



**ABSTRACT**

**PRACTICES AND CHARACTERISTICS FOR PASTORS**

**RENEWING MAINLINE CONGREGATIONS:**

**CASE STUDIES FROM THE PRESBYTERY OF MEMPHIS**

by

G. Christopher Scruggs

The purpose of this study was to discern relationships between a biblically derived shepherd/servant model of leadership and the revitalization of local congregations in the Presbytery of Memphis of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (PCUSA). Since the 1960s, mainline denominations' membership has declined. The Presbytery of Memphis, the basic unit studied, participated in the decline of the PCUSA. The dynamic model developed in this dissertation combines the shepherd and servant metaphors to develop a biblical, narrative-driven model for transformational leadership. Interviews with individual leaders was the basic research tool, however personal experience was also an important factor.

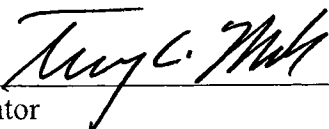
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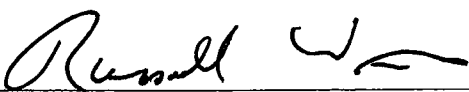
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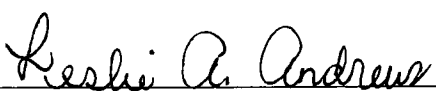
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March 24, 2004  
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**PRACTICES AND CHARACTERISTICS  
FOR PASTORS RENEWING MAINLINE CONGREGATIONS:  
CASE STUDIES FROM THE PRESBYTERY OF MEMPHIS**

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of  
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by

G. Christopher Scruggs

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## CHAPTER 1

### OVERVIEW OF STUDY

#### Introduction

Before attending seminary, I was an elder, Sunday school teacher, and leader in a large, urban Presbyterian church in the southwestern part of the United States. This church went through a process that enabled a congregation, formerly a part of the southern branch of the Presbyterian Church (USA) (PCUSA), to leave the denomination under certain circumstances. This event was probably the single most difficult church situation I have ever faced. My wife, Kathy, and I were part of a failed “unity” effort. We sought to lead people toward committing to remain together regardless of the outcome of the vote. Our efforts failed. The church split, with approximately four hundred people (mostly under age forty-five) leaving. Once the issue was raised, Kathy and I felt led not to join either the “leave the denomination” or the “loyal Presbyterian” fight in hopes of avoiding the split. Thus, some of our friends on both sides were disappointed by our stand.

This event greatly influenced my decision to go to seminary. Kathy, who had not previously felt convinced of “God’s call” to enter the ministry, decided that she would “donate me to the PCUSA” to work for renewal of the denomination. The “Article 13” process, a provision allowing certain congregations to leave the PCUSA, left her with a feeling of stewardship for a denomination that had nurtured her faith throughout her life. She also knew that I wanted to become a pastor.

During our seminary years, we were active in the renewal movements of the PCUSA, and I began a ministry that gave books to seminary students to help promote evangelical faith and development of ministry skills. Since leaving seminary, I have

devoted a portion of my time to renewal ministries within the PCUSA and in our Presbytery. This dissertation flows from my interest in renewal of mainline congregations.

### **The Problem**

A consensus exists that mainline denominations are faced with the need for renewal and revitalization of local congregations and their ministries.

### **Mainline Decline**

After the Second World War, mainline denominations entered a period of growth and prosperity. The return of the “GI Generation” from the perils of war to the promise of peacetime began a period of economic and cultural expansion. The GI Generation entered the 1950s mature and ready to build families, businesses, and community organizations—including churches. The growth of wealth and prosperity, the coming of the postwar Baby Boom, and the movement of many young families to the suburbs occasioned a huge growth in the membership of mainline churches.

The churches that this generational cohort joined were generally those in which they had been raised. American Baptists, Episcopalians, Churches of Christ, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, and other denominations, as well as Christian groups not normally associated with “mainline America,” grew in numbers, wealth, and power. Congregations grew and prospered, and many new churches were formed. New churches were built in suburbs as American cities expanded and families found a need for a place of worship closer to home. Interestingly, this period of growth ended just about the time that the GI Generation entered middle-age and ceased to have children (Coulter, Mulder, and Weeks, Reforming Tradition 67).

To some degree, the numerical growth of the mainline denominations after World



War II masked the continued decline of their relative importance of Presbyterians and others of the mainline denominations. Studies have shown that the “decentering” of the mainline churches has been a long process with these denominations declining in a series of “disestablishments” that began before the American Revolution and that have continued throughout our history (Coulter, Mulder, and Weeks, Reforming Tradition 37). Nevertheless, for many people, the absolute decline in recent years combined with the even more dramatic decline relative to the growth of the American population, is deeply troubling.

Although scholars debate the causes, no doubt exists that mainline Christianity has declined in relative and absolute importance in American religious life (Coulter, Mulder, and Weeks, Reforming Tradition 67). The reasons are complex. First, many smaller communities, where mainline denominations had local churches dating back to the earliest history of the community, experienced decline as Americans moved to larger cities. Second, in rural areas these churches, which were historically middle and upper class, had difficulty replacing the children of the congregation as they moved away for college and failed to return to the local community. Third, the tremendous cultural upheavals of the 1960s and the secularization of American culture hit mainline churches harder than other groups because of their relatively high level of social status and education. Put simply, American elites deserted mainline churches as part of a larger desertion of Christian faith, but in relatively greater numbers (68-73). Fourth, the allegiance of many young people to their denomination of origin was diminished to the extent that they left home and either ceased to be regular church attendees or joined other religious groups. Switching among churches became popular as historic loyalty to family denominational affiliation declined (78). Fifth, the emergence of large, affluent, and

evangelical congregations provided an atmosphere and community that many people found appealing. As Baby Boomers began to return to church after their relatively late start in having families, they often found larger, nondenominational ministries attractive with respect to both worship style and the programs they offered. Sixth, in some cases, especially cities' older suburbs, neighborhoods began to change, and the ethnic profile of the new residents of communities did not fit well with the cultural and worship styles of the now aging members of the "Builder Generation."<sup>1</sup> Finally, the battles over human sexuality and other social issues caused mainline churches to turn inward and focus on their internal debates and agendas to the detriment of new church development and the revitalization of local congregations.

Whatever the causes, the decline was dramatic. A broad shift occurred, a shift that disproportionately affected affluent, educated, upwardly mobile persons and the denominations to which they belonged (Coulter, Mulder, and Weeks, Reforming Tradition 30). The immediate result was a decline in membership and attendance. For a long time, the relative affluence of mainline churches and the fact that their aging members had accumulated an unprecedented amount of wealth masked the decline as far as financial matters were concerned. More recently, as the Builder Generation aged to the point that members were dying in large numbers, the financial consequences of decline began to be felt. Budgets, local and national, began to feel the pinch.

From 1991 to 2001, membership in the PCUSA declined from 2,814,821 to 2,609,191—a decline of 205,630 members or almost 10 percent. Table 1.1 shows the yearly decline of the denomination for the last five years of that period.

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<sup>1</sup> Builder Generation refers to the World War II generation, that cohort who came to maturity during the Depression and who built many American institutions after the war.

**Table 1.1. Decline in Membership of the PCUSA from 1997 to 2001**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Loss</b>
1997	2,609,191	22,275
1998	2,587,674	21,517
1999	2,560,201	27,473
2000	2,525,330	34,871
2001	2,493,781	31,549

In the midst of this decline, denominations and groups that were previously on the fringes of American Christianity grew. First, more conservative religious groups began to emerge as powerful religious forces in American life. The Southern Baptist Convention, the Evangelical Free Church, Independent Bible Churches, and other more conservative Bible churches grew dramatically. Second, the charismatic movement moved from the margins of American religious life to take an important place in the life of American cities. Once thought to be the religious choice of less educated and less affluent Americans, groups like the Assembly of God, the Four Square Gospel Churches, the Vineyard Fellowship, and other independent charismatic groups grew dramatically among all social classes. Third, more conservative groups with roots in mainline churches began to split off and form new denominations, which they felt were more faithful to their respective traditions theologically, morally, and sometimes politically. The result was a dramatic change in the number of religious options available to people.

In many respects, the problems of mainline churches can be analogized to the

problems of the American automobile industry: both were slow to adapt to changing markets and to the emergence of powerful competitors for the allegiance of their customers or members. Because the effects of the cultural and religious changes in American life were slow to develop, the results were not easily seen. For a long time, mainline denominations ignored the storm clouds on their horizons and continued with business as usual. More recently, the phenomenon has been impossible to ignore due to the continued decline.

Nowhere was this complacency more apparent than in the way in which mainline pastors were educated, trained, and ordained. The institutional orientation of the Builder Generation was reflected in the professionalization of the ministry and in the way pastors were prepared for ministry. Increasingly, pastors were trained for positions in local churches and were thought to be institutional representatives of the national denomination (Coulter, Mulder, and Weeks, Reforming Tradition 101). Younger pastors were given the skills to preach and provide basic pastoral care to existing congregations. Often evangelism and church growth were not even a part of the curriculum offered. Local congregations were frequently visualized as stable, loyal outlets of a national denominational franchise. Technical skills were the focus of education. Curricula at seminaries focused on (1) biblical scholarship, often focused on critical methodologies of interest to scholars as opposed to faith communication; (2) pastoral care, often focused on the way traditional pastoral care could be enhanced by the insights of psychology; (3) theology, often focused on the current interest of the academic community; and, (4) preaching and worship, often with a heavy emphasis on the maintenance of the liturgical tradition of the denomination. Such persons left seminary ill-equipped to face the twin problems of cultural change and institutional decline.

