glean many benefits; however, when agreements fail due to the lack of responsibility, the church should not treat the other who administered justice with contempt.

Action 4—Adjust to The Hurt

This particular actionable point reflects one of the ideas discussed in Chapter 2, that hurt comes from our human nature. A suggestion to the COP Norfolk leadership underscores that most hurt people experience comes from man's sinful nature. Once this point is well understood,

when a person faces the challenge of or feels hurt, the first way to deal with it is to resolve that it is from man's sinful nature. It becomes an excellent way to help with the mitigation trajectory when one sees it from those lenses. For example, Mercy shows how she could not let go of what her roommate did to her because it was an unbelievable sight to behold a church member, one who could be called a sister could do what she did. Mercy said,

Until my pastor helped open me up to see things from man's depraved nature perspective, I walked with so much difficulty in forgiving this sister. I even realized that I sometimes had inexplicable dreams of fighting with this sister. After my pastor helped me realize this and prayed for me, I would have been carrying this hurt without knowing.

The researcher believes that every church member should be taught to understand how human depraved nature could cause them to hurt another person, sometimes without even acknowledging it. As the researcher interacts with different congregants, it can be observed that though many have various hurt issues they deal with in the church, the lack of understanding that it comes from man's depravity makes it difficult to extend a hand of restoration, restitution, or grace. Many Christians cannot give those who hurt them the benefit of the doubt, even when it happens. The Bible admonishes Christians to make room for some of these errors. Paul, the apostle, admonishes all Christians to make allowance for each other's faults and forgive anyone who offends them. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others (cf. Col. 3:13). When people comment, "Let it go," they may say one thing but mean another. Perhaps, what they mean is to make room.

Making room does not exclude the person hurt from the matter at stake; rather, it enables them to look at all that may have happened and then say to themselves that despite all that has happened, "I am making room or allowance for the other person." Therefore, the researcher proposes to the COP Norfolk leadership to teach members how to make room for each other, especially regarding the area of hurt in the mitigation trajectory. One practical way is to create an

opportunity for open forums. At the same time, intentionally including topics like conflict resolution or how to deal with people from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds may be helpful.

The researcher also believes that exploring options could be handled case-by-case basis. If the church teaches how to make room for others, they are also teaching being mindful of how different personalities will handle or accept the making room concept. Christine Pohl, a professor at Ashbury Theological Seminary, adds to the idea of adjusting to the hurt. The researcher finds this idea helpful to COP Norfolk leadership and members to use hospitality as a model to help the hurting. Pohl said,

The richness of the hospitality story continues beyond the many biblical texts. Early Christian writers claimed that transcending social and ethnic differences by sharing meals, homes, and worship with persons of different backgrounds was proof of the truth of the Christian faith. In the 4th century, church leaders warned clergy who might be tempted to use hospitality to gain favor with the powerful instead of welcoming the poor to their table. In doing so, they will have Christ as their guest.¹⁴³

It is apparent in the quote above that the idea of hospitality should be adapted with a clear conscience so that members in and within the church will feel comfortable in all they do. Leadership should define ways hospitality is displayed according to the biblical context to help welcome new members well into the fold. Therefore, the researcher invites the COP Norfolk leadership to explore other biblical and practical methods that may appeal to the personality types described in the next section.

Action 5—Knowing the Members Personally

The researcher realizes that one of the critical reasons for hurt within COP Norfolk is the lack of knowledge of members' personalities. The researcher sees that the kind of interactions

¹⁴³ Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 25.

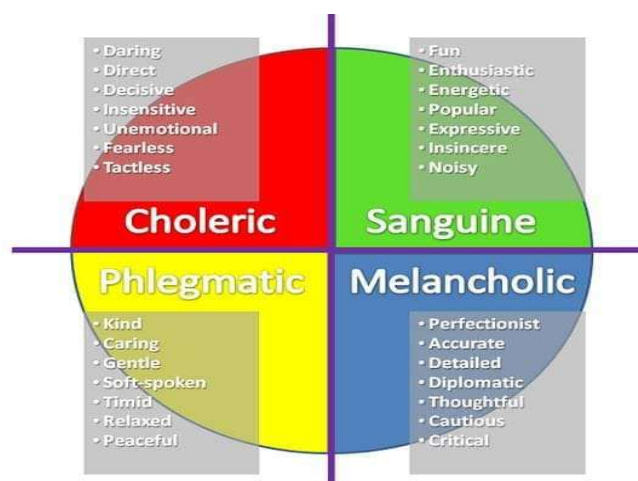
that helps to know people well appear to end within the four walls of the church mostly. Many have a certain type of posture when they come to church, and indeed, it informs why there is a lot of assumption in the church. The church's inability to know people personally is why many people are deeply hurt when someone who has put on a masquerading posture shows a bit of their authentic self in their conduct or language.

