

## Church 9.0: A Series of Paradigm Shifts for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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Scholars, religious leaders, and journalists have written extensively about the decline of mainline churches.<sup>1</sup> Few of these books, articles, and discourses, however, place the decline within the context of the larger changes in the political economy in the US and world. To effectively evaluate the decline of mainline churches requires an examination of how mainline churches have been affected by and interact with broader structures of society. From government laws to market economics, significant institutional and structural forces have affected the faith community. This article will discuss how three connected issues—neoliberalism, the rise of evangelicals, and the tacit embrace of violence—have altered the social, religious, and economic fabric of the nation, thus accelerating the decline of mainline denominations. Attending to these new realities helps understand new directions for the church, with the goal of setting a new agenda for a new era.

Starting in the 1970's and early 1980's several things began occurring; first, mainline denominations started their decline. For example, the United Church of Christ has lost 48.76% of its members since 1974, even though the population in the U.S. has increased 49%.<sup>2</sup> The Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) has lost 46.73 % of its members since 1983.<sup>3</sup> The Disciples of Christ has lost a staggering 64.25% of their members since 1974.<sup>4</sup> Episcopalians, Lutherans (ELCA), and Methodists have also witnessed significant decline during this period.

During the 1970's and 1980's neoliberal economic policies also became the new dominant religion—the belief in and devotion to a supernatural controlling power: free markets. The new religion has a well-defined doctrine, a clearly delineated duality of good versus bad, and a faithful, well-armed, and well-funded priesthood of missionaries who tirelessly and exuberantly preach the new gospel. Within a few years, these economic policies quickly permeated the globe. Drawing upon neoliberalism's mantra of individualism, Evangelical churches and mega-churches also started to flourish. Many of them linked themselves to Republican platforms of a strong defense, pro-family values, and anti-big government. Violence in all its forms—self-inflicted, interpersonal, and collective (political, military and institutional) increased during the same period, yet little has been written or done by mainline churches to systematically address this pandemic.

The combination of these changes has moved the Christian church into its ninth iteration since its birth—Church 9.0.<sup>5</sup> The three primary tasks for Church 9.0 are: promote intellectual and spiritual independence within community, develop local outreach accelerators, and articulate new narratives through the arts and storytelling.

### **Neoliberalism**

The first major process that displaced and replaced mainline denominations was the adaptation of neoliberal economic policies. Drawing upon the ideas of US economist Milton Friedman, Austrian economist and philosopher Friedrich von Hayek, and Charles Darwin, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher famously said, "There is no alternative" (TINA) to economic liberalism.<sup>6</sup> For modern societies to develop, she argued, they must liberalize the economy. Seeing a grand opportunity to advance their interests, corporations, think tanks—'experts in legitimization,' international financial institutions (World Bank, IMF, WTO), and an army of right-wing politicians around the world became missionaries for this new socio-economic gospel. The menacing enemies: big government, which includes communism. The religious message was strikingly simple: free up trade between nations.

## Neoliberal economic policies advocated:

<b>Deregulation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reduce, eliminate, or limit government's power to regulate trade</li><li>• Allow the market to self-regulate</li></ul>
<b>Privatization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Privatize state sector enterprises (schools, prisons, etc.)</li><li>• In theory, the private sector is more efficient than the government sector</li></ul>
<b>Reduction in taxes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Especially on the rich</li><li>• Wealth will trickle down</li></ul>
<b>Elimination of trade barriers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Remove tariffs, quotas, and duties</li><li>• Reduce the size and power of labor unions</li></ul>
<b>Finance liberalization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Open up currencies, trade, and property ownership in foreign lands</li></ul>

In short, neoliberalism contends that if countries remove government interference and inefficiencies, and let the market function naturally, all will prosper and find universal salvation. As neoliberalism became the defining economic paradigm its ideology permeated and transformed the political, social, and cultural sectors of the country.

Tremendous growth and wealth occurred due to these policies; however, the growth was for a very small sector of the population. The majority of the populations where these policies have been implemented did not fare as well. At the end of the day, poverty, inequality, job insecurity, debt, and wage stagnation became common for most of the population.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, states and countries were subject to market forces, and American labor started competing with labor in the developing world.<sup>8</sup>

Built into this belief system is the idea that the person became primary, not the community or the state. Margaret Thatcher stated,

I think we've been through a period where too many people have been given to understand that if they have a problem, it's the government's job to cope with it. 'I have a problem, I'll get a grant.' 'I'm homeless, the government must house me.' They're casting their problem on society. And, you know, there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families.<sup>9</sup>

As a result, the individual was valued above the community and the state and any sense of collectivism or shared journey was discouraged. These policies ushered in a new period of survival of the fittest. American society went from 'we to me.' Self-interest overtook any broad-minded elements of society, there was no sense of the commons, and progressive mainline churches along with service groups (Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis) were overpowered and neutered in the process. The market became the singular lens through which everything flowed.

As momentum built through the 1990's to today for this new religious ideology, a series of cascading occurrences further accelerated changes within society. Some of these are:

1. The market became the sole measure of one's worth. Money buys everything. All of life is a commodity to be bought and sold.<sup>10</sup> Compassion, social responsibility, and mutual obligations are antiquated concepts.
2. Hyper-individualism set off massive consumer consumption and waste. As a result, people, things, and the commons becomes disposable.
3. Wealth and political power became concentrated at the top.