More recently, mainline denominations have begun church-planting programs. Nevertheless, most pastors will spend at least some of their pastoral life pastoring an existing congregation, many of which are caught in the grips of the religious and social forces that cause, and result from, the decline of many traditional congregations in mainline denominations. Therefore, a need exists to focus attention on the techniques of congregational renewal and revitalization. This study attempted to focus on one aspect of renewal and revitalization: the kind of pastoral character that is needed to renew and revitalize local congregations.

Simply stated, the problem is the need for mainline churches to find ways to renew and revitalize existing congregations. Without capable, visionary leadership, further decline is more likely than growth and vitality (Barna, Turnaround Churches 34-35). Crucial to the renewal and revitalization of these denominations are clergy and lay leaders who possess the character and skills needed to accomplish the revitalization. Unfortunately, these denominations have not understood the great problems associated with ministry and church leadership in America.

This study was part of a journey into a deeper understanding of the kind of pastoral character needed for the process of renewal and revitalization. It was a journey that others have begun before me. My hope is that others will join me on this journey.

### **Context**

The churches of America minister in a challenging social context in which many traditional forms of ministry the mainline churches developed over hundreds of years are no longer as effective as in previous years.

### **Postmodernity**

The current theologies and organization of mainline churches represent their

adaptation to the modern world. Mainline churches are currently, however, ministering in a new, rapidly changing, and difficult context (Veith 19-20). This context is sometimes called postmodern.<sup>2</sup> The West may not be in a truly postmodern era, for many of the characteristics of what is commonly called “postmodern” seem to be the decadent phase of the modern era. Nevertheless, emerging new and challenging realities are impacting the Church and those who minister within it. At the root of the problem lies the dramatic shift of American culture from a Christian to a post-Christian culture. In such a culture, ministry must be conducted without many of the social supports common in preceding years. The ministry has gone from being a respected to a suspected profession. Society has shifted from one in which Protestantism, especially mainline Protestantism, represented a societal religious consensus to one in which many cultural elites are openly hostile to Christian faith.

Peter Berger’s analysis of religion and modernity is helpful in understanding the stress that modernity and postmodernity place on pastors and other church leaders who desire to lead local congregations through a time of renewal and revitalization. In the West, almost all persons live within a culture that contains certain “plausibility structures” that define what is reasonable and what cultural patterns are sensible and what

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<sup>2</sup> The term postmodernity is used in a variety of ways by various authors. In general, the term postmodern is used to describe both a philosophical movement and an emerging cultural reality. The postmodern intellectual period is generally thought to have begun with the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and his powerful indictment of both Christianity and Enlightenment optimism concerning human reason. Culturally, the postmodern period is generally thought to have begun to emerge after the First World War, which engendered a tremendous alienation from Western Culture among European intellectual elites. Both the philosophical and cultural aspects of postmodernism are very complex. This study does not presume to provide a comprehensive analysis of postmodern thought. It sought to give a pastoral analysis sufficient for a study of transformational leadership in the contemporary church. Worth noting, however, is that I believe that postmodernism is “here to stay” as a cultural phenomenon, and pastors must minister within postmodern America and to people who are consciously or unconsciously affected by its theory and cultural artifacts. As a cultural reality and as a philosophical movement, postmodernism has aspects that are both positive and negative for the Church and for Christians who witness to Christ under its conditions.

are not. Modern society created a “crisis of credibility” within which Christian beliefs, values, and morals no longer make sense to a majority of people, and especially the youngest, best educated, and most successful members of the cultural elite (151). The loss of a distinctly Christian plausibility structure and the rise of a primarily secular culture among elites hit mainline churches such as the PCUSA with special force because of their relatively high level of education and the particular way in which they attempted to accommodate modernity.

**Loss of a story.** Most analyses of the postmodern phenomena focus upon the way in which the decline of the Enlightenment optimism concerning human nature and the capacities of human reason have resulted in the growth of a distinctly postmodern philosophy, which begins with Nietzsche and continues in what is sometimes called deconstructionism and postmodern pragmatism. This postmodern ideal is characterized by a rejection of all “meta-narratives.” Meta-narratives may be described as unified visions of human life, of which Christian faith is one. The postmodern ideal is also characterized by a loss of conviction that a non-contextual or universal truth exists, a related denial of a shared morality based on human reason, and a loss of faith in the Enlightenment ideal of progress. This Enlightenment ideal of progress is dependent to at least some degree upon a secular version of the Christian meta-narrative. Christians, on the other hand, have traditionally believed that the story of Jesus is just the kind of meta-narrative that postmodernity rejects.

Thus, a basic characteristic of postmodernity is its denial of exactly the kind of meaningful narrative base to culture that Christianity implies. Postmoderns have abandoned the hope that any core symbolic world or meta-narrative can provide a unified vision and narrative structure for human life (Grenz 42-43). Christianity, on the other

hand, asserts that the Gospel narratives of the life of Jesus are precisely that sort of story.

Thus, one of the basic challenges of contemporary Christians is that of a “world that has lost its story” (Jenson 19). In the West, the decline of Christian faith coincided with a decline in the ability of Western people to form their lives around the biblical story. Modernity was inherently unable to sustain and renew its moral foundations with the result that it collapsed into the kind of absolute relativism and/or nihilism represented by many in the postmodern movement (20).

The cultural patterns of postmodernity are also deeply troubling in the way they affect the lives of those who live in the North American context. These cultural patterns constitute a form of life deeply at odds with values that stand at the core of Christian faith and with the kind of life the gospel narrative calls Christians to lead. As hostility toward meta-narratives has grown ever more intense in recent years, a tendency for the biblical story to be ignored or even suppressed developed in schools, colleges, universities, and the like. A corollary of this development is a decrease in the number of people outside and inside the Church who have a familiarity with the biblical narrative. This decrease, in turn, has made communication of the gospel more difficult as many people simply do not have the kind of familiarity with the Christian story that permits them to understand and respond to the gospel. Furthermore, many inside the Church have effectively forgotten the story of the Bible or never knew it. At the same time, secular society has developed a kind of lifestyle that is deeply at odds with many facets of historic Christianity.

**Consumerism.** When persons from less developed nations visit Europe and North America, one of the first things they notice is the vast array of goods and services available to those who live in these cultures. With the passing of the World War II generation, most Americans cannot remember a time that was not characterized by a



relative degree of prosperity. Recessions aside, the standard of living enjoyed by most Americans today far surpasses that of their parents and grandparents. The impact of consumerism is important, deep, and pervasive. Many Americans, and especially many younger Americans, regard shopping as a hobby. The average young couple lives in a home several times larger than the “starter home” of their parents and believe that their home ought to be furnished at least as well as their parents’ home.

The economies of Europe and North America have evolved from struggling to meet basic human needs to providing a growing supply of goods and services to an affluent market. Marketing has moved from a means by which people with needs find products to meet those needs to the creation of needs that are met in ever more narrow product niches. The postmodern definition of the “good life” is increasingly dominated by the feeling that “good” and “abundant” are identical concepts. In such a culture, materialism, whether or not it is a consciously held philosophy, has a deep and abiding impact on the lives of people.

The consumer culture is a challenge to the gospel, the Church, and its leaders. Many members of local congregations have difficulty to resisting consumerism; however, church leaders and their families are not exempt from the disease sometimes called “consumeritis.”<sup>3</sup> Consumerism assumes human happiness can be purchased, that the acquisition of things will bring happiness, and that the experience of ownership and possession is redemptive. Few people articulate this faith explicitly, but many practice it. The bumper sticker that reads, “He who dies with the most toys wins,” is truer for more people than they want to admit, including many who would never admit that things

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<sup>3</sup> “Consumeritus” is a term I have coined for the ‘consumer’ orientation of our economy and the way in which it encourages people to find meaning in acquiring things.

constitute the primary focus of their lives.

Advertising and the media constantly communicate the idea that new cars, new hair sprays, and new soft drinks can bring happiness and fulfillment to the one who acquires them. Pastors, teachers, and other church leaders who preach, teach, and lead otherwise on Sunday are still caught up in the culture and may still be powerfully impacted by its vision of reality. So, often a kind of disconnect exists between the gospel that is preached and the life that is lived, making authentic spirituality hard to achieve and maintain in a local congregation. This situation is especially true in those denominations that sit at the center of American culture.

**Materialism.** Sitting beneath the superficiality of consumer culture is the reality of a materialistic culture, a culture that assumes that physical goods and services are redemptive. Deep in the modern and postmodern psyche is the notion that the physical universe is the only and ultimate reality. God, if such exists, is often considered to be a part of the only and, therefore, ultimate reality, the physical universe. Pantheism is one religious response to a materialistic worldview. A more common practical reaction is a movement of religion to the human psyche, where it is viewed either negatively as a neurosis or positively as a principle of self-transcendence and wholeness. New Age and other similar forms of popular religion often emerge from this kind of thinking.

Among mainline churches, an overt attempt to find a place within a fundamentally materialistic worldview is common. In liberal circles, this accommodation is evident in its theological accommodation to a materialistic and anti-supernatural worldview. In evangelical circles, the accommodation often emerges in a different form, such as an uncritical adoption of psychotherapeutic techniques and notions.