Rachel added, "Our church members have superficial relationships, and we need to work on those if we want to deal with the issue of hurt. We don't know people's backgrounds, sensitivity levels, and temperaments. This assertion puts us in a place where we want to deal with everyone the same way, and this is where the hurt starts." The researcher discovered that everyone had a different way of assessing issues based on their personality type out of the fifteen engaged participants. For example, when Lordina talked about how she thought the church was making a massive mistake in hiring and placing ministers in certain places, she remarked, "I think the church leadership brings us pastors who don't have the necessary emotional intelligence to govern the church." The researcher certainly agrees that the statement was very piercing. Still, he probed more, knowing just a bit about the participant's temperament. He discovered the participant needed an outlet to address specific issues that have lingered for a while, like several others in the church. Some personality types could let specific issues slide, while others may not let them go so quickly until the matter is resolved.

Because of the point under discussion, the researcher took some time to walk COP Norfolk through a series of lessons on temperaments and the nature of man. Many congregants appreciated the lesson because it helped them know why people behave the way they do. Figure 15 shows Tim LaHaye's explanation of how people of different temperaments behave.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Tim LaHaye, *Spirit-Controlled Temperament* (Wheaton, Ill: Tyndale House, 1974), 65.

Figure 15. Temperaments as it Relates to Hurt



Research Limitations

The researcher safely suggests that the church, mainly the leadership, could engage in other activities to help boost the quest to know people well to avoid experiencing any aspect of the apparent sources listed in Chapter 4. It is worth noting that though the points suggested prior greatly help lessen the hurts among members, there may also be external and internal limiting factors. For example, COVID prevented the researcher from getting more people to participate during the research interviews and interactions. Aside from that, many who attended the in-person seminars did not open up until they understood the benefit derived from this project was integral to member and church growth.

The other challenge is building relationships, which takes a little time. Finding mentors willing to pour into others in the church could take a while because of people's seemingly negative perceptions. Despite this limitation, the researcher believes it is a great place to lessen people's hurt. Lucy Foster-Smith, a researcher into multi-faith practices, adds to the need for spiritual mentorship. Lucy alludes, "One of the most enduring relationships a chaplain can

develop is a mentor.”¹⁴⁵ Notwithstanding a few of the potential inhibiting factors to the research, the list below may not necessarily be in the order of preference but a suggestive hurt-lessening plan for COP Norfolk leadership and members to explore:

- 1.13.1. Encourage church members to have more family bonding times. Vacations and other small family events are helpful as couples’ events.
- 1.13.2. Have an open dialogue once in a while at the church where members can ask questions with answers from the church’s perspective
- 1.13.3. Create more teachings on applying grace and envisioning healing for many who have come from outside with hurts. Provide Scriptures that can guide the process could be the following but are not limited to Luke 10:25-25, Ps 147:2-4, and Proverbs 16:24.
- 1.13.4. Do not set traps for people in the church by creating situations where they can be hurt.
- 1.13.5. Small ministry meetings should include portions where members are taught to identify and manage the sources of hurt.

To conclude this section, the researcher points out the need to understand that mismanagement of resources can create emergencies or catastrophes that may breed hurt. The researcher proposes a God intervention as stipulated in the book of Genesis. “Neither wild plants nor grains were growing on the earth. The LORD God had not yet sent rain to water the earth, and there were no people to cultivate the soil” (2:5). If the leadership invests in grooming members to become good managers, they will want to mitigate hurt whenever it shows up. The skill and application of members are also vital to enable this learning trajectory. In summary, the

¹⁴⁵ Lucy Foster-Smith, *College & University Chaplaincy in the 21st Century: a Multifaith Look at the Practice of Ministry on Campuses Across America* (Woodstock, VT: SkyLight Paths Publishing, 2013), 127.

researcher proposes that the leadership explore consistent and dynamic methods of building men and women up to help understand the source of hurt and ultimately lessen them.