4. A re-emerging plutocracy occurred within the country.
5. Technological advances cut across geography, educational, class, occupational, and knowledge boundaries while at the same time cannibalizing industries and jobs.
6. Unregulated business accelerated climate change and pollution, bringing the planet to the brink.<sup>11</sup>
7. The negative costs of neoliberalism were externalized to the public—workers at Wal-Mart are often on food stamps or go to food pantries;<sup>12</sup> cheap fast food has increased obesity and diabetes.<sup>13</sup>
8. Repeal of legislation further concentrated power. For example, the 1996 Telecommunication Act altered media ownership rules and thus narrowed discussion of public life. The Financial Services Modernization Act of 1999, repealed parts of the 1933 Glass-Steagall Act which allowed banks to offer more services, grow, and become ‘too big to fail’ despite questionable practices.
9. Society has become increasingly atomized and social capital has decreased. Trust has diminished and fear has increased.
10. American cities and states lost thousands of jobs as the ‘race to the bottom’ occurred around wages, regulations, taxes, and trading agreements. In the new world of neoliberalism corporations control trade and policies more than democratic policies.<sup>14</sup>

The list could go on—loss of pension programs, the rise of struggling communities that have witnessed significant job loss, a new Second Gilded Age, and the rise of depression and anxiety.<sup>15</sup> All these changes have been devastating for large sectors of the population—women, children, youth, and minorities—and the planet. These sectors are increasingly seen as disposable. In America, the economy does not work for the majority of the population as evidenced by 51% of all American workers earning less than \$30,000 and 62% less than \$40,000.<sup>16</sup> The poverty threshold rate for a family of four in 2015 is \$24,250. Families are eligible for food assistance if they earn 130% of the poverty threshold or \$31,525 for a family of four. Furthermore, 80% of the job growth since the great recession was in low-wage service and retail employment.<sup>17</sup> Having enough money to live on is becoming the number one burden for individuals and families in today's economy.

Mainline faith communities have not responded well to the disruption by neoliberalism, as evidenced by decreasing numbers of church members and a lack of meaningful discussion from denominations or professional faith-based journals. In the 1960's and 1970's mainline churches had a collective view of the world—operating within the public sphere—that encouraged people to think outside their self-interest. Community problems were community problems, not individual problems. When the new religion of the marketplace encouraged people to serve only their self-interest it brought out the worst in human nature. How faith communities eventually respond to the assault of neoliberalism will be the defining moral issue of our time.

### **Rise of Evangelicals<sup>18</sup> and the Religious Right**

The events of the 1960's and 70's—civil rights, women's liberation, protests over the Vietnam war and authority, Watergate, gay rights, increased environmental awareness, Johnson's Great Society, liberation theology, legalized abortion, and increased sexual freedom were very disruptive to conservative religious and business leaders. Many conservatives thought the United States was moving away from its core Christian foundation and the country was on the wrong track. As a result, these two dispirited groups—evangelicals and political conservatives—joined ranks and set out to turn the country around.<sup>19</sup>

The seeds of the modern evangelical movement go back to the period between the two great wars when evangelicals, sometimes called fundamentalists, started working outside the corridors of religious power by starting new churches, schools, colleges, independent denominations, associations (National Association of Evangelicals for United Action) and media outlets. Presidents Truman's and Eisenhower's use of religion in fighting the Cold War further helped coalesce the notion of both American Exceptionalism and the need to further spread the gospel around the world.<sup>20</sup> In the 1970's a series of talented evangelical leaders emerged on the national stage—Jerry Falwell, Paul Crouch, Francis Schaeffer, D. James Kennedy, James Dobson, Pat Robertson, and Tim LaHaye. They understood the social ills,

emptiness, and despair of society and told their followers what was right and what was wrong in the world. The male-only leaders told their flocks how to live, act, and feel. The centrality of Jesus was fundamental to all their actions. They appropriated and gave new meanings to language (terms such as truth, liberty, freedom, Satan, prophecy, anti-Christ, and saved); adopted symbols like the American flag; and married the language and symbols to a mystical apocalyptic vision of the world while promising stability, personal success, wholeness, and utopian paradise.<sup>21</sup> These entrepreneurs also offered great programs for children, youth, and families along with easy parking and good coffee.

In 1979, Jerry Falwell and three Republican politicians—Howard Phillips (Founder of the Conservative Caucus), Paul Weyrich (founder of Heritage Foundation and American Legislative Council (ALEC), and Richard Viguerie (founder of *Conservative Digest* magazine) met to discuss organizing conservative Christian grassroots activities, and the Moral Majority was formed with three objectives: get people saved, get them baptized, and get them registered to vote. Within a few years the Moral Majority delivered 7 million people who dedicated themselves to conservative causes—pro-life, pro-family, pro-morality, pro-Israel, and pro-defense.<sup>22</sup> Other religious right groups also pop up during this period—Focus on the Family, Family Research Council, Christian Broadcasting Network, Trinity Broadcasting Network, and the Christian Coalition—each with their own set of media products.

While neither the Moral Majority nor the other groups represented all evangelicals, their political outreach and the tactic of tying faith to daily living, along with identifying clear enemies (democrats and communists), acted like an accelerator for evangelicals to grow in popularity and visibility. In 1989, the Moral Majority ended and Pat Robertson started the Christian Coalition. For decades there has been a symbiotic relationship between conservative evangelicals and the Republican Party, and the themes of God and Country continue to be a unifying principle for both religious and political conservatives. Moreover, their similar worldviews and makeup mirror each other, as reflected below.