Nowhere in mainline churches is the impact of materialism more evident than in

arguments over human sexuality. Whether the debate is over marital fidelity or alternative forms of sexual expression, the argument used often involves some form of an argument that “people are born this way.” At the root of the widespread acceptance of this argument is a materialistic notion of reality in which religious faith may give subjective support to persons but is unable to change ultimate reality.

**Hedonism.** Without question, the dominant philosophy of life in early twenty-first century America is a kind of hedonism. The idea that the good life is synonymous with a life of pleasure is part of the everyday environment within which people live. This hedonism surrounds and permeates American culture. The idea that pleasure, and especially physical pleasure, sits at the center of the good life bombards Americans on television, in movies, and in the music to which they listen. Much of this hedonism is overt, and many overt pagans live in America.

A more subtle form of hedonism is often found in the Church. Many members who would never affirm their commitment to a life lived for pleasure engage in activities that are indistinguishable from the activities of non-Christian members of the society. Often, Christians have affairs, drink heavily, use recreational drugs, collect pleasurable experiences, and engage in other hedonistic activities with no less frequency than non-Christians. Despite what Christians, including church leaders, may say about the meaning of religious faith, the consumer ideal impacts everything from the family budget, to the cars they drive, to the time spent on hobbies, to personal fitness and grooming.

Again, the hedonism of modern culture is especially evident in the way in which sexuality both dominates the Church’s agenda and distorts the Church’s life mission. Recent headlines involving the incidence of child molestation by Roman Catholic priests, the continuing divisions in mainline churches over homosexuality, and highly publicized

heterosexual clergy misconduct are but examples of the way in which the hedonism of modern culture invades the Church. Addiction to pornography, a challenge in many cultures, has been made much more pervasive by its easy availability on the Internet. In such a culture, the idea that self-denial and suffering are part of the good life is at odds with the form of life that surrounds people.

**Radical individualism.** The modern era was hostile to any form of authority, and postmodernism is increasingly hostile to any form of communal norms (Trueblood 19). The antiauthoritarian and anticomunitarian bias of the modern age is reflected in a radical form of individualism that permeates Western culture and characterizes much of postmodernism. The good life is conceived as the ability to do “whatever I want to do so long as I do not hurt another person.” In such a culture, the idea that individual desires and goals may need to be sacrificed for the good of family, children, city, state, or nation seems quaint and out of date. Radical individualism has moved from being the province of a narrow elite to being an underlying assumption of a majority of people. In such a society, traditional sources of authority, such as parents, pastors, political leaders, and especially the authority of such works as the Bible, are lost.

Nowhere is the rampant individualism of contemporary society more evident than in the decline of marriage. When the primary goal of human life becomes self-fulfillment, the kind of self-sacrifice that is demanded to maintain strong marriages and families is absent. In the early 1960s, a convenient fiction was born, holding that even where a marriage had already produced children, divorce was preferable to lovelessness and constant strife in the family. The alternative of loving out of duty and creating a home of peacefulness was not deemed a rational alternative. The results have been what is sometimes called an “epidemic” of divorce, weak families, a decline in standards of

living, and children with deep, unhealed spiritual wounds.

This radical individualism is increasingly being felt in the Church. The notion of an authoritative text read as part of a tradition is difficult to sustain in a postmodern environment. Church leaders are confronted each and every day with persons for whom the notion of authority, and perhaps especially the notion of pastoral authority, have little or no meaning. The result for church leaders is an intense pressure to succumb to such views or constantly minister in an environment in which church leaders can do little more than support persons. Furthermore, church leaders are not immune from such radical individualism in their own lives.

**Relativism.** In the postmodern world, the radical individualism of modern culture combines with the modern awareness of the differences in fundamental belief systems to create a form of radical relativism that characterizes the moral and religious beliefs and behavior of many people (Allen 9). Nothing is more common in the West than to hear people, especially young people, voice the opinion that all truth is relative (Bloom 25). The idea that “true” means “true for me,” as opposed to “true” in the sense of accurately rendering reality as it exists external to personal beliefs, is a deep cultural pattern in the West. Relativism, especially cultural relativism, creates a society in which communal norms are extremely difficult to maintain.

Moral relativism is also evident, especially among the younger members of the culture. If “true” means “true for me,” good means “right for me.” If good is a relative and personal matter, then traditional moral standards and the carriers of such standards are bound to be less powerful and often trumped by the easy course of “right for me” (Bloom 27). Once again, this way of thinking and living is evident in the Church.

Moral relativism is especially prevalent among people who have been educated in

the postmodern way of thinking in schools and universities. Often, they do not so much personally reject the moral standards of their parents or churches as they reject their application to persons who do not see them as personally “true for them.” This way of thinking puts church leaders and others whose teaching and preaching inevitably involves moral issues in a dilemma. They must either speak in ways that are massively unpopular and live with the resultant rejection or conform the teachings of the Scriptures and Church to contemporary moral norms. Many leaders in mainline churches choose the latter course. Pastors and leaders can easily fall into their own form of moral relativism. For example, in the area of clergy misconduct, many clergy are completely capable of preaching one thing on Sunday while excusing their own behavior on Monday by the use of various relativistic rationalizations.

**“Entertainmentism.”** The entertainment industry is central to the lives of modern, Western people. The entertainment industry is deeply romantic and antirealistic in its orientation. The industry often makes consciously irrational appeal to the emotions central in its communication techniques. Sex is often the vehicle of communication. The end result of a culture saturated with the values of the entertainment media is a culture with a deep and abiding lack of interest in truth and a romantic avoidance of reality. One author describes it in the following manner:

For all practical purposes, the U.S. today is a 24-hour, TV entertainment society. Everything in contemporary America is an entertainment, from sporting event to big business, politics, certainly religion, and even academia. If it isn't fun, cute, or packaged in ten-second sound bite, then forget it. If it can't be presented with a smiling, cheerful, sexy face, then it ain't worth attending to. We're all spectators in a grand entertainment society. (Mitroff and Bennis 7)

The problem with such a society is that it must reduce complex problems to a sound bite.

If complex problems are often oversimplified by politicians, they may also be

oversimplified by church leaders under constant pressure to communicate the truth of Scripture and the content of the confessional standards in simple, even simplistic, ways. Furthermore, the way in which worship services and other church programs are conceived and presented must increasingly take notice of the way in which the entertainment industry structures reality and the acquisition of new information and ideas.

**Conclusion.** A culture characterized by consumerism, radical individualism, hedonism, and “entertainmentism” is a challenging culture in which to preach the gospel and form and sustain Christian community. I have experienced many conversations, particularly with older pastors, where the following statement was made. “It is no longer fun to be a pastor.” In noting the reactions of Third World observers to American cultural religion, Eugene Peterson makes an observation that, at least partially explains this sentiment:

What they notice mostly is the greed, the silliness, the narcissism. They appreciate the size and prosperity of our churches, the energy and the technology, but they wonder at the conspicuous absence of the cross, the phobic avoidance of suffering, the puzzling indifference to community and relationships of intimacy. (37)

The culture of twenty-first century America and a church characterized by consumerism, hedonism, and “entertainmentism” is deeply at odds with the gospel and a form of life based on the Christian narrative.

The decline of liberal mainline churches parallels the decline of modernism and the emergence of a postmodern, post-Christian age. Mainline denominations have been slow to apprehend the dramatic shifts in the culture in which they minister—a culture that they helped to create and sustain and that they assumed would continue to be favorably structured for and receptive to their particular religious vision. As one retired professor observed, “We were slow to discern that the culture is not our friend” (C. Ellis Nelson).

In particular, the Church has been slow to recognize that the new “meta-narrative” has been replacing the Christian story as the primary way in which people structure reality.

The postmodern meta-narrative might be summarized in the following way:

We are alone in the physical universe, which constitutes the only reality. In this universe, there is no embedded notion of truth, beauty or goodness. These concepts are matters of personal choice. We humans must, therefore, create our own meaning and lives by acts of personal choice. All attempts to force such ideas upon others are a form of coercion by which one group forces its will upon others. Personal pleasure attained by the acquisition of personal experiences and things that can provide desired experiences are the means by which humans create their lives. (Allen 1)

The problem with this meta-narrative from a Christian viewpoint is that it is false.

The result of this new postmodern meta-narrative is a “new apostolic age” in which the Church is faced with the task of ministering to a decaying, pagan, and spiritually wounded culture (Hunter 23). Hunter identifies six characteristics he believes are important for the development of an apostolic congregation that is actively reaching out into its community: (1) a vision of what people can become; (2) an inviting worship experience that helps people to sense the presence of God; (3) small group life that creates authentic community and draws people out of isolation; (4) active lay ministry; (5) spiritual mentoring; and, (6) need-meeting ministries. The renewal of mainline churches requires humble servant leaders who are also strong shepherds. These leaders must have the kind of personality and character required to respond to the needs these churches have to “gather the scattered people of Israel” (see Matt. 4:23-25).

Pastors who minister within the North American context have a unique ministry. Their ministry is to take people where they are found, caught in destructive cultural patterns, and shepherd them into a new way, the way of Christ. The sum total of the challenges posed by Western culture is the need to minister amid a deep and abiding



sense that the way of Christ and the way of this world are radically different. The need is to develop the kind of leadership character than can build and sustain Christian community in the face of the cultural challenges church leaders face.