Future Research

Inevitably, this project has to end; however, the researcher believes that this discussion should not end because the more oblivious the church becomes to the subject of church hurt, the more dangerous those who are hurt become to themselves and others. Although, as mentioned, hurt people hurt others, the researcher can safely say that gratified people always show gratitude. When the church environment is flooded with willing people who have effective tools to deal with hurt, the more it can impact how they serve God. There are seven recommendations that leadership and members could explore to help the hurt SPEAK out. Those are:

- 2.1.1 There should be an intentional effort to organize new membership classes where such members are taught about the church without any assumptions or presuppositions. This intentional orientation class must be a formal bridge to introduce new members to the church. The proposal is essential, so the incoming new members are not completely thrown off by the culture and doings of the church. Apart from the formally written church practice materials recommended for the orientation, mature church members must facilitate the program to pass on certain oral traditions that are not documented to new members. According to Aps. James Smith Gyimah, a retired church apostle and formal executive member, adds, “Spirituality is doing what we do with what we believe.”¹⁴⁶ Since the researcher held this statement honestly, this intentional effort will make the new member feel a sense of belonging. At the same

¹⁴⁶ James Smith Gyimah, “An Analysis Of The Development and Current Practices of Pentecostal Spirituality In the Church of Pentecost.” Regent Theological College, 2004, 9.

time, they connect to God spiritually through these practices. An axiom over time posits that “certain oral traditions are caught, while others are taught.”¹⁴⁷ This statement suggests that it is essential to have matured or well-trained officers who will help the new members quickly adapt to the church's practices. A common practice like ushering mentioned in Chapter 2 is an example of an exercise that can veer new members who come in to think the church segregates even in the way they seat people. During such orientation sessions, this researcher proposes that mature or well-trained facilitators will teach the ethos of Pentecostalism. Joel Edwards, a Jamaican-born British writer and Bible teacher, was on point when he said, “Pentecostalism has its well-formulated liturgy. To the uninitiated, black church worship may appear to be a random collection of spontaneous and unrelated events. However, the regular visitor has another story to tell. Short of divine intervention, the order of a church service can be very predictable.”¹⁴⁸ This observation made profoundly by Edwards is why there is a need to be intentional about the proposed new member orientation.

- 2.1.2 There should be intentionality to measure the church's growth as it reaches different parts of the world. The matrix for this measurement should look at the percentage of its indigenous group per country. As the world evolves, many changes come with it, such that a church, which is not only an organization but an organism, must transform without necessarily changing its foundational doctrine. Being an organism means it has the potential to grow. Rev. Professor Kingsley Larbi, the chancellor of the

¹⁴⁷ Michael Kwabena Ntuny, “The Passing on of Spiritual Baton to the Next Generation,” Leadership Retreat: (Holy Spirit Conference King of Prussia, PA, September 15, 2007).

¹⁴⁸ Joel Edwards, *Let's Praise Him Again* (United Kingdom, Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1992), 68.

Regent University College of Science and Technology, attributed the phenomenal growth of the COP to the liberating power of the Pentecostal experience.”¹⁴⁹ While the Pentecostal distinctiveness allows and produces growth, Dr. Noel Smith, a Bible teacher, and writer posits an excellent opinion that diversity will increase when the church works at creating a viable indigenous matrix. Smith observes, "One of the most important factors underlying this situation is the failure of NGOs to make the proper linkages between their work at micro-level and their wider systems and structure of which they form a small part.”¹⁵⁰ In this light, it is fair to say that the intentionality on the church's part is to provide updated materials that explain the most updated church polity and practices well, so there are no ambiguities. These materials should be updated regularly and circulated to members who already have the old ones during such times when the documents are updated.

The researcher gleans from the possible issues that may arise when such policies or practices are not intentionally explained or made accessible to the church public.

Tanya Gulliver and Alicia Campney, researchers into hurt and trauma, observe that, sometimes, leaders alter services only after an individual, or several people, go through traumatic events. Policies are often changed after the harm they are causing is recognized.¹⁵¹ It will be too late to wait until a problem happens before resolving it.

Gulliver and Campney showed how the lack of materials and intentionality to change

¹⁴⁹ Kingsley E. Larbi, *Pentecostalism: Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra, Ghana: Center for Pentecostal Studies, 2001), 494.

¹⁵⁰ Noel Smith, *The Presbyterian Church of Ghana 1838–1960* (Accra: Ghana Universities Press, 1996), 87.