	<b>Neoliberalism</b>	<b>Evangelicals</b>
<b>Sole Authority</b>	Free Markets	Bible
<b>Redemption</b>	The market will free all; wealth will trickle down	Jesus saves all
<b>Transformation</b>	Government is not the answer; the individual is paramount	Each must be born again
<b>Mission</b>	Spread the good news	Spread the Good News
<b>Enemies</b>	Government and communism	Satan, specifically government, schools, and communism
<b>Doctrine</b>	Strict and narrow	Strict and narrow
<b>Dissent</b>	Not tolerated	Not tolerated
<b>Orwellian Language</b>	Free trade	Saved, born again

A new generation of gifted, entrepreneurial, evangelical leaders—Bill Hybels, Rick Warren, Joel Osteen, Ted Parsley, and others—have replaced Falwell and the earlier leaders. Many of these men, like the old

leaders, have attributes in common. They have an entrepreneurial drive to their work; they understand and utilize the media very well; while sticking to fundamental religious understandings and interpretations, they are willing to experiment with how they do and go about being church. They have fresh approaches in regard to physical space, music, attire, time, and small groups. In an increasingly complex world, Evangelicals continue to deliver a black/white, good/evil view of faith, family, and country that resonates with the citizenry.

In brief, entrepreneurial evangelical conservatives assessed the changing American landscape and adapted to the needs of their customers by providing activities and entertainment for children and families, a sense of belonging and purpose, and moral direction that was grounded in fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible and biblical tradition. Many evangelicals added the extra accelerators of “God and Country,” pro-war, pro-gun, anti-Muslim, and neoliberalism into their message.<sup>23</sup>

### **America’s Culture of Violence**

- On 17 September 2013 video game *Grand Theft Auto V* was released and grossed \$800 million dollars on the first day and 1 billion dollars after three days.<sup>24</sup>
- *American Sniper* is the highest grossing war film of all time.<sup>25</sup> The movie is about an American soldier who was the most deadly sniper in US history. His targets: men, women, children who were suspected of maybe, someday, harming the US.
- 22 US veterans commit suicide everyday.<sup>26</sup>
- Nearly 75% of violent scenes on television feature no immediate punishment for or condemnation of violence.<sup>27</sup>
- 6488 American troops were killed in Iraq and Afghanistan between 2001 and 2012. The number of women murdered by current or former partners during the same time period: 11,766.<sup>28</sup>
- There are 112.4 guns per hundred people in the United States.<sup>29</sup> In the Netherlands the number is 3.9, and in Singapore .5. There were 330 mass shootings (four or more people killed or injured) in the US in 2015.<sup>30</sup>
- 65.5% of ‘discretionary’ funding of the federal government goes to Department of Defense, Veteran Affairs, and Department of Energy (nuclear weapons).<sup>31</sup>
- 84,350 corporate pension programs have been eliminated between 1985-2012.<sup>32</sup> (economic and political violence)
- Ferguson, Missouri collected about \$2 million dollars annually in fines and fees, mainly from traffic stops. A US Department of Justice report shows significant bias against African Americans ‘affecting nearly every aspect of Ferguson police and court operations.’<sup>33</sup> (economic, political, and social violence)
- US citizens are the most watched, monitored, photographed, eavesdropped population in human history.<sup>34</sup> (political and social violence)

Violence is the elephant in the room that no one wants to address. From its inception, America has always been a violent society—genocide of the native population, slavery and subsequent subjugation, attacks on labor, the use of militia groups to attack protestors, and today’s mass incarceration has provided a foundation and culture of violence. From Hollywood to video games, from domestic violence to military



spending, from structural violence to self-inflicted violence—it is out of control. Violence permeates every city, county, and community in America. The amount of economic, political, personal, social, emotional bandwidth that is spent on violence is staggering. Like neoliberalism above, faith communities have failed to understand and address this pandemic. This paper is not going to go into a deep analysis of violence but it will raise two issues: who benefits from violence and who is at the receiving end of violence.

First, people with money and/or power benefit from the ‘violence industrial complex.’ Throughout history, people in charge will dispense violence to maintain power and control; this was true in Jesus’s time as well as today. The departments of Defense, Energy, and Veterans Affairs’ budgets have saturated every congregational district with money, jobs, or contracts so that having a conversation about cutting back military spending is virtually impossible. As a result, we live in a permanent war economy. Furthermore, there is no profit to be made in a peaceful society. If one does speak out, like Martin Luther King Jr. did at Riverside Church a year before his death, one gets ostracized, labeled, and vilified.<sup>35</sup> Sadly, intellectuals, ministers, and journalists line up to serve the agenda of the dominant class because doing so confers access to power and privilege. Violence, especially military, video, and media violence, has become a unifying force that draws people together in a negative way. Often when violence is done to others it makes us feel better about ourselves: especially when the victims don’t look, talk, or act like us. Violence has its own set of cultures, its own language; violence exposes our capacity for evil.