### **Denominational Context: The Presbytery of Memphis**

The Presbytery of Memphis, where I pastor, is in many ways a microcosm of America and the PCUSA. During the ten-year period ending 31 December 2000, total membership in the Presbytery of Memphis fell from 20,441 to 12,555, a decline of 7,891 or 38 percent. All but possibly two churches located in the inner city of Memphis lost members. Membership loss within the city of Memphis was about 41 percent . (Committee on Renewal 2). The only churches that grew during the period were located outside the “I-240 Loop” in eastern Shelby County or in towns close to the metropolitan edge of Shelby County (2). At the time of the study, a total of seventy-one churches were in the Presbytery of Memphis. Sixty-seven of these churches experienced their lowest membership during the last ten years. In the past nine years, the Presbytery has closed or merged a total of five churches. Over 50 percent of the churches have fewer than one hundred members, and 43.7 percent have fewer than fifty members (2).

At the time the study was initiated, only twenty-three churches had installed pastors and required no Presbytery assistance (Committee on Renewal 8). Thirteen churches were in the process of seeking pastors, at least three of which had experienced serious conflict (8). Thirty churches in the Presbytery with no installed pastor were covered by temporary ministers, designated ministers, or other temporary arrangements (9). A number of these churches had no real prospect of calling a permanent pastor. At least thirty-two churches received or required Presbytery assistance of some kind (9).

The statistical data, in some ways, masks the seriousness of the problem. For the

past three years, I was the Chairman of the Committee on Renewal, Revitalization, and Presbytery Planning. This committee produced a comprehensive statistical study of the Presbytery. In addition, the committee has been involved in the difficult decision to close or merge several churches. The Presbytery has merged two churches in the past two years and has two more churches that have reached the stage in which they must either close or merge with another congregation. The Committee on Ministry is considering closing one additional congregation and one new church development.

Among those churches without a pastor, many are so small that they cannot afford a full-time, installed pastor. Many churches that are without pastors are rural and in areas experiencing population and employment decline. Other churches have difficulty finding interim pastors with the skills to shepherd a local congregation toward choosing a pastor who might assist in revitalizing their ministry. Often, local congregations in decline are conflicted, wounded, and lack trust in the denomination and/or their future.

The Presbytery Study reached several conclusions relevant for the purposes of this study:

1. The Presbytery lacks a clear and diversified program of church growth;
2. The population of the Presbytery is becoming increasingly African-American;
3. The Presbytery is becoming increasingly older (a sign of decline);
4. Other churches in both the mainline and independent traditions are growing;
5. The Presbytery lacks a clear strategy to keep churches vital and responsive in changing times; and
6. The Presbytery needs to find a new paradigm for operating (Committee on Renewal 2-3).

The need for renewal and revitalization is obvious. Without renewal and revitalization of

many local congregations, the Presbytery will decline further. A key element of the process of renewal and revitalization is and will continue to be leadership.

### **Design of Study**

The study that forms the basis of this dissertation was a qualitative, multi-case exploratory study designed to discern the applicability of a “shepherd/servant” model of leadership to the dynamics of congregational renewal.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to discern correlations between a biblically derived shepherd/servant model of church leadership and the revitalization of seven local congregations in the Presbytery of Memphis of the PCUSA. One ancillary purpose of the study was that knowledge of its results would affect the kinds of pastors that churches in the Presbytery of Memphis consider calling in order to lead them into a period of revitalization. A second ancillary purpose was that the study would have heuristic value in exploring the usefulness of a shepherd/servant leadership model that could be further explored by others.

### **Research Questions**

This study was designed to supplement an existing demographic study of the Presbytery of Memphis in order to seek to understand better the characteristics of pastors who can lead congregations into a period of increased vitality and growth.

This research study focused on two research questions designed to discern the presence or absence of characteristics of a biblically derived shepherd/servant leadership model. The questions were designed to assist in discerning whether and in what way the characteristics of a shepherd/servant leadership model were present in the pastors studied.

**Research question 1.** Did the pastors of churches that met the criteria for this

study perceive themselves in ways consistent with the presence or absence of character traits suggested by the shepherd/servant leadership model?

**Research question 2** Did significant persons who were part of the leadership team (usually the Session) of the congregation perceive the presence or absence of the same shepherd/servant leadership model leadership traits?

### **Definitions of Terms**

For the purposes of this dissertation, the following terms have specific meanings.

“Discipline” refers to regular, specific practices that assist a Christian in becoming a more vital member of the body of Christ as that person is more deeply rooted in the character and being of God.

“Indwell” refers to the capacity of a knower to move into a deep, personal appropriation of that which is known, such that it becomes a tacit ground of knowing. Indwelling is the kind of knowing that occurs when we enter into a relationship with the person or thing being known in order to understand it. For example, we “indwell a story,” such as the story of the life, death and resurrection of Christ, when we enter the Biblical narrative and allow the contours of the story to frame our understanding of it. Indwelling is a kind of “personal knowledge,” as opposed to the Enlightenment ideal of an abstract kind of knowledge that does not require our personal commitment (the best example being the enlightenment understanding of science and mathematics). Even here, modern philosophers of science understand that mathematicians and scientists also learn their craft by entering into the story of a tradition of inquiry and committing themselves to that tradition as they learn the skills that will allow them to become practitioners of their arts. Thus scientists, mathematicians and theologians all make commitments to a tradition of inquiry which becomes a lens through which they attend to and examine their subject

matter (Newbigin, Proper Confidence 40).

“Leadership” refers to the relational ability to guide and shepherd a local congregation and its members as disciples of Jesus Christ. It refers to the interpersonal dynamic whereby a person or persons influence the beliefs and behavior of others in the local congregation. This influence involves a degree of dominance by the leader over those led in some area of thinking, feeling, or action; however, it is relational in the sense that the church is a voluntary organization in which people choose to be influenced by leaders they think can meet the needs of their congregation and its members.

“Renewal” refers to the process by which a church senses new life among its members, either as a result of numerical (membership) or spiritual (discipleship) growth.

“Servant/Shepherd leadership” refers to the dynamic process by which a pastor combines shepherd (dominant) and servant (other-centered) leadership qualities under the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit in order to influence and guide a congregation through a period of transformation by which it is renewed and revitalized in its ability to build Christian community.

“Transformation” refers to the process by which the regular practice of the Christian life of discipleship results in a change in the character of individual members of a local congregation and in the life of the congregation itself under the power of the Holy Spirit.

“Transforming leadership” refers to that kind of leadership that renews and transforms an existing congregation by leading it into a period of increased capability to adjust to its environment, to provide meaning and purpose for its members, and to accomplish the purposes for which it was created.

“Vision” refers to a human or God-inspired perception of a desirable future state

of an organization. In the case of Christian leadership, vision refers to a mental picture of a desired future state of a local congregation or other religious organization.

### **Methodology of the Project**

This study was a qualitative, multi-case, exploratory study of the validity of the shepherd/servant model of leadership.

#### **Methodology**

This project engaged in a critical and creative dialogue among biblical text, theological reflection on the master biblical metaphor for pastoral leadership, and the actual experiences of pastors and other leaders in congregations that have undergone renewal or are in the process of renewal and revitalization. As an exploratory, qualitative multi-case study of a non-quantifiable phenomena, the methodology used was one appropriate to the nature of the study. Semi-structured interviews formed the basic research tool, supplemented by personal experience with the churches studied and documents gathered as part of the research.

#### **Study Sources**

The source of the study consisted of interviews with two sorts of persons: (1) an interview with the primary pastoral leader who led the renewal process and (2) an interview of another participant(s) in the renewal process. In addition to interviews, each congregation was asked to submit information regarding its history, programs, beliefs, and statistical and other data, to the extent available.

Interviews were supplemented by my experience within the Presbytery in connection with the revitalization of two congregations, one large and one smaller. The first of the congregations studied was the First Presbyterian Church of Brownsville, my former church, a smaller congregation that experienced numerical as well as spiritual

growth during my nearly five years as pastor. More recently, I have been involved in the renewal of a larger church, Advent Presbyterian Church.

The final source of this study was my experience as the chairperson of the Committee on Renewal, Revitalization, and Presbytery Planning of the Presbytery of Memphis and as a member of a special committee that acts as a liaison with the Committee on Ministry when issues of church vitality are concerned. In this connection, I was responsible for creating a statistical study of the Presbytery of Memphis and subsequent later reports. In addition, during 2003, I was the chairperson of Council for the Presbytery of Memphis. In this capacity, I am responsible to assist in coordinating among the heads of the various committees and ministry heads of the Presbytery.

### **Sample**

The sample was purposely chosen in order to study the character of pastors who have led churches to experience growth. The population studied initially consisted of eight pastors in the Presbytery of Memphis who pastored seven congregations that have experienced growth in the midst of the general decline. In order to be admitted to the study, a congregation must have experienced growth during the ten-year reporting period ending 31 December 2000. Out of the seventy-one churches in the Presbytery of Memphis, nine met the initial criteria. After further analysis and the elimination of those that, on further analysis, failed to meet the criteria, seven congregations were studied. The sample was purposely chosen in order to study the population of pastors who have led churches to experience growth.

### **Instrumentation and Data Collection**

The study was conducted using two Interview Guides, one for pastors and one for lay leaders (see Appendixes A and B). Each interviewee was asked to fill out an

Interviewee Questionnaire (see Appendix C). The Interview Guides were used to ensure that all interviews covered roughly the same areas pertinent to discerning the presence or absence of leadership qualities consistent with the shepherd/servant leadership model. Each interviewee was also asked to sign a consent letter in order to gather basic biographical data concerning the interviewee (see Appendix D).

Each interviewee was interviewed for a period of approximately one hour. A court reporter who was also a seminary student recorded each interview, using a micro cassette recorder and other techniques. A copy of the interview was sent to each interviewee in order to verify its accuracy. Thereafter, each church, pastor, and lay leader was assigned a number. From the interviews and other information, I prepared a summary of the data gathered, which was presented to my research reflection team.