¹⁵¹ Tanya Gulliver and Alicia Campney, *23 Healing the Pain and Hurt: Dealing with the Homelessness* (Toronto, ON: Canadian Observatory on Homeless, 2015):136.

procedures, policies, and structure could create serious problems. They explained how the police were affected,

The police association eventually paid for the drugs, and Anonymous received his first dose three days after his possible infection. While it was a horrendous experience, it did lead to policy changes: They now have an in-house credit card available for officers to use in situations similar to mine. But, unfortunately, it was at my mental and physical expense and greatly increased my PTSD.¹⁵²

In Chapters two and four, this researcher talked about how the culture of the dominant population could create hurt. The researcher recommends the church have a team at every local assembly, especially Norfolk COP, a melting pot of people from all walks of life, to monitor all activities, ensuring they fit within a culturally relevant church matrix. Doing this will help achieve the overarching vision of the general church by “Equipping the church to influence every sphere of society with values and principles of the kingdom of God...so the church will remain vibrant and relevant.”¹⁵³

- 2.1.3 There should be a more formalized outlet for members to ask questions and seek clarification on issues that are not clear. That environment should not make the person who seeks clarification feel judged or in any way feel awkward. The researcher’s peculiar relationship with the church enables an advantage of having first-hand information about those that are caged. This researcher hears many stories of hurt people who feel caged, as defined in Chapter four. This feeling leaves few formalized or minimal outlets for such to voice out. This situation mirrors an analysis of the tensions relating to different forms of participation. Emmanuelle Cheyns

¹⁵² Tanya Gulliver, *Healing the Pain and Hurt*, 136.

¹⁵³ The Church of Pentecost, *2021 Lay leadership Training Manual - Refresher Course* (Accra, Ghana: Pentecost Press, 2021), 4.

describes this situation as the gap between those who make the policies and those at the receiving end.¹⁵⁴ In other words, communication is difficult, such that there is no accommodation for people who may have gone through certain kinds of discipline; suspension, demotion, or revoking office. In recent times as stated in Chapters 2 and 4, people who went through a form of discipline were not given any space for hearing after such decisions were made.

- 2.1.4 There should be the enhancement of specific and laborious processes. For example, purchasing a vehicle, a church, or a house assigned to a particular group with that specific role may help avoid inevitable long hurts. Members will know precisely what to do and where to go when such happens. Allow for discussion and accommodate deferring views before such decisions are made.
- 2.1.5 There should be the creations of additional ministries should be formed to address and augment the already existing ones. For example, though the church has several ministries addressing specific needs, the following could be explored: counseling, hospitality, conflict resolution, and crisis management. In addition, these ministries will help members have an opportunity to bring their views if anything happens. Finally, the researcher suggests that the ministries should be visible and accessible to all members.
- 2.1.6 Standardize the transfer process of ministers so that everyone knows how long they will be at the post or station in a particular assignment. If this plan has to change for some reason, the minister in question should have ample time and explanation to

¹⁵⁴ Emmanuelle Cheyns, "Making Minority Voices Heard in Transnational Roundtables: The role of local NGOs in Reintroducing Justice and Attachments." *Agriculture and Human Values* 31, no. 3 (2014): 439-53.

avoid ambiguity. The leadership could also look into standardizing gifts or donations given to ministers during such times to bring uniformity into the system with less hurt.

- 2.1.7 There should be an avenue for arbitration and rehabilitation created for hurt members. leadership would engage focus groups or ministries within the church; especially members who have been hurt by using SWOT analysis and the DISC model to help consolidate gains through strategic planning. It must be noted that leadership may benefit more from engaging an external body for this exercise in order not to miss any critical information worthy as it pertains to the lessening of hurts. As the leadership begins to explore how to reduce hurts by becoming more flexible in changing policies, structures, and procedures within COP Norfolk, the researcher proposes that in the future, leadership should include an emphasis on studying the environmental tempo to help make informed decisions within the system. Other tools for future studies could be, Relational Economic Man, Social Man, Organizational Man, The Self Actualization Man, and The Complex Man.

Final Thoughts On Hurts

An analogy that comes to mind concerning research recommendations is the certainty that not everyone at the airport will fly on a plane. While many experiences hurt in different ways, they may not be observed or easily recognized. Therefore, leadership should encourage members to remove all kinds of fear that prevent them from speaking and receiving the truth in love. It is essential to address each hurt case by case so that growth and healing flow in the church. Likewise, the church should understand that when individuals in the church SPEAK

(speak, practice what is preached, evaluate options, adjust to hurt, and know members well) out their hurt, it brings healing and reduces all sorts of emotional hurts.