Second and more important is who is on the receiving end of violence: women, children, Muslims, minorities, veterans, and the poor—the majority of the population. Why should one’s zip code, sex, race, or religion determine one’s health and well-being? Increasingly, the violence the US thrust upon other nations is now being enacted domestically, with an over bloated prison population of minorities, the criminalizing of dissent, structural violence, the militarization of local police departments, and ever-increasing intrusions on privacy.<sup>36</sup> Thucydides understood empire as a disease. He wrote that the tyranny which the Athenian empire imposed on others it finally imposed on itself.<sup>37</sup>

Neoliberalism, evangelical beliefs, and the use of violence are choices we make as a society. They are not set in stone, and they are changeable. Neoliberal economic policies are increasing structural violence at accelerating rates domestically through flat wages, job insecurity, and job losses. Violence against women, children, minorities, non-Christians are also increasing. Who is going to take a stand? Who is going to stand against the violence of climate change, unregulated pollution, increased poverty or mass surveillance? In various degrees and in various sectors, supremacy, hegemony, and exploitation are the common threads that run through neoliberalism, evangelical ideology, and violence. In theological terms violence and neoliberalism are forces of death, as is the religious exploitation of the sick, the elderly, and those in despair. We are all accomplices in this madness. Let us turn to some solutions.

## **Church 9.0**

Like previous iterations of the church, new tools and new skills will be needed for the church to survive in Church 9.0. Every new era brings in its wake greater progress and challenges than the previous era. Mainline churches are in crisis on many levels and they will need to speak in a new language for a new time. Jesus did that in his day. Martin Luther also did it in his day, as did Nelson Mandela, Vaclav Havel, Dorothy Day, and others.

French philosopher Julien Benda argued there are two sets of principles one can follow: one can follow the principles of truth and justice or the principles of power and privilege. Neoliberalism continues to diminish and alter historically liberal institutions—the church, the media, unions, universities, the arts, the Democratic Party—that attempted to address truth and justice.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, these institutions are increasingly disconnected from the daily lives of the citizenry, as money is the driving force. Neoliberalism makes it difficult to exist in a prophetic, progressive manner over the past few decades. As a result, many faith communities have abandoned their politically liberal orientation in order to stay in business. One does not want to offend donors who work in finance, business, or the corporate sector. Meanwhile, millions of Americans have fallen through the cracks because of neoliberalism, and the church has failed them. The church needs to address neoliberalism as well give members the tools to think,



articulate, and act. Jesus brought liberation from old ways and liberation to a new reality. That time is upon us once again and some answers can be found in the first twelve chapters in the book of Mark.

### **Promote intellectual and spiritual independence within community**

Since previously enlightened institutions have been increasingly abandoning their broadminded role, it is incumbent on the church to be that voice—that institution—in society that offers liberation from forces of death. It is part of our DNA to take on systems that oppress and marginalize individuals and communities. A central task of the church in the new era is: intellectual liberation from the tyrannical forces of neoliberalism and all its tentacles; this includes spiritual liberation from bad and outdated theology and biblical fundamentalism. Faith communities need to offer a different view other than neoliberalism's mantra that everything is a commodity; human beings and the earth are not commodities. Moreover, faith formation is not a belief system or a formula like neoliberalism or Evangelical Christianity; it is a way of life, a way of being in the world. Churches must foster intellectual independence about religion, politics, and culture where one learns to question basic assumptions, conventional wisdom becomes routine, and layers of blindness are peeled away. This must be done within community and with others.

Cultural critic and scholar Henry Giroux writes about the power and necessity of developing meaningful language and critical thinking:

In a robust democratic society, language, and critical thought have a liberating function. At best, they work together to shatter illusions, strengthen the power of reason and critical judgment, and provide the codes and framing mechanisms for human beings to exercise a degree of self-determination while holding the throne of government, military, and economic power accountable. Language in such a society is robust, engaged, critical, dialectical, historical, and creates the conditions for dialogue, thoughtfulness and informed action. Such a language refuses to be co-opted in the service of marketing goods, personalities, and sleazy corporations. Needless to say, it is a language that is troubling and almost always threatening to the guardians of the status quo.<sup>39</sup>

Jesus, the prophets, countless martyrs, and a myriad of dissidents all spoke in a new language that opened the doors of liberation for individuals, communities, and countries. In the first twelve chapters of Mark there are sixteen illustrations of Jesus healing a person's predominate affliction, illness, or condition—leprosy, paralysis, the disciples' fear, mental illness, death of a girl, deafness, and blindness.

Today, some of our afflictions are neoliberalism, religious fundamentalism, and political blindness. We need to foster a new era of civic imagination and civic courage to hold power accountable, overcome the manufacturing of fear and exclusion, and draw upon our collective sense of care, respect, and compassion for others. Nelson Mandela stated, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Our time has come to be a firewall against orthodoxy and hyper-individualism by providing a new grammar about community, hope, and imagination. We must provide the language of possibility for people and our communities.