Finally, as part of the methodology, other relevant information was collected concerning each church and pastor.

### **Generalizability**

The study was restricted to only eight pastors from seven churches, factors that severely limit the ability to generalize from the conclusions reached. Only one of the churches could qualify as “liberal” by any definition, and it is predominately a moderate to conservative congregation. No church was a primarily minority congregation. Thus, generalizations are difficult to make from the data gathered.

### **Theological Grounding of the Study**

The study was grounded in an interdisciplinary conversation between a biblical and theological look at the phenomena of leadership and modern theories of transformational leadership. From a biblical perspective, the chief biblical and theological tool of the study was the notion of the biblical leader as “shepherd” and “servant.” From



the biblical and theological materials, and in conversation with contemporary leadership theory, a shepherd/servant model of Christian leadership was developed.

Like many pastors, I am on a personal journey of discovery concerning how to lead a local congregation. Of course, I read my Bible and the story of Jesus. Also, of course, I read leadership materials, much of which was written for business persons. How to bring the insights of these very different sources together is both puzzling and difficult. This study was an attempt to bring the sacred text of Scripture and theological reflection on that text into a conversation with secular literature. My purpose was to keep the biblical text the dominant voice in the conversation since the One of whom Scripture speaks is Lord over both the secular and sacred. Christians can learn much from understanding secular thought, because the Lord is Lord of the secular and the sacred.

For Christians, the biblical narrative of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as it is set in the context of the history of Israel, is the story by which they live and try to make sense of their lives. Within the context of the biblical story, Christians form their character and conduct their lives. Under the power of the Holy Spirit, this narrative comes into creative tension with the culture in which they live, its norms and its standards. The effective Christian transformational leader embodies the biblical narrative in his or her life and ministry and applies this narrative to the life and ministry of the local congregation in a creative and culturally relevant way. The vision and plan of the shepherd/servant transformational leader is communicated to the local congregation in ways that result in understanding and action taken toward the accomplishment of the vision by the power of the Holy Spirit. As the congregation is renewed and revitalized under the inspiration of a biblically derived and Spirit-inspired vision, people are healed, equipped, and empowered for ministry. This process further empowers the congregation

for ongoing renewal and revitalization. This transformational process takes place within the context of the biblical narrative as it is lived out in the life of a local congregation.

### **Overview of the Study**

In this chapter, the study was introduced and summarized. Chapter 2 consists of an overview of the biblical, theological, and contemporary sources for understanding the concept of transformational leadership and its particular shepherd/servant form, which constitutes the model studied in this research project. Chapter 3 contains a detailed explanation of the project design, the research method chosen, and the methods of data collection. Chapter 4 contains an analysis of the findings of the study. Finally, Chapter 5 reports major findings of the study and the kinds of practical applications that might flow from the research conducted. Chapter 5 also offers suggestions for future attempts to look at the validity of the shepherd/servant leadership model.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Alasdair MacIntyre notes that, in classical cultures, the basic means of moral education involved the telling of stories (121). In such cultures, the good life is largely defined with reference to stories of one or more heroic figures who embody the virtues of such a society. More recently, others have written on the way in which human beings automatically order experience in a narrative form (Crites 72-73). For Christians, the focal narrative that defines how they think of leadership is found within the Bible. Within that narrative, Christians find metaphors that embody the kind of relational power and compassion that define Christian leadership (Ramsey 42). The two formative metaphors that define Christian notions of leadership are those of the leader as shepherd and servant.

The Bible and Christian tradition have always placed special emphasis on the narratively derived pastoral metaphor of the leader as shepherd in shaping their ideas of Christian leadership. In Becoming a Minister, Thomas C. Oden comments on this metaphor:

No image has influenced the practice of pastoral care more than its chief formative metaphor, the good shepherd caring for the vulnerable flock amid a perilous world. This central matrix of imagery has served as the foundation for other images of the pastor—guardian of tradition, guide through hazard, and physician of the flock. It is only upon the basis of this axial metaphor that the pastor can reflect rightly upon the due authorization for ministry and upon *diakonia*. It constitutes an important link in the correlation of Christ's shepherding with contemporary shepherding. (41)

The biblical metaphor of the spiritual leader of the people of God as shepherd is, indeed, the controlling (or “axial”) metaphor for theological reflection on the duties, role,

character, and spirituality of the Christian leader (41).<sup>4</sup> As the controlling metaphor, all other metaphors—player/coach, administrator, spiritual director, friend, etc., even servant—must be brought into a reflective tension with and be controlled by the master metaphor of Christian leader as shepherd.

In recent years, scholars have come to understand the crucial role that metaphor plays in human understanding. It is one of the primary ways human beings think, understand, and structure experience (Lakoff and Johnson 56). Religious metaphors provide a primary tool of human reason as it seeks to structure its experience of God (234). The human capacity to think metaphorically enables Christians to understand God who cannot be apprehended by human senses in terms of things people can and do apprehend—“rocks,” “fortresses,” “lambs,” “lions,” and the like (McFague 15). For Israel, and for the church, the principal metaphor through which leadership is understood is that of the leader as “shepherd.”

The thesis of this dissertation is that certain spiritual practices and related skills characterize an effective spiritual shepherd/servant leader empowered to renew an existing congregation. These practices are derived from the biblical narrative and constitute the building blocks of a “form of life” that can be and often is at odds with the form of life adopted by the increasingly post-Christian West. Sustaining a deep, Christian spiritual and moral life in a driven, secular culture is one of the greatest challenges of the contemporary church and is especially vital in renewing and revitalizing a local church. Exploring the biblical notion of pastoral leadership as “shepherding” is crucial to the

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<sup>4</sup> David Bennett does not agree with this assessment (13). In his view, no master metaphor exists. In his 1993 work, he points out many metaphors that inform a biblical understanding of leadership. In my view, Oden is correct, and the primary metaphor is that of leader as “shepherd.” Nevertheless, other metaphors expand and enrich Christian understanding. Thus, when the Christ

renewal of the church.

Meeting this challenge requires meditation upon the biblical witness and upon the traditional understanding of that witness as it has been understood throughout the ages. It requires that pastors internalize the biblical narrative, specifically the shepherd metaphor for ministry as it is expanded and modified by Christ, until their character and consciousness is framed in accordance with the narrative of Scripture. Thomas F.

Torrance expresses this concept in the following way:

It is only as our minds are open and adjusted to God in accordance with his revealed nature, only when we respond to him in faith, obedience and worship that we can think and speak of God with the kind of precision that is appropriate to his divine nature. Piety and precision, godliness and exactness belong together and condition on another, for knowledge of God arises and takes shape in our minds under the determination of his revealed nature, and is maintained in the experience of worship, prayer, holiness and godliness. (54)

In order for Christian leaders to be able to know God and do God's will, they must be involved in worship, devotion, and holy living and actively sharing the love of God with others. They must indwell and embody the narrative by which Christians are to live and within which they form their lives and modes of understanding (H. Gardner 10). If church leaders experience God in transforming relationship, their transformation will be experienced by others in and outside of the church as leaders embody the biblical narrative and internalize the controlling biblical metaphors for leadership, those of the leader as Shepherd and Servant.

### **Biblical Foundation**

In order to adjust Christian notions of leadership in light of the biblical witness to Christ, Christians must first enter the narrative world of Scripture and indwell its story of

God's relationship with humanity. The story the Bible tells must be assimilated and allowed to shape categories and frames of reference for understanding leadership (Newbigin, Gospel in a Pluralistic Society 97-98). In Calvin's terms, Scripture must be allowed to form the spectacles through which Christians understand the world (1.6.1)

### **Old Testament Shepherd Imagery**

The ancient Hebrews were nomadic shepherds. In their culture, sheep were valuable, and the wealth and status of the shepherd were tied to the number and quality of sheep. The life of a shepherd was difficult due to the need for sheep to be defended, led, and protected, as well as fed. The job of a shepherd called for diligence and endurance. The job of a shepherd was usually filled with routine tasks, including finding the sheep food and water and keeping them safe. The owner of the sheep expected the shepherd to keep a count of the sheep. If animals wandered away, the shepherd had the duty of finding them. If the sheep were in danger, the shepherd was duty-bound to rescue them in the face of personal danger (Mattingly 941).

The patriarchs were all shepherds. Abraham was a shepherd as were Isaac, Jacob, and the other patriarchs. Moses, though trained in the court of Pharaoh, spent his formative years keeping the sheep of his father-in-law, Jethro.

Israel's ideal leader, David, was a shepherd. In fact, the story of David fixed the metaphor of "leader as shepherd" into the consciousness of Israel. Most Christian leaders are at least somewhat familiar with the image of the leader as shepherd from the story of David, the "Shepherd of Israel" (Ps. 78:70-72), but the fact is that the imagery is a profound part of the history and tradition of God's people. The stories of David's life contained in Samuel, 1 Chronicles, and 1 Kings—his calling from a simple shepherd, his

defeat of Goliath, his relationship with Saul, his eventual ascendance, his victory over the enemies of Israel, his love of God, and his fallen character—constitute the narrative background upon which messianic thought developed.

Deep in the history and literature of Israel was the story of David, the Shepherd King, who came out of obscurity to become the greatest leader of God's chosen, covenant people. David's story is recorded in Psalm 78:70-72:

[God] chose David his servant and took him from the sheep pens; from tending the sheep he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel his inheritance. And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them.