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APPENDIX A
PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A STUDY

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

RE: Request to Conduct Research Study

Dear Executive,

As a graduate student in the Chaplaincy Department of the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am researching the requirements for a Doctor of Ministry in Chaplaincy degree. The title of my research project is Mitigating Strategies for Hurt Members and Leaders in COP Norfolk. My research aims to underscore some issues that create hurt while providing ways to mitigate them.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at COP Norfolk and utilize your membership list to recruit participants for my study. Participants will be asked to complete the attached survey, be part of two training programs, and be interviewed to collect data for analysis. Participants will be presented with informed consent information before participating. This study is entirely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond by email to the researcher's email address at [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

A permission letter document is attached for your convenience. Thanks for your help

Sincerely,
Jehu Gyimah

APPENDIX B
PERMISSION APPROVAL NOTE

[REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]
 [REDACTED]

RE: Request to Conduct Research Study

Dear Jehu Gyimah Ps.

After carefully reviewing your research proposal entitled Mitigating Strategies for Hurt Members in COP Norfolk, we have decided to grant you permission to access our membership list and invite them to participate in your study.

☐ We will provide our membership list to Jehu Gyimah through your email and may use it to contact our members to invite them to participate in his research study.

☐ We grant permission for Jehu Gyimah to contact

- a. Pastors
- b. Pastors Wives
- c. Pastor's Children Older than Eighteen
- d. Lay Leaders
- e. Members

to invite them to participate in his research study.

☐ We will not provide potential participant information to Jehu Gyimah, but we agree to provide his study information to the church soliciting volunteers on his behalf.

☐ The requested data WILL NOT BE STRIPPED of identifying information before it is provided to the researcher.

☐ We request a copy of the results upon study completion and publication.

Sincerely,

Elder Emmanuel Lartey
 Church Secretary
 The Church of Pentecost Norfolk

APPENDIX C

Consent

Title of the Project: Mitigating Strategies for Hurt Members at COP Norfolk

Principal Investigator: Jehu Gyimah Ps.

Invitation to be part of a Research Study
--

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be over eighteen years and a member or affiliate of the church of Pentecost Norfolk. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research.

What is the study about, and why is it being done?

The study aims to generate awareness of hurt and its effect while introducing the mitigation benefits to the spiritual environment, using COP Norfolk as a case study. In anticipation, the subject of hurt discussed in the church will put various strategies of mitigation and its attendant issues.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. First task/procedure: Be part of the training programs and group meetings
2. Second task/procedure: Watch a video of training programs if you cannot attend in-person training sessions.
3. Additional tasks/procedures as needed: Be sure to participate in the interviews

How could you or others benefit from this study?

[Option 1: Direct Benefits: The direct benefits participants should expect from taking part in this study is that it will allow participants to identify and provide an outlet to discuss hurt with mitigating strategies.

The benefit to the congregation is an anticipation of an environment that fuels genuine worship.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are very minimal or none. “The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you encounter in everyday life.”

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. [Include the following sentence if the data will NOT be anonymous. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms/codes. Interviews will be conducted where others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted. However, data shall be retained for three years upon completion of the study.
- Interviews and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. However, while discouraged, other focus group members may share what was discussed with persons outside the group.

How will you be compensated for being part of the study?

Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Does the researcher have any conflicts of interest?

Professional/Grading Authority] The researcher serves as a pastor at this church. To limit potential or perceived conflicts, research, though it will involve certain disclosures, will ensure that codes are used for names to protect the privacy of individuals who disclose them.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision on whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or The Church of Pentecost Norfolk. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer any questions or withdraw.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

Withdrawal: If you withdraw from the study, please inform the researcher of your plan to discontinue participation and not submit your study materials. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Jehu Gyimah. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Darren Hercyk, at dehercyk@liberty.edu.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, who do you contact?

Suppose you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher. In that case, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515, or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) ensures that human subjects' research will be ethically conducted as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand the nature of the study. You will be given a copy of this document for your records/you can print a copy of the paper. If you have questions about the study later, you can contact the researcher using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. Furthermore, I have asked questions and have received answers. Therefore, I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record/video-record/photograph me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Legally Authorized Representative Permission

You agree to the person named below participating in this study by signing this document. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy of the study records. If you have any questions about the study after signing this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. Furthermore, I have asked questions and have received answers. Therefore, I agree that the person below will participate in this study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to [audio-record/video-record/photograph] the person named below as part of their participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Printed LAR Name and Relationship to Subject

LAR Signature

Date

Appendix C1

Intake Form – Hurt Mitigation Strategies at COP Norfolk

1. Have you experienced any type of hurt in the last year?
Yes
No
2. How will you categorize the hurt?
Church
Home/Domestic
Job/Career
3. Has the hurt been resolved?
Yes
No
4. Do you think anything could be done to resolve the hurt?
Yes
No
5. If the hurt is church-related, do you think anything could resolve it?
Yes
No
6. Are you willing to share your experience with a mitigation plan?
Yes
No
7. Please share the initials of your name and state whether you would like to participate in the research.
Yes
No

5:32 5G 38%

docs.google.com/form

Intake Form - Hurt Mitigation Strategies at COP Norfolk

Please fill out the following to the best of your ability in order to help with an ongoing research on methodologies that can be used to mitigate hurt in the church. Thank you.

sustainance@gmail.com (not shared)
[Switch account](#)

* Required

Have you experienced any kind of hurt *
in the last year?