### **Articulate new narratives through the arts, storytelling, and language**

There is an ever-widening gap between what the media, politicians, and institutions put forward and what people actually receive and understand. This is true for almost every issue: the war on terror, war on drugs, race, prisons, poverty, education, the list is long. The dominant narrative is often based on fear and is regulated by the powerful and wealthy. Political dissident, Noam Chomsky writes,

We live entangled in webs of endless deceit, often self-deceit, but with a little honest effort, it is possible to extricate ourselves from them. If we do, we will see a world that is rather different from the one presented to us by a remarkably effective ideological system, a world that is much uglier,

often horrifying. We will also learn that our own actions, or passive acquiescence, contribute quite substantially to misery and oppression, and perhaps eventual global destruction.<sup>40</sup>

Despite all the rhetoric about America and the land of opportunity, the American experiment is unattainable for the majority of the population. Evidence of this can be found in: lack of well paying jobs, increased job insecurity, wage stagnation, poor infrastructure, soaring debt levels, over-inflated prison population, educational shortfalls, and increased poverty rates. Journalist and writer Chris Hedges writes, 'When societies break down, their words, or at least the words used in everyday discourse, no longer make sense. What is real cannot be spoken about.'<sup>41</sup> This is very apparent in the current presidential campaign, prosperity gospel rhetoric, persistent gun violence, and television programming. Have we lost our imagination to challenge power or conventional wisdom and come up with alternatives?

Faith communities in Church 9.0 will need to speak in a new language, a language of truth, authenticity, and hope. They will need a new vocabulary that both articulates and conveys the failures of neoliberalism and communicates a way of building something new. For example, a small group of Quakers in the United Kingdom and the United States spoke a new language in the abolition movement against slavery. Witness For Peace, a faith-based grassroots organization committed to non-violence, sent thousands of courageous Americans to Nicaragua during Ronald Reagan's illegal funding of the Contras. The organization was able to witness, document, and communicate a different narrative to the country about the devastating effects of the proxy war, thus conceivably averting an all-out invasion. In 2005, the United Church of Christ provided a new narrative for mainline denominations when they voted as a denomination to affirm the full inclusion of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender persons in the church's life and ministry. American cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead states:

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world...Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.<sup>42</sup>

Faith communities need to continue creating new stories, new narratives in a new era of Church 9.0.

It will be essential that faith communities utilize and cultivate artists—poets, painters, sculptures, and playwrights. Art gives the capacity for ideas to be felt, as artists see things others cannot and often see things before others. Art brings people together in community. Artists can and will challenge our own thinking. James Baldwin, an American novelist, playwright, essayist, poet, and social critic, states:

The role of the artist, then precisely, is to illuminate that darkness, blaze roads through the vast forest, so that we will not, in all our doing, lose sight of its purpose, which is, after all, to make the world a more human dwelling place.<sup>43</sup>

Art and good storytelling exposes undercurrents that allow a shift in social consciousness. Furthermore, it can express collective memory and solidarity.

Articulating a new narrative through storytelling through the written and oral word has been a powerful tool throughout history. Starting a neighborhood newspaper that is based in the lives of local residents is an excellent medium to provide a new language and vocabulary that is not dominated by the wealthy and powerful. *The Fig Tree* is an interfaith monthly newspaper that provides solution-oriented, peace journalism to eastern Washington and northern Idaho. Another option is securing programming slots on community radio. Low-power FM radio is another. Low-power FM is limited to 100 watts and has a three to five mile range. Radio and print remain excellent low-cost mediums for articulating new narratives.

History has demonstrated that authentic moral voices have the capacity to build relationships of mutual trust and understanding and societal transformation. Powerful stories that appeal to the higher emotions of love, beauty, justice, truth, wisdom, and caring build emotional and spiritual capital within communities. Meaningful story telling goes to where the silence is—it makes the invisible visible. Journalist, activist, and professor Les Switzer documents and demonstrates in a trilogy of books about the



importance newspapers, letters, and publications in providing a voice for the voiceless in South Africa during apartheid.

[M]arginalized press had an impact on its audience that cannot be measured in terms of the small number of issues sold, the limited amount of advertising revenue raised, or the relative absence of effective marketing and distribution strategies. These journalists rendered personalities, events, and issues visible that were too often invisible and provided a voice to alienated communities that were too often voiceless.<sup>44</sup>

Many churches across the country provide money to social service agencies as part of their mission outreach. Once the money is given to another it becomes part of their storytelling. Faith communities would be well served if they created their own story of transformation—how they started a program or service in the neighborhood and how lives have changed.

The book of Mark has sixteen illustrations in the first twelve chapters that provide new narratives about the new way of living. These include: healing on the Sabbath—despite its being illegal, in order to be great—one must be a servant of all, and the temple is a house of prayer—not a place of economic exploitation. Likewise, there are fourteen illustrations of Jesus's challenging the status quo—eating with sinners, fasting, paying taxes to Caesar and the teachers, elders, and chief priests question Jesus authority. Each time, Jesus used a new language to reframe familiar themes of love, justice, and freedom.

Finally, new narratives must reflect the lives and circumstances of those on the bottom of society. These narratives should be filled with stories about things that affect a large majority of the population, such as economic insecurity, healthcare, and education. These stories should not be sensational or anecdotal, but rather critical and informative, allowing citizens to reflect, act, and advocate for change. Faith communities ought to have detailed stories about neighborhood life. These stories would also lift up illustrations of community, altruism, and service. While economic indicators such as corporate earnings are important, they should not misplace coverage of the societal and economic needs of the majority of the population; it is important to remember that lives can be changed through awareness and the resulting public outcry. In short, society should hear and read the stories about the whole range of emotional, political, and economic sectors of society and it is incumbent on the faith community to drive this in Church 9.0. Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a prisoner in Nazi Germany, stated, “the test of the morality of a society is how it treats its children.”<sup>45</sup> This can be reframed for the media: “the test of the morality of a society is how the poor, oppressed, and marginalized are presented and covered within the media.” We must once again be a voice of reason in a raging sea of ideological fundamentalism.