Therefore, the basic image for leadership used by Israel being that of a shepherd is not surprising

If David had the integrity and skill that God demanded of the leaders of his people, his successors generally did not. God critiques the leaders of Israel for neglecting the proper care of their flock (Jer. 23:1-4). Virtuous shepherds must be vigilant protectors of the flock, gather and protect the people of God, and not ignore the needs of the sheep under their care. Subsequent leaders of Israel failed in this test (Ezek. 34:1-5)

Throughout the Old Testament, God critiques the leaders of Israel for neglecting the proper care of the flock so that they are scattered and defenseless (see Jer. 23:1-4). Jeremiah's prophecy establishes the role of the pastor as vigilant protector and indicates that pastors must be careful not to ignore the needs of those under their care.

In Ezekiel, the prophet speaks in similar language to the shepherds of Israel:

The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak

or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. So they were scattered because there was not shepherd.” (Ezek. 34:1-5)

In this passage, the prophetic critique of the shepherds is that they care for themselves, not the sheep. Israel’s leadership has neglected feeding, healing, and restoring its sheep.

Harshness that scatters the sheep so they are vulnerable to attack is especially criticized (Ezek. 34:7-8). The harshness, negligence, and self-indulgence of the shepherds results in their removal from over the house of Israel (Ezek. 34:10). The replacement for the shepherds of Israel will be God’s messianic leader:

As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will tend my sheep and make them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice. (Ezek. 34:12-16)

This passage outlines the chief characteristics of faithful leaders of God’s people in the Old Testament; they will gather, find, rescue, tend, feed, give rest to heal, and give justice to the people.

The metaphor of the leader as shepherd is, therefore, the central Old Testament image used both for God’s leadership of his people and for the human leadership of the people of God. The virtues of such a shepherd leader are not the virtues of a monk. Old Testament images for the shepherd leader do not support the idea of leaders as distant, mystical, spiritual guides. Isaac and Jacob were the inheritors of a family business. The story of the patriarchs begins as the story of a nomadic, shepherd family. The



descendants, however, were people of action and many abilities. Joseph was a seer and political leader. Moses was a prophet, lawgiver, and nation builder. Joshua was a military commander. Deborah was a judge, prophet, and military leader. As the shepherd leaders of Israel grew in wealth and power, as was the case for Abraham, the other patriarch, and David, other characteristics were needed beyond those of a simple shepherd. The shepherd leader was a businessperson, diplomat, negotiator, and often an amateur or professional soldier. These shepherd leaders were actively involved in the lives of those they shepherded.

By the time of Christ, deep in the consciousness of Israel was the notion that Israel had been unfaithful to God, their shepherd, both in the person of their religious and political leaders and in the failure of the people themselves to maintain faithfulness to God and his covenant. Jesus' ministry cannot be understood or applied in contemporary Christian understanding apart from an understanding that the people to whom Jesus ministered held a worldview and inhabited a narrative world in which they saw themselves as part of the story of their Shepherd Leaders, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and David. They also saw themselves as living out the consequences of their formation as the people of God and of their disobedience and exile (Wright, New Testament 150). They awaited a Messiah who would undo their exile and reestablish them as the people of God.

### **Gospel Shepherd as Servant Imagery**

The world into which Jesus was born was dominated by Greco-Roman thought forms and Hellenistic in its cultural presuppositions (Wright, New Testament 153). Within this world, the Jewish people lived in an exile of sorts. Their story was supposed to have ended with the coming of the Messiah and the reestablishment of their nation as

an independent nation to which the entire world would stream (Isa. 61-66). In fact, it ended with the flock of Yahweh still scattered (216). The leaders who had brought them back from exile had not fulfilled the messianic promise of an ingathering of the people of God. What was needed was a leader who would fulfill the messianic promise. Into this world Jesus *bar* Joseph was born. In this world Jesus reconstituted the idea of Messiahship common among the Jewish people.

The basic New Testament narrative model for faithful Christian leadership is found in the gospel narrative of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The Gospels specifically identify Jesus as the long awaited “Shepherd of Israel” (Matt. 2:6). Near the beginning of his ministry, when Jesus saw the people of the land, he was moved with compassion for they were “like sheep without a shepherd” (Matt. 9:36; Mark 6:34).

The Messiah was to be a shepherd king for whom the people had long waited. As the true shepherd of his people, the Messiah embodied the character of the true, perfect servant of God. The Messiah would reconstitute the people of Israel. Jesus is portrayed in the New Testament as a kind of leadership prophet—a mighty servant of God in word and deed (Wright, Jesus168). Jesus redefined and assumed the role of the “Shepherd of Israel” as the “Good Shepherd” who gives up his life for the sheep. The older shepherds ended up serving themselves, not the sheep. The Good Shepherd was a sacrificial servant of the sheep.

Thus, the gospel imagery builds upon the Old Testament notions of the shepherd as a leader and protector of Israel. Yet, a deepening transformation of the metaphor and its Old Testament usage occurs as Jesus forces the Church to reflect upon what is entailed in the shepherd metaphor in light of his life and teachings.

In the New Testament, Jesus consciously identifies with and adopts the metaphor

of the leader as shepherd, but he modifies this metaphor as he incorporates his understanding of the Good Shepherd as servant and sacrificial leader. John records the following words of Jesus:

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. (John 10:11-15)

Jesus explicitly identified the shepherd metaphor with apostolic ministry when he remarked, “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:16). Jesus is the embodiment of the gathering task of the Messiah, for he was the Great Shepherd sent to gather the scattered sheep of God.

Jesus’ ministry focused on a style of prophetic leadership and renewal that both deepened and illuminated, undermined and transformed the expectations of the people of God as to the nature and character of the Messiah, their ultimate leader (Wright, *Jesus* 169). Jesus’ behavior—his powerful proclamation, his mighty deeds, and the like—evoked from his disciples the interpretation that they were experiencing the promised renewal of the throne of David (194-96). Yet, he undermined their naïve hope of a physical renewal of David’s kingdom by taking on the role of a servant, even washing their feet (John 13:1-20). Then, his arrest, trial, and crucifixion completed a reversal that could not have been understood or accepted without the resurrection for it undermined the basic narrative understanding of who the Messiah was to be—a victorious conqueror.

### **New Testament Narrative Transformation of the Metaphor**

The New Testament image retains the active, this worldly emphasis of the Old

Testament images, and the virtues that Jesus mentions are precisely the virtues that the Old Testament prophets commended. Jesus is not a distant Buddha but an active caring participant in the lives of his disciples. The Gospel narratives modify the idea of shepherd leadership found in the Old Testament narratives.

Jesus was not a small businessman, shrewd negotiator, or military leader. The nature of the shepherd leader is now to be found in the character of Christ, the rejected and crucified Messiah. As Jesus conducted his ministry, he acted out and retold the story of Israel in such a way as to change and dramatically redirect and reinterpret its basic narrative plot (Wright, Jesus199). This reinterpretation means that older business or military analogies need to be used with care. With this background in mind, church leaders need to take a deeper look at the narrative structure of Jesus' life and ministry in order to identify the movements of the text that would enlighten them as to the narrative meaning of shepherd/servant leadership.

**The preparation and temptation of the shepherd/servant.** Before Jesus began his ministry, he experienced a time of preparation—his first thirty or so years. He was raised for a time in Egypt and then in Galilee, where he grew up in a Jewish home (Matt. 2:1-23). As a boy, he learned the meaning of being a Jew and attended the Jewish festivals (Luke 2:41-51). The temptations on the mountain were to turn stones into bread, to receive all the kingdoms of the world, and to throw himself down and receive the assistance of angels. Giving in to any of these temptations would have involved Jesus in the abuse of power characteristic of the false shepherds of Israel and would have undone the narrative transformation that he intended.

**The shepherd/servant as the proclaimer of the gospel.** As portrayed in the Gospels, Jesus was first and foremost a prophet who came to proclaim the good news that

in him God was coming to restore and renew the people of God. This ministry of reconstituting Israel is the ministry of proclaiming the gospel. Luke records Jesus saying, “I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent” (Luke 4:43). The first step in the reconstitution of the covenant people of God is the proclamation that the time has come when God will act to restore his people.

As the messianic people of God, the primary external duty of the people of God is the proclamation of the kingdom after the example of their King. In Luke, the disciples are sent out “to preach the kingdom of God” (9:2). The apostolic witness recorded in Acts begins and ends with the preaching of the kingdom of God (2:1 ff. and 28:23). The apostolic witness begins with Peter standing up and giving his great sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-36). As Acts ends, Paul, upon his entry into Rome, is concluding his ministry. “From morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets” (Acts 28:23). To the end, Luke records that the apostle “boldly and without hindrance ... preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 28:31).

**The shepherd/servant as gatherer of the flock.** In Mark, Jesus’ ministry begins after John is arrested. He has already been identified as “Christ, the son of God” (Mark 1:1). His first act is to begin the process of gathering the scattered sheep of Israel by inviting potential disciples to follow him (Mark 1:17; Matt. 4:18-22; Luke 5:1-11, 27-32; John 1:35-51). This invitational nature of Jesus’ ministry is not restricted to those he initially called, for later he issues to Levi an invitation to follow him as well as “many [others] who followed him” (Matt. 9:9-113; Mark 2:14-15). From time to time multitudes followed him (Matt. 12:15; Mark 3:7; Luke 6:17-19). Once prepared, Jesus fulfills his

messianic task, his role as a shepherd, by beginning with gathering the lost and scattered sheep of Israel. This gathering or personal invitation is accompanied by his preaching for he comes proclaiming that “the time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God has come near, repent, and believe in the good news” (Matt. 4:12-17; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:14-18; John 4:43-45).

