

Paper Proposal for the BISAM study group for the Sydney Conference, July 2020

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"A Theological Look at Community Development Through the Unity of the Church: A Case Study of the BRIDGE Model in Nigeria"

Unity of believers is the heart of God (Ps 133, John 17:23). The early church dealt with the Jew and Gentile question (Acts 15) and many passages in Paul's letters to churches speak of the unity of the believers (i.e. Ephesians 2 and breaking down of dividing walls). However, over the centuries, the Church has become more and more divided, and ended up further away from answering the prayer of Jesus in John 17 that His disciples would be one in order that the world would know of Him.

The BRIDGE model, as developed by Dr. Kathy Dudley, is being used successfully in Nigeria to build unity across a wide variety of church leaders with the results of building relationships and accomplishing community development in Badagry, Nigeria.

The Bridge model is built on: B: beliefs vs bottom-line, R: relationships vs results, I: interdependence vs individualism, D: development vs dependency, G: grassroots driven vs government driven, and E: empowerment vs entitlement. This model will be discussed from the perspective of how unity informs this model. This paper will examine the theological principles of unity, the expressions of unity in the BRIDGE model, and how the outworkings of this model have resulted in bringing together a wide variety of both national level church leaders, and local church leaders, to bring about change in the former slave port of Badagry, Nigeria.