## **Outreach Accelerators**

Churches have a moral convening authority in their neighborhoods that allows them the ability to bring together stakeholders to examine and serve the community. It will be incumbent on faith communities in Church 9.0 to focus their outreach locally using their time, talent, and funds to care for the neighborhood. In the light of global warming and limited outreach funds the days of exotic foreign mission trips or ‘poverty tourism’ need to be re-evaluated in a new era. Church members’ financial donations, their volunteer time and talents should not be viewed as an end, but rather as an accelerator—a multiplier—like the mustard seed parable used by Jesus. If faith communities can demonstrate transformation and wise use of funds it will act as an accelerator. Let me provide an example of how a local church used its resources as an accelerator.

During the recent economic downturn a local community center in an underserved area was slated to close in Colorado Springs as the Parks and Recreation Department’s budget went from \$17 million dollars in 2008 to \$3 million dollars in 2009. Government workers were stunned and immobilized with the quick change in the economic landscape and were unable to see a way forward. Using its moral convening authority, a local church stepped up and put forward a ‘broad-based partnership’ plan that brought together the public, private, and civil sectors of society under one banner. The church provided money,



leadership, and vision to the neighborhood and the community center stayed open. The broad-based partnership was so successful that it opened two more community centers and won several national awards and the plan was used as a model for the city. In the end the church put in \$30,000 over three years and the yield was over \$500,000. Moreover, the model put forward by the church built social and emotional capital, trust, and tolerance within the community, all of which are vital for a functioning democracy.<sup>46</sup> The church was not the biggest or the richest, but they understood the power of vision and accelerators.

Other possible multipliers are mergers, acquisitions, and expansion to multi-site locations. Merging with another like-minded group/ministry can provide added resources, people, and synergy. This is done in the corporate world all the time. The days of working alone in a silo are over; like-minded groups need to band together and share resources. Other times, a group may want to take over or acquire another group or ministry. For example, a church may want to take over a food pantry or campus ministry if its values align. Expanding services to another location such as a nursing home, another church, another part of town provides increased viability and new opportunities. Each of these requires getting out of one's comfort zone, stepping into the unknown space, and thinking in new and bold ways.

Faith communities need to continually look for accelerators that multiply limited resources and transform lives and the community. In the book of Mark, Jesus calls Simon and Andrew and tells them they will be fishers of something much bigger and much more important—people (1:16-18). He selects, develops and appoints the twelve others to expand God's work (3:13-19), to preach and drive out demons. Three chapters later, Jesus again sends out the twelve in pairs to preach, drive out demons and help the sick. Jesus used accelerators, in this case people, to further the message.

Writer and futurist Alvin Toffler wrote that if you do not have a strategy you end up being part of someone else's strategy. Our test moving forward will be how well we tell the truth, expose lies, and provide means for those on the faith journey to move towards liberation from the dominant, prevailing ideology. We cannot be passive in a time of horror. The church is the only institution that has the ability to provide a holistic approach for society. Our time has come to step forward once again.

#### **Forthcoming topics in the series include:**

Fostering intellectual self-defense  
Building emotional, social, and spiritual capital  
Art: illuminating darkness and blazing new frontiers

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<sup>1</sup> For scholarly work see the following authors: Diana Butler Bass, Phyllis Tickle, Mark Chaves, Christian Smith, David Kinnaman, Kenda Creasy Dean, Robert Wuthnow, and Robert Putnam. For faith based authors see: John Dorhauer, United Church of Christ (UCC); Nadia Bolz-Weber (Evangelical Lutheran Church of America); Carol Howard Merritt, Presbyterian; Michael Piazza, United Church of Christ; Brian McLaren; Emergent Church; Robin Meyers, UCC; Richard Rohr, Franciscan: George Bullard, American Baptist; Rachel Held Evans; Darrel Guder, Missional Church; Alan Roxburgh and M. Scott Boren, Missional Church.

<sup>2</sup> In 1974, the United Church of Christ had 1,841,312 members; in 2014 they had 943,521 members. In 1964, they had 2,067,179 a 53.36% change. Taken from *The United Church of Christ: A Statistical Profile*. Fall 2015.

<sup>3</sup> In 1983, the Presbyterian Church (UPUSA) had 3,131,228 members (Kibler, Craig M. PCUSA Projects Largest Membership Loss Ever in 2007. *Presbyterian Layman*, February 19, 2008) and in 2014 they had 1,667,767 members (PCUSA continues membership decline – 92,433 members gone in 2014 - 'The Layman Online'. *The Layman Online*. Retrieved 14 June 2015).

<sup>4</sup> The Disciples had 1,312,326 members in 1974 and 469,212 in 2014. Personal correspondence with Howard Bowers at the Disciples of Christ home office on 2 November 2015.

<sup>5</sup> While there are a myriad of ways to divide up church history. I have divided church history into the following time frames: 1. The Apostolic Period 35-120. 2. The Apologists 120-220. 3. The Third Century 220-305. 4. The Imperial Church 305-476. 5. The Middle Ages 476-1499. 6. The Reformation and Puritan Era 1500-1699. 7. The Great Awakenings 1700-1899. 8. The Modern Period 1900-Present.