One image Jesus uses for the kingdom is the idea of an ever advancing sovereignty. In Matthew, he says, “From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it” (Matt. 11:12). The agents of the advance are those who are already part of the advancing kingdom of God. The advance of the kingdom is seen both internally among the members of the church as they begin to embody the kingdom and externally as the church advances and others are brought into the kingdom (Luke 17:21; Matt. 10:15). Jesus understood that the process of reconstituting the Old Testament people of God would involve him and those who followed him as leaders to gather people and to bring them into the sheepfold of God. Shepherd leadership inevitably involves the necessity of gathering a flock of God’s people.

**The shepherd/servant as teacher of the flock.** Another characteristic of Jesus was his ability to teach. When Jesus entered the synagogue, he taught as one with authority (Mark 1:21). He is portrayed as the new Moses, teaching the crowds who gather before him in ways that are dramatically unlike their expectations (Matt. 5:1-7:28). He taught by the sea (Mark 2:13). He taught in homes (Mark 2:15). He taught in his own home (Mark 3:19-20). He taught on the Sea of Galilee (Mark 3:7). He taught beside the Sea of Galilee (Mark 4:1).

The nature of his teaching is also important. Jesus taught with authority. Another

characteristic of his teaching is his use of parables and wise sayings. For example, the central parable in Luke is the parable of the sower. The parable is so mysterious that the disciples have to ask concerning its meaning (4:1-21). The disciples need for clarification underscores the fact that the parable cannot be understood by everyone but only by those to whom it is given to understand (4:11-12). Beyond his ability to tell stories, Jesus had a way with words. He often coined memorable phrases.

**The shepherd/servant as doer of mighty deeds on behalf of the flock.** One characteristic of the ministry of Jesus is the way in which he performed mighty deeds of power, such as healings, on behalf of the people. He cast out demons and unclean spirits (Mark 1:26; 3:7-12; 5:1-13; 7:24-30; 8:14-29). He healed fever (1:30-31). He cleansed lepers (Mark 1:40-44). He healed a person of paralysis (Mark 2:1-12). He healed a withered hand (Mark 3:1-5). He protected the lives of his disciples by calming a storm (Mark 4:35-41). He healed a woman with a flow of blood (Mark 5:24-29). He raised a child who was thought to be dead (Mark 5:35-42). He fed a multitude of people upon whom he felt compassion (Mark 6:30-44; 8:1-21). He healed a deaf and dumb person (Mark 7:31-37). He caused the blind to see (Mark 8:22-25; 10:46-52).

Part of the messianic vocation was healing the sin-induced wounds of Israel. Thus, Isaiah says of the Messiah, “he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds are we healed” (53:5). One expected messianic vocation was to heal Israel and restore it to peace and wholeness (*shalom*). Jesus came as the messianic healer of the wounds of Israel (Matt. 4:23-25; Mark 1:21-32).

As a result of the messianic ministry of Jesus, the *shalom* (peace) of Israel was to be restored. The apostles are pictured in Acts as carrying on this healing ministry of the

Messiah. One of the first acts of Peter and John is the healing of the crippled beggar in the temple (Acts 3:1-9). The apostles were active in the ministry of healing, which may have led to persecution by the authorities (Acts 5:12-18). Philip the Evangelist performs mighty acts of healing in his ministry in Samaria (Acts 8:7-8). Ananias healed the stricken Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:17-18). Peter healed Aeneas the paralytic (Acts 9:32-34). In Ephesus Paul did extraordinary acts of healing (Acts 19:11-12). Paul lists the gift of healing as one of the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:28). In James the sick are encouraged to call upon the elders of the church for prayer and healing (Jas. 5:14-15).

The physical healing of individuals is not the only healing foreseen by the New Testament. The healing power of the Spirit is also felt in the social institutions because the healing power of the Spirit is for all the nations. Paul visualizes all creation, including those who have accepted Christ, as in need of restoration (Rom. 8:10-18). John provides the following description as he concludes his vision of the restoration of creation to *shalom*:

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. (Rev. 22:1-2)

Thus, the messianic task includes the healing power of the Spirit for the ills of the nations as well as for the ills of individuals. The final vision of the New Testament visualizes the restoration of the perfect relationship between God and human beings and among human beings that was lost in the Fall.

**The shepherd/servant as empowerer of the flock.** The calling of the twelve and the deeds of power are but a prelude to the task of the Church to reconstitute Israel as the end-time community of the people of God. Jesus appointed the twelve as his apostles



(“sent ones”) to be sent out to proclaim the message of the kingdom of God and to perform mighty deeds of power (Matt. 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:6-11). Later, he sent the twelve out on their own mission in which they teach and do mighty deeds of power, giving evidence of the presence of the kingdom (Matt. 10:1-15; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:7-9).

Jesus instructed the disciples in their mission as Matthew records in his rendition of the Great Commission:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matt. 28:19-29)

In telling the disciples to go, Jesus is giving the Church an outward focus on the advancement of the kingdom of the Messiah. In affirming that the Church should “[g]o in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:18-20), Jesus is reminding the disciples that the presence of the Spirit is his own personal presence with them for ministry. With these words, Jesus handed over his ministry to the disciples. This commission and the promise of the presence given to simple laypeople, not the elite, is a commission to advance the kingdom of God.

**The shepherd/servant as courageous protector of the flock.** The reconstitution of Israel was not without its detractors. Jesus faced opposition in his attempt to reconstitute the end-time people of God. In particular, the current false shepherds of Israel opposed Jesus. The scribes early objected to his forgiveness of sins in connection with healing a paralytic (Mark 2:8-11). Others objected to the way in which he healed and met human needs on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:15-21; Mark 3:1-2; Luke 6:6-11; John 5:1-16). The Pharisees objected to his violation of some of the finer parts of the Law,

such as cleanliness codes (Mark 7:1-23). Ultimately, the Pharisees made attempts to trick Jesus and divide the loyalty of the common people to his ministry (Mark 12:13-17; Matt. 22:15-22; Luke 20:20-26). Even those who did not overtly oppose Jesus often rejected him, and some of those whom Jesus faced were wealthy and powerful (Matt. 26:1-5; Mark 12:1-2; Luke 22:1-6).

**The shepherd/servant as sacrificial servant of the flock.** Jesus understood that his role of protector of the sheep would ultimately involve his death (Matt. 16:21-28; Mark 8:31-33; 9:30-32; 10:33-35; Luke 9:22-27; John 10:1-18). This fact underscores the servant nature of Jesus' leadership. Just after he prophesied his own death, James and John came to him and asked which would be the greatest. In response, he teaches that the greatest among his disciples must be the servant of all, and he must serve them by dying for them (Mark 10:25-45; John 10:11).

**The shepherd/servant as the symbol of hope for the flock.** The story of Jesus did not end with his death and burial. The final word is found in the powerful victory of God over death. The resurrection is God's validation of Jesus' sinless life and character. In the resurrection, Jesus is shown to be the Messiah, the Shepherd of God's reconstituted Israel.

### **Apostolic Appropriation of the shepherd/servant Metaphor**

The apostolic writers recognized the application of the shepherd metaphor to those in Christian leadership. As spiritual shepherds, Christian leaders were to serve under and emulate the Great Shepherd who will lead his people to the "springs of Living Water" (Rev. 7:17). Jesus was the supreme shepherd and overseer of the souls of his people. Jesus' role in shepherding his flock is outlined in Hebrews:

May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant

brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. (Heb. 13:20-21)

Those who follow him and provide leadership in the community are under-shepherds.

The apostles, as they reflected upon the teachings, life, and ministry of Jesus, concluded that just as the Messiah was the Good Shepherd promised through the prophets, so those who carried on the ministry of Jesus were to serve as under-shepherds after the example of the Great Shepherd, Jesus. Peter, for example, exhorts leaders to “[b]e shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve” (1 Pet. 5:2).

Yet, the shepherd metaphor was now altered because the Christian leader is not to be puffed up by the office but a humble servant of the people of God (1 Tim. 3:6). The writer of 1 Timothy clearly lists the characteristics of the Christian leader:

Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap. (1 Tim. 2:1-7)

Church leadership books, which often quote this passage out of its narrative context, miss the point that this passage illuminates a greater teaching concerning leadership in the entire narrative of Scripture.

The apostolic testimony continues the ministry of Jesus in many ways. For example, as Jesus had lost years preparing for his messianic task, Paul had his years alone

(Gal. 1). As Jesus had the disciples, Paul shared his ministry with Barnabas, Silas, Titus, Luke, and others. As Jesus had the “Beloved Disciple,” Paul had Timothy, his child in the faith (1 Tim. 1:2). Paul both admonishes Timothy to be a virtuous leader of the Church and shows deep concern for his well-being. As Jesus was rejected by his people, so also Peter, Paul, and others were rejected. As Jesus did mighty deeds of power, which showed him to be the Messiah who would reconstitute the people of God, so also the apostles did mighty deeds of power, which authenticated their ministry and the continuation of the ministry of Jesus, now in the hands of his disciples.

### **Appropriating the Shepherd/Servant Metaphor**

The Church, throughout her history, has appropriated the shepherd/servant metaphor in different ways during different periods.