☐ Yes
☐ No

How will you categorize the hurt? *

☐ Church
☐ Home/Domestic

III O <

APPENDIX D

Interview One

1. Tell me about your Christian journey the last year.
2. Have you experienced any hurt? (Meaning, any shame you have felt that makes you different from everyone?)
3. Have you had any hurtful experiences in the past year? Can you describe the feeling in a phrase or a sentence of hurt?
 - a. An official of the church
 - b. Member of the church
4. Tell me how the hurt has affected your spiritual life over the past year.
5. How have you dealt with hurts from:
 - a. Officials of the church
 - b. Members of the church

APPENDIX E

Focus Group Facilitation Questions

Focus groups.

- Pastors
- Pastors' wives
- Pastors' children
- Lay leaders
- Members

1. Tell me some of the hurtful situations you encountered in the church.
2. How has that impacted your view of the church?
3. What would you wish to change regarding church hurt if you were in leadership?
4. What do you think the church could do about it?

APPENDIX F

Interview Two

1. What are some of how you have learned to deal with hurt over time?
2. Was the training on positive confession helpful in dealing with hurt?
3. In your opinion, do you have suggestions or ways you believe the church can infuse the idea of positive confession into practicality for all members?

APPENDIX G

CALENDAR OF ACTIVITIES

<u>Sunday</u>	<u>Monday</u>	<u>Tuesday</u>	<u>Wednesday</u>	<u>Thursday</u>	<u>Friday</u>	<u>Saturday</u>

APPENDIX H

SURVEY INFORMATION & REGISTRATION PANEL



Dealing with Church Hurt!

*Mitigating Hurts and Wounds in the Church*

Jehu Gyimah is looking at creating an awareness in the area of hurts and wounds in the church and hopes to come out with ways to mitigate such occurrences in the church.

Jehu seeks to identify people that have been hurt or feel wounded in certain ways to help participate in this research.



APPENDIX I

CHURCH ANNOUNCEMENT BULLETIN

Good Day, Church,

A Glorious Church Revived to Possess the Nations.

The slogan: Possessing the nations: I am an agent of transformation.

1. Kronkron! The Regional Women's Ministry Monthly Prayer Conference is on Monday, November 8, 2021, from 8:30 pm to 9:30 pm. - The phone number is 202 602 1291.

2. Jehu Gyimah is conducting a study on Mitigating Church Hurts and Wounds. A link has been provided for all who want to participate in the study. Please text, email, or register at the following. An initial virtual meeting shall be held to set up all participants' content, details, and expectations on November 13, 2021, from 12 pm to 1 pm.

Weekly reminders:

***District Pastor Jehu holds office hours at the church on Tuesdays from 10:30 am to 2:30 pm. Don't hesitate to contact him for all counseling needs or discussions to arrange a time or walk-in. His number is 859-803-8751.

*** Prayer Marathon starts on the district line at 6 am and ends at 6 pm every Tuesday; there's a prayer session every 3 hours throughout the day (each meeting lasts for 30mins)

**All are invited to join the Regional Young Adults Early morning devotions every Wednesday from 5:00 am- 6:00 am on the regional conference line 202 602 1291 ** -

**Esther Hour every Friday from 5 am-6 am on NORFOLK PIWC district conference line 757-998-8404.

**All announcements are to be sent to the church email @ Norfolkpentecost@yahoo.com, then followed by a text to confirm receipt/confirmation

Program/meeting times for the week:

Monday & Tuesday on the district conference line 757 998 8404 from 8 pm- 9 pm

Wednesday & Thursday @ the church Premise from 7:30 pm- 9:30 pm

Friday @ the church Premise from 7:30 pm- 10:00 pm

Saturday @ the church Premise from 6:30 pm- 9:00 pm

Sunday Service 10 am- 1:30 pm

****SERVICE STARTS AT EXACTLY 10 am, SO IF YOU HAVE ANY TESTIMONIES, KINDLY ARRIVE ON TIME****

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ALL OUR November BORNs. WE THANK GOD FOR YOUR LIVES!!!!