Some American church leaders naively refer to the present church era as Church 2.0 or even Church 3.0.

<sup>6</sup> Berlinski, Claire. *There is No Alternative: Why Margaret Thatcher Matters*. New York: Basic Books, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Susan George, Noam Chomsky, David Harvey, Naomi Klein, Walden Bello, Henry Giroux, Ha-Joon Chang, Patrick Bond, Joseph Stiglitz, Richard Wolff, Dean Baker, Doug Henwood, Thomas Piketty, Gar Alperovitz, and Jeff Faux have all documented the negative consequences of neoliberalism.

<sup>8</sup> Former Governor of Michigan, Jennifer Granholm and the city of Greenville, MI (pop 8000) offered millions of tax breaks and credits to Electrolux if they agreed to stay in Greenville. The city offered to build a new factory. At the end of the day Electrolux said, 'There is nothing you can do to compete for the fact we can pay \$1.17 an hour for labor in Mexico.' 2700 jobs were eliminated and Electrolux went to Mexico.

<sup>9</sup> Prime Minister Thatcher talking with *Women's Own Magazine* on October 31, 1987.

<sup>10</sup> Vandana Shiva from the global justice movement pointed out that under this new world of trade, "every aspect of our lives is up for sale and every aspect of human needs and every form of human activity is being redefined as a tradeable service." Shiva, Vandana. "GATS/WTO: The Auctioning of Vital Resources and Essential Services." 26 March 2001. <http://www.urfig.org/sup-eng-gats-shiva-pt.htm>

<sup>11</sup> See Robert Reich. *Saving Capitalism*. New York: Knopf, 2015. Chapter 8.

<sup>12</sup> Forbes Magazine's, April O'Connor's, April 15, 2014 article, 'Report: Wal-Mart Workers Cost Taxpayers \$6.2 Billion in Public Assistance' draws upon the work of American for Tax Fairness. The article states, 'It (Americans for Tax Fairness) found that a single Wal-Mart Supercenter cost taxpayers between \$904,542 and \$1.75 million per year, or between \$3,015 and \$5,815 on average for each of 300 workers.' O'Connor writes, 'Americans for Tax Fairness then took the mid-point of that range (\$4,415) and multiplied it by Wal-Mart's approximately 1.4 million workers to come up with an estimate of the overall taxpayers' bill for the Bentonville, Ark.-based big box giant's staffers.' <http://www.forbes.com/sites/clareoconnor/2014/04/15/report-walmart-workers-cost-taxpayers-6-2-billion-in-public-assistance/>

<sup>13</sup> See Raj Patel, *Stuffed and Starved: The Hidden Battle for the World Food System*. New York: Melville House, 2012; Michael Pollan, *Omnivore's Dilemma*. New York: Penguin, 2007. Michael Moss, *Salt Sugar Fat: How the Food Giants Hooked Us*. New York: Random House, 2014. Eric Slosser, *Fast Food Nation*. Boston: Mariner Books, 2012.

<sup>14</sup> The country of Uruguay was taken to a World Bank tribunal by US cigarette manufacturer Phillip Morris because the country's anti-smoking policies. Former New York City Mayor, Michael Bloomberg and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have pledged money to help poorer countries fight legal battles against tobacco corporations.

<sup>15</sup> Some of these towns and cities include: Benton Harbor, MI; Buffalo, NY; Camden, NJ; Chattanooga, TN; Chicago, IL; Detroit, MI; Flint, MI; Fresno, CA, Galesburg, IL, Greenville, MI; Immokalee, FL; Janesville, WI; Milwaukee, WI; Mobile, AL; Pine Ridge, SD; Providence, RI; Springfield, IL; Syracuse, NY; and Welch, WV. Each of these cities, along with hundreds of rural towns, has a story about job loss, lack of tax revenue, or cutting services. Chris Hedges in his book, *Days of Destruction Days of Revolt* calls some of these towns 'sacrifice zones.' These communities have been offered up for exploitation like was done in the developing world.

<sup>16</sup> Taken from Social Security website on 30 November 2015. Data comes from 2014. <https://www.ssa.gov/cgi-bin/netcomp.cgi?year=2014>

<sup>17</sup> Stiglitz, Joseph. *Rewriting the Rules of the American Economy*. (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2015) p. xii.

<sup>18</sup> Evangelicals can broadly be defined by embracing four tenets of faith: all essential truth is found in the Bible, especially the New Testament; Jesus's death and resurrection were an atonement of humanities sins; humans need to be 'born again;' and the gospel needs to be spread throughout the world.

<sup>19</sup> Some political liberals were also worried as evidenced by the formation of the Trilateral Commission by David Rockefeller. See Holly Sklar, *Trilateralism: The Trilateral Commission and Elite Planning for World Management*. Boston: South End Press, 1980.

<sup>20</sup> Sutton, Matthew A. *Jerry Falwell and the Rise of Religious Right*. (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013) p. 6-11. Also, see Kruse, Kevin M. *One Nation Under God*. New York: Basic Books, 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Hedges, Chris. *American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America*. (New York: Free Press, 2006), Chapters one and two.

