

D. Min. Dissertation Project Proposal (Design) *

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TITLE: A Critical Study of the Root Causes of Homelessness, Paying Particular Attention to the Response of the Church

PROBLEM: What is the PROBLEM or AREA of STUDY you wish to explore?

The area of my study will be the root causes of homelessness in the context of the United States. The U.S. is the wealthiest country in the world. However, 45 million people suffer from poverty and 3.5 million people experience homelessness every year. The U.S. government and secular agencies, Christian Churches, other faith communities and individuals are trying very hard to help the homeless. But their help seems to be focused on emergency intervention and not on permanent solutions, while homelessness for the working poor and women/children is rapidly growing. It seems no one is interested in the root causes. Without understanding the root causes of homelessness no one can arrive at solution.

PURPOSE:

1. Given the problem what do you want to CHANGE?

I want the Christian Church to: 1) change their understanding of homelessness from blaming the victims to understanding the socio-economic, political and cultural root causes; 2) put their personal spiritual salvation into action in caring for needy neighbors; 3) change their role from supporting the system that creates poverty to challenging the system to give priority to the poor; and 4) change their mission strategy from maintaining the status quo to ending homelessness by creating political will, policy and funding priority.

2. What GROUP will join you in bringing about this change?

The Presbyterian Network to End Homelessness, National Alliance to End Homelessness, Seattle Interfaith Task Force on Homelessness, Washington Association of Churches, Washington Lutheran Public Policy Office, Church Council of Greater Seattle, Church Women United-Seattle chapter and other faith groups will join me to bring about the change.

3. What will you DO to bring about the desired change?

1) Help the Christian Church understand the root causes of homelessness from socio-economic, political, cultural and religious perspectives in the context of the U.S.; 2) Help the Church encounter with and build a Biblical ground for their mission; and 3) Guide the Church to passionately engage in public policy advocacy toward ending homelessness.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY (limitations, definitions, etc.)

The scope of the study at this time will focus on poverty and the homeless issue in the U.S. I will involve Presbyterians, people from other faith groups and those outside religious groups in the discussion of the issue, and I will value their inputs highly. Comparing the social service policy of the United States with other countries will be done but limited due to the lack of resource.

METHOD:

1. What QUALIFIES you to do this D/P? (Experiences and/or involvement that have raised this issue for you and make it a current practical and academic concern)

I believe what qualifies and motivates me to do this D/P are: 1) experience in direct service at a community mental health center for the homeless, substance addicted and mentally disturbed population as a certified social worker and mental health counselor; 2) experience in founding and serving the homeless women's church as an ordained and committed Presbyterian clergy; 3) experience in working with ecumenical/interfaith groups on homeless issues; 4) experience from being on a speaking tour on behalf of Women's Ministries and the Hunger Program of the General Assembly to motivate Presbyterians to be in the mission of ending homelessness; 5) writing an instructional manual and developing a video on the homeless issue; 6) my academic degrees in theology and social work; and 7) last but not the least, my commitment to Jesus Christ who is my teacher, a model, principle and the Lord in this homeless issue.

2. How is this topic related to YOUR MINISTRY?

Since my ministry has been and continues to be motivating congregations to engage in ministry to end homelessness, this topic is very closely related and relevant to my ministry.

3. SOCIAL ANALYSIS: What will you do to place the problem in its historical, cultural, and social context? What literature will you read and with whom will you interview or talk about it?

We live in an economic system that constantly strives for ever increasing profits which result in an ever-widening gap between the rich and poor. The U.S. government gives funding priority for wars, national security, militarism, and tax cuts for the rich, and constantly slashes funds for the poor. This system creates a culture of self-centered, success-oriented individualism, materialism, and consumerism. While many rich Americans enjoy affluence 45 million people fall into poverty and 3.5 million into homelessness. In order to put the root cause of homelessness in such historical, social, economic, political and cultural context I will study and examine resources written by political scientists, economists, sociologists, and theologians such as Andrew J. Bacevich, David Korten, John O. Fox, Ichiro Kawachi, and Bruce P. Kennedy, Jeremy Rifkin, M. Douglas Meeks, John Hall, Marcus Borg, McAfee Brown and others. I will also interview homeless advocates, general public and homeless people to talk about the issue.

4. THEOLOGICAL RESOURCES: What are the biblical /theological lenses you will use to examine this problem? Identify 3-5 writers who help you deal with this problem theologically. With whom you will discuss the problem theologically?

I will examine the homeless problem through the lenses of God' and Jesus' economic justice and policies for the poor throughout the scripture. In order to read and interpret Biblical teaching right I studied theological resources written from the religious, socio-economic and political perspectives. The theologians who help me the most were M. Douglas Meeks, John Hall, Marcus Borg, Robert McAfee Brown, Reggie McNeal, Robert Thorton Henderson, Haskell M, Miller, Donald B, Kraybill, Gerald W. Schlabach, Jim Wallis, J. Philip Wogaman, John Shelby Spong, and others whose names and profiles are included in the bibliography.

5 How will you integrate IN WRITING steps 1-4, i.e. your reflection on experience, your conversation with others, and your review of literature?

What I gained from reading, interviews and consultation will be integrated in two parts: Part I will include the dissertation and Part II will include the projects.

The Part I, the Dissertation, will include social analysis of the society we live in and review of God's policies for the poor in the Old Testament and Jesus' policies for the poor in the New Testament, which will be ground/guide and principle for the Church's mission. The last chapter of the dissertation will deal with theological/ethical perspective of the Christian Mission and will include the theology of mission developed on the basis of the Biblical teachings, with a diagnosis and prescription for the future health of Church mission toward ending homelessness.

Part II, the Project, will include four different projects. Project 1 will be the interview result of 150 people. Project 2 will be the results from my Myth and Facts on Homelessness survey. Project 3 is recommendations for five public policy advocacy areas that are significantly related to homeless issue, including some guidelines on how to be involved in public policy advocacy. Project 4 will be the introduction of public policy advocacy examples that have been done or are in process by ecumenical or interfaith groups in the nation.

6. What steps will you take to DESIGN & IMPLEMENT the project?

1). I will ask San Francisco Theological Seminary to assign a dissertation supervisor for me. 2) I will form my support group with whom I will consult frequently. 3) I will begin to write the dissertation integrating resources I read and interview results.

7. How will you EVALUATE & REVISE the Project? To whom will you REPORT it ?

I will have ongoing consultations and evaluation with the support group and the dissertation supervisor for advice and for revision of the dissertation. When the draft of the dissertation is completed my dissertation supervisor will read it. With his advice I will finalize it.

RESOURCES (oral and written) on a separate page list your resources; put an asterisk (*) by those you have already examined in depth; indicate in parentheses after each source where it is accessible to you. Limit your written resources to the 50 most important ones for which you will be held accountable. Do not 'pad' the bibliography.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES, CONTRIBUTIONS TO MINISTRY:

The expected outcome and contribution of this dissertation material is for it to become a useful resource that might motivate the Presbyterian Churches and others to develop a public policy advocacy mission for the poor and homeless in the United States and thus finally congregations can contribute to God's mission of ending homelessness. I hope to publish this paper for the church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in particular.

TIME SCHEULE FOR THE STUDY (by specific dates):

By June 2005, I will try to finish a draft of the dissertation and plan to finish the final form by November of 2005 and Graduate in May 2006.

HAS ADVISOR APPROVED REVIEW OF LITERATURE? Yes X No _____

(This is mandatory for some, optional for others, as determined by the APS Committee.)

ADVISOR'S SIGNATURE: _____

BIBLIOGRAPHY is an attachment to the dissertation.