Stay blessed, and don't forget during the week. We are Possessing the Nation; I am an agent of transformation.

APPENDIX J

COP NORFOLK SURVEY QUESTIONS DRAFT

Name:

Age:

Office:

- a. Officer (Any Office Holder)
- b. Non-Officers
- c. Youth or Students
- d. Ministers/Pastor's Children
- e. New Members
- f. Associates/Non-Members

Gender:

Race/ethnicity:

1. How important is Christianity in your life?
 - a. 1=Very Important
 - b. 2=Important
 - c. 3=Neutral
 - d. 4=Unimportant
 - e. 5=Very unimportant
2. How satisfied are you with your overall experience at church?
 - a. 1=Very dissatisfied
 - b. 2=Dissatisfied
 - c. 3=Somewhat dissatisfied
 - d. 4=Somewhat satisfied
 - e. 5=Satisfied
 - f. 6=Very satisfied
3. How often have you been hurt emotionally or mentally in the past month? Has this affected your motivation to be a Christian or services?
 - a. 1=Not at all
 - b. 2=Several days
 - c. 3=Over half the days
 - d. 4=Nearly every day
4. I lead a life of purpose without hurting others intentionally.
 - a. 1=Strongly agree
 - b. 2=Agree
 - c. 3=Somewhat agree
 - d. 4=Somewhat disagree
 - e. 5=Disagree

- f. 6=Strongly disagree
5. I am an active contributor to the happiness and well-being of others.
 - a. 1=Strongly agree
 - b. 2=Agree
 - c. 3=Somewhat agree
 - d. 4=Somewhat disagree
 - e. 5=Disagree
 - f. 6=Strongly disagree
 6. Over the last two weeks, how often has a hurt caused you to be depressed, have minimal interest or pleasure in doing things, feeling down, depressed, or hopeless, feeling tired, or having little energy to minister in any way:
 - a. 1=Not at all
 - b. 2=Several days
 - c. 3=Over half the days
 - d. 4=Nearly every day
 7. Over the last two weeks, how often has a hurt made you feel like a failure or made yourself or your family feel like you don't matter?
 - a. 1=Not at all
 - b. 2=Several days
 - c. 3=Over half the days
 - d. 4=Nearly every day
 8. Over the last two weeks, how often have you been bothered by a bitter experience that makes you want to leave the church?
 - a. 1=Not at all
 - b. 2=Several days
 - c. 3=Over half the days
 - d. 4=Nearly every day
 9. Over the last two weeks, have you had difficulty sleeping or focusing per a hurt inside?
 - a. 1=Yes
 - b. 0=No
 10. In the past year, did you ever seriously think about attempting to hurt another person because you were hurt?
 - a. 1=Yes
 - b. 0=No
 11. How much do you agree with the following statement? If I needed to seek professional help for a particular hurt?
 - a. 1=Strongly agree

- b. 2=Agree
 - c. 3=Somewhat agree
 - d. 4=Somewhat disagree
 - e. 5=Disagree
 - f. 6=Strongly disagree
12. How helpful, on average, do you think therapy or counseling is when provided competently for people your age who are clinically depressed?
- a. 1=Very helpful
 - b. 2=Helpful
 - c. 3=Somewhat helpful
 - d. 4=Not helpful
13. How much do you agree with the following statement? Most people think less of a person who shows signs of hurt or voices it out.
- a. 1=Strongly agree
 - b. 2=Agree
 - c. 3=Somewhat agree
 - d. 4=Somewhat disagree
 - e. 5=Disagree
 - f. 6=Strongly disagree
14. How much do you agree with the following statement? I would think less of someone who shows they have been hurt or voice it out.
- a. 1=Strongly agree
 - b. 2=Agree
 - c. 3=Somewhat agree
 - d. 4=Somewhat disagree
 - e. 5=Disagree
 - f. 6=Strongly disagree
15. How much do you agree with the following statement? In the past 12 months, I have felt that I needed help for being hurt
- a. 1=Strongly agree
 - b. 2=Agree
 - c. 3=Somewhat agree
 - d. 4=Somewhat disagree
 - e. 5=Disagree
 - f. 6=Strongly disagree
16. Have you ever done any of the following intentionally in the past year?
(Select all that apply)
- a. 1=Missed Church
 - b. 2=Decided not to talk to the one who hurt you