- <sup>22</sup> Sutton, Matthew A. *Jerry Falwell and the Rise of Religious Right*. (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2013), pp. 20-22.
- <sup>23</sup> Hackworth, Jason. *Faith Based: Religious Neoliberalism and the Politics of Welfare in the United States*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012. Bowler, Kate. *Blessed: A History of the American Prosperity Gospel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Focus on the Family. "The Truth Project" video series. Produced 2004. Copyright 2004-2014. Colorado Springs, CO. Connolly, William E. *Capitalism and Christianity, American Style*. Durham: Duke University Press Book, 2008. Moreton, Bethnay. *To Serve God and Wal-Mart*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009. Speaking after the mass shooting in San Bernardino, CA Liberty University President, Jerry Falwell Jr. stated, 'If more good people had concealed carry permits, then we could end those Muslims before they, before they go out there and kill.'
- <sup>24</sup> <http://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/news/2013/10/confirmed-grand-theft-auto-breaks-six-sales-world-records-51900/>
- <sup>25</sup> <http://money.cnn.com/2015/02/02/media/american-sniper-box-office/>
- <sup>26</sup> *TIME* Jan 10, 2014 <http://time.com/304/report-suicide-rate-soars-among-young-vets/>
- <sup>27</sup> Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General:  
[www.mentalhealth.org/youthviolence/surgeongeneral/SG\\_site/chapter4/appendix4bsec2.asp](http://www.mentalhealth.org/youthviolence/surgeongeneral/SG_site/chapter4/appendix4bsec2.asp)
- <sup>28</sup> Vaglanos, Alanna. "30 Shocking Domestic Violence Statistics that Remind Us Its an epidemic," *Huffington Post*, October 23, 2014, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/23/domestic-violence-statistics\\_n\\_5959776.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/10/23/domestic-violence-statistics_n_5959776.html) According to a March 2015 report, *Body Count*, from Physicians for Social Responsibility there have been 1.3 million people killed in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan since the 'War on Terror' started. <http://www.psr.org/assets/pdfs/body-count.pdf>
- <sup>29</sup> Ingraham, Christopher (2015-10-05). "There are now more guns than people in the United States." *The Washington Post* ISSN 0190-8286.
- <sup>30</sup> Taken from the website: *Gun Violence Archive*. <http://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls>
- <sup>31</sup> This is based on the proposed 2013 budget. <http://www.oneminuteforpeace.org>
- <sup>32</sup> Bartlett, Donald L. and James B. Steele. (*The Betrayal of the American Dream*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2013), Chapter 6.
- <sup>33</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/03/04/us/ferguson-police-racial-discrimination.html>
- <sup>34</sup> See Greenwald, Glenn. *No Place to Hide*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2014. Scheer, Robert. *They Know Everything About You*. New York: Nation Books, 2015.
- <sup>35</sup> See Smiley, Tavis. *Death of a King: The Real Story of Dr. Martin Luther's King Jr.'s Final Year*. New York: Little, Brown and Company 2014.
- <sup>36</sup> Giroux, Henry A. *Dangerous Thinking in the age of the new authoritarianism*. (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2015) pp. 50-53.
- <sup>37</sup> Hedges, Chris. 'Chris Hedges Speaks on Osama bin Laden's Death.' *Truthdig*. May 1, 2011.  
[http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/chris\\_hedges\\_speaks\\_on\\_osama\\_bin\\_ladens\\_death\\_20110502/P100](http://www.truthdig.com/report/item/chris_hedges_speaks_on_osama_bin_ladens_death_20110502/P100)
- <sup>38</sup> Hedges, Chris. *The Death of the Liberal Class*. (New York: Nation Books, 2010), p. 10.
- <sup>39</sup> Giroux, Henry. *Zombie Politics and Culture in the Age of Casino Capitalism*. (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), p. 49.
- <sup>40</sup> Chomsky, Noam. *Turning the Tide*. (Boston: South End Press, 1985) p. 1.
- <sup>41</sup> Hedges, Chris, *Wages of Rebellion*. (New York: Nation books, 2015), p. 36.
- <sup>42</sup> [http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Margaret\\_Mead](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Margaret_Mead)
- <sup>43</sup> Hedges, Chris. *Wages of Rebellion*. (New York: Nation Books, 2015), p. 225.
- <sup>44</sup> Switzer, Les and Mohamed Adhikari (Eds) *South Africa's Resistance Press: Alternatives Voices in the Last Generation under Apartheid (Ohio RIS Africa Series)*. (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000), p. 39. Also see, Switzer, Les. (Editor) *South Africa's Alternative Press: Voices of Protest and Resistance, 1880-1960*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2009. Switzer, Les and Donna Switzer. *The Black press in South Africa and Lesotho: A descriptive guide to African, Coloured and Indian newspapers, newsletters and magazines 1836-1976*. Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1979.
- <sup>45</sup> Marian Wright Edelman, 2006 Commencement Address to Yale University, School of Public Health. Edelman is Founder and President of the Children's Defense Fund. <http://publichealth.yale.edu/news/may06/commencement.html>
- <sup>46</sup> See Robert D. Putnam, Robert Leonardi, Raffaella Y. Nanetti; Robert Leonardi, Raffaella Y. Nanetti (1994). *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton University Press. Robert Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Steven M Tipton (1985). *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Kate Pickett and Richard Wilkinson. *The Spirit Level: What Great Equality Makes Societies Stronger*. (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2009). Eric M. Uslaner. *The Moral Foundation of Trust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).