- c. 3=Physically hurt the person who hurt you
 - d. 4= Revenge for a hurtful situation
 - e. 11=Other (please specify)
 - f. 12=No, none of these
17. If you were experiencing severe hurt, whom would you talk to about this?
- a. 1=Professional clinician (e.g., psychologist, counselor, or psychiatrist)
 - b. 2=Roommate
 - c. 3=Friend (who is not a roommate)
 - d. 4=Significant other
 - e. 5=Family member
 - f. 6=Religious counselor or other religious contacts
 - g. 7=Support group
 - h. 8=Other non-clinical sources (please specify)
 - i. 9=No one

APPENDIX K



INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS
P. O. BOX 2194
Accra - Ghana, West Africa
Phone #: 777615/774721
Fax #: 302-774721/760295
Email: copusa@thechurchofpentecost.com

REGIONAL OFFICES**NEW YORK**

621 East 216 Streets
Bronx, NY 10467

NEW JERSEY

P. O. Box 2637
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4345A Ridgewood Center Dr.
Woodbridge, VA 22192

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Romeoville, IL 60446

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Harris, TX 75074

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3821 West Imperial Avenue
Englewood, CA 90755

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NEW ENGLAND

800 Union Street
Leominster, MA 01453

OHIO

6200 Cleveland Ave.
Columbus, OH 43231

DISTRICTS

Atlanta; North Dallas
Atlantic City; Oakland
Austin; Oklahoma
Bakersfield; Paterson
Baltimore; Pennsylvania
Bethel; Phoenix - AZ
Boston; P.I.W.C. New York
Brooklyn; P.I.W.C. Norfolk
Buffalo; P.I.W.C. Orange
Charlotte; P.I.W.C. Raleigh
Chicago; P.I.W.C. Worcester
Cincinnati; Queens
Cleveland; Rhode Island
Columbus; Richmond
Columbus East; Romeoville
Dallas; Sacramento
Delaware; San Bernardino
Denver; Seattle
Des Moines; Spanish - CA
Detroit; Spanish - TX
Dunfermline; Springfield
Frankfort; Tampa
Gallatinburg; Tennessee
Greensboro; Trenton
Harrisburg; Virginia
Hartford; Wisconsin
Hawaii
Henderson
Houston
Indiana
Jacksonville
Kansas
Las Vegas
Long Island
Lowell
Los Angeles
Maryland
Military Base (Fayetteville)
Minnesota
New England
New Jersey
New York

THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST U.S.A., INC.

FOUNDER: Rev. James McKeown

NATIONAL HEAD: Apostle Michael Agyemang - Amoako

Our Ref: COP/NO/CIR/2020/010

Your Ref:

10/18/2020

All Regional Heads

All District Pastors

Entire COP USA

National Headquarters
1450 Valley Road
Wayne, NJ 07470

Tel: (973) 553-1752
(973) 782-4837

Fax: (973) 925-5283

E-Mail: info@copusa.org
Website: www.copusa.org
Facebook: copusa-inc

Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the LORD has helped us." (1 Samuel 7:12)

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are grateful to the Ebenezer God for bringing us this far amidst global pandemic and worldwide challenges. Indeed, the Lord has kept us alive to accomplish His purpose, and my prayer is that this purpose will be fulfilled to His own glory.

2. ACTING NATIONAL HEAD

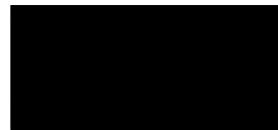
My wife and I will be traveling to Ghana from October 16th to November 28th, 2020. In my absence, Apostle Stephen Amponsah will be the acting national head. Please accord him all the needed support towards his new responsibilities.

3. REVOCATION OF DEACONSHIP AND ELDERSHIP

The deaconship and eldership of Deacon Richard Tawiah and Elder Josés Judah have been revoked due to their failed marriages and misconduct, respectively. Let's bear our brothers and their families up in prayers.

4. CONCLUSION

May the grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ continue to abide with you.



APPENDIX L

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

December 20, 2021

Jehu Gmiyah
Darren Hercyk

Re: IRB Application - IRB-FY21-22-474 Mitigating Strategies for Hurt and Wounded Members in COP Norfolk

Dear Jehu Gmiyah and Darren Hercyk,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your project with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Decision: No Human Subjects Research

Explanation: Your study is not considered human subjects research for the following reason:

Your project will consist of quality improvement activities, which are not "designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge" according to 45 CFR 46.102(f).

Please note that this decision only applies to your current application, and any modifications to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty University IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by completing a modification submission through your Cayuse IRB account.

Also, although you are welcome to use our recruitment and consent templates, you are not required to do so. If you choose to use our documents, please replace the word *research* with the word *project* throughout both documents.

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in determining whether possible modifications to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of the official.