**The early fathers.** The Christian pastoral tradition always placed special emphasis on the pastoral metaphor in shaping ministry. In appropriating the metaphor, the Church fathers adopted many of the biblical concerns of the Old Testament prophets. For example, Gregory the Great holds that a shepherd who showed no care for the flock was lacking in love for the Chief Shepherd, saying, “If, then, the care and feeding is a testimony of love, he who, abounding in virtues, refuses to feed the flock of God, is convicted of having no love for the Supreme Shepherd” (30).

Shepherds should be diligent in maintaining virtues that enable them to provide spiritual care for the flock. “He must not be remiss in his care for the inner life by preoccupation with the external; nor must he in his solicitude for what is internal fail to give attention to the external” (Gregory 45). Gregory saw the need for leaders to balance the internal life of faith with the external life of ministry. Among the internal qualities that a leader must develop and maintain are purity of life and exemplary conduct. A

pastor must “by his manner of life ... show the way of life to his subjects, and that the flock, following the teaching and conduct of its shepherd, may proceed the better through example than words” (48).

A good shepherd will also balance the demands of silence and speech. St. Ambrose, in his treatise on the clergy, identifies silence as a virtue for Christian leaders. The practice of silence ensures that the leader has the self-control to “not burst out into speech through displeasure or anger, nor give sign of any passion in his words, nor proclaim that the flames of lust are burning in his language, or that the incentives of wrath are present in what he says” (3). On the other hand, leaders must know when to speak. “Now to rise up against the enemy is to oppose worldly powers with candid speech in defense of the flock.... For if a shepherd feared to say what is right, what else is that but to have turned his back by not speaking” (Gregory 53). Gregory goes on to show how care for the flock, compassion, humility, care for the internal life, meekness, self-awareness, prudence, and devotion to Scripture should characterize the shepherd leader of God’s people.

St. Ambrose, after a section of his work Duties of the Clergy that deals with the patriarchs in which he describes Jacob as a “faithful shepherd,” summarizes their character as follows:

What duty connected with the chief virtues was wanting in these men? In the first place, they showed prudence, which is exercised in the search for truth, and which imparts a desire for full knowledge; next justice, which assigns each man his own, does not claim another’s, and disregards its own advantage, so as to guard the rights of all; thirdly, fortitude, which both in warfare and at home is conspicuous in greatness of mind and distinguishes itself in the strength of the body; fourthly, temperance, which preserves the right method and order in all things that we think should be either done or said. (20)

**Confessional adaptation.** The confessional heritage of the PCUSA gives some

guidance concerning the kinds of virtues that would be appropriate for those exercising Christian leadership. Once again, the dominant tone of the heritage indicates that the kind of spirituality that is required of leaders is an active, dynamic spirituality. The Second Helvetic Confession notes that “God has always used ministers for the gathering or establishing of a Church ... and for the governing and preserving of the same, and he still does, and always will, as long as the Church remains on earth” (Presbyterian Church Sec. 5.142). In making this affirmation, the example of the Patriarchs is expressly adopted (Presbyterian Church Sec. 5.14). Thus, the Church is to be governed by leaders whose duties are the practical duties of gathering and maintaining the flock of Christ. Correspondingly, the virtues of such persons are those virtues that make possible the continuation of the ministry of Jesus, the task of building and maintaining the Church of Christ as the end-time people of God.

Bullinger, in the “Second Helvetic Confession,” outlines the pastoral task by interpreting 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11. The duties of the pastoral office are encompassed in the roles of evangelist, bishop, pastor, and teacher. The evangelistic gift is expressed in gathering the Church. The task of bishop, or elder, involves the roles of oversight and management. The role of pastor involves “keeping the sheepfold.” The role of teaching involves instructing the faithful in faith and godliness (Presbyterian Church Sec. 5.147).

The kinds of spiritual practices that undergird the Christian in the accomplishment of these tasks are those of (1) an interest in people; (2) a willingness to invite people to share in the ministry of the Church and the benefits of Christ; (3) a careful attention to the discipline and care of the congregation, including caring for the individual members of the congregation; and, (4) studying and preparing to share the gospel. The underlying

virtue in all these roles is humility “for the Lord has prohibited dominion to his disciples and has highly commended humility” (Presbyterian Church Sec. 5.157).

**Modern appropriation.** In his book Pastoral Theology, Thomas Oden fleshes out the image of the shepherd as it pertains to the role of the modern leader. For Oden, the pastoral image has a continuing validity to guide contemporary pastoral practice (51). For the modern church leader, the duties of intimate knowledge, unifying teaching, guidance, and courageous protection remain central to the task of guiding God’s people (51-52). The shepherd has authority over the sheep, but this authority is of a unique character; it is the authority of one who is himself or herself a servant (53). The servanthood of the leader is twofold. First, a leader of a local congregation is the servant of the Great Shepherd, responsible to God for the flock. Second, a leader of a local congregation is the servant of the flock since the Great Shepherd has placed their interests in the care of the leadership of the Church. The shepherd leader has dignity and power, but it is not the power of the rulers of this world because “[w]herever Christians speak of authority or dignity of ministry or headship of the shepherd, these are not properly understood as coercive modes of power, but persuasive, participative modes of benevolent, empathetic guidance” (53). In the context of a larger church, where community interaction is less personal, this image of leaders as sponsors of participative guidance for the congregation is an important one to keep in mind.

John Macquarrie, in his Principles of Christian Theology, emphasizes that the ministry of the Church is the ministry of Jesus Christ who was the servant of the Lord (420). Just as the Church is the embodied continuing ministry of Christ so the ministry of every Christian leader is also a participation in the ministry of Christ (420). This participation in the ministry of Christ applies to laypersons and pastors alike (422). Yet,

only a naïve person assumes that the Church, as a human entity that operates within the boundaries of human history, can avoid the necessity for a trained leadership (424). For Macquarrie, mission is inherent in the very notion of the Church and is part of the very essence of Christian leadership (441). Just as Jesus entrusted the mission into the hands of his apostles, so contemporary leaders are entrusted with the apostolic mission of expanding the boundaries of the Church (442).

Leslie Newbigin built upon a missional understanding of Christian leadership in a number of works that launched the “Gospel and Culture” movement. Newbigin believes that the Church in the West is now in a missional condition. The secularization of Western culture is forcing the Christian church in the West to do something that has not been necessary since the first few centuries of its existence—it must recover its identity as a missionary body (Open Secret 8). Visible congregations need the kind of visible and tangible leadership that can develop, nourish, and sustain Christian faith and life in the midst of a hostile culture (Gospel in a Pluralistic Society 235). This concept suggests a need for a new kind of ministerial leadership.

For Newbigin, the life of the Church and its leaders is centered in proclaiming the kingdom of the Father, sharing the life of the Son, and bearing witness in the power of the Spirit (Open Secret 30-56). This missionary leadership involves the Church in reclaiming areas it has abandoned, such as the inner city, “deploying ministers in areas where the Christian presence is the weakest” (Gospel in a Pluralistic Society 236). Newbigin believes that one of the signals of the decline of the mainline and established churches is their abandonment of their mission to the inner cities (236). A renewed church in the West will be a missionary church that engages the real needs of the culture and society in which it ministers.



An essential element of renewing the ministries of the traditional churches is a revitalized ministry of the laity: “Equipping all the members of the congregation to understand and fulfill their several roles” (Newbigin, Gospel in a Pluralistic Society 238). Missional leadership involves the pastor in confronting the powers and in displaying the courage to confront social and corporate sin (240). However, Newbigin defines the minister’s role even further:

[The] minister’s leadership of the congregation in its mission to the world will be first and foremost in the area of his or her own discipleship, in that life of prayer and daily consecration which remains hidden from the world but which is the place where the essential battles are either won or lost. (241)

The missional leader is, first of all, a disciple of the shepherd/servant, Jesus Christ (241). Thus, missional leadership will involve a coherence between the character of Christian leaders, the gospel that is preached, and the community that is formed. Christian leaders must indwell the biblical narrative until it forms the primary lens through which ministry is understood and leadership is formed.

Building on the work of Newbigin, the “Gospel and Culture movement” has attempted to build a “missional theology” for ministry because the ministry of leadership is given to enable the Church to carry out its missional task (Guder et al. 185). The first principle of this movement is that the key to the formation of missional communities is leadership. The Spirit empowers the Church for ministry through the gifts of its people, one of which is the gift of leadership. In the eyes of the missional church movement, the purpose of leadership is to form and equip a people who announce the purpose and direction of God through Jesus Christ (183). Biblical passages indicating that Christian leaders are to embody the ministry of Christ point to the importance of Christian leaders identifying the practices that make for a covenant, missional community, and making

those practices concrete and real in their lives and in the life of the community they serve (200). Although Guder and his associates do not use the specific language of shepherding and servanthood, their emphasis on the biblical model of leadership and the need for leaders to embody the life of Christ points to the metaphor of shepherd servanthood.

## **Conclusion**

The essential issue for the leader of a local church is not whether the core roles of ministry can be avoided. They cannot. The image, often used, of the pastor as “player/coach” implies that church leaders must “play” the game of discipleship, not merely preach, teach, and organize it. If the central need of late twenty-first century people is some sense of connection with God and with others, and if the quest for meaning is essentially a spiritual quest, then pastoral activity must flow from the internal spirituality of the pastor. This spiritual quest involves people’s recovering a narrative basis for their lives and faith. Leaders must participate in the reconstruction of the narrative basis for Christian life and must embody it in their lives. In the same way, lay leaders cannot avoid the need to be actively and personally involved in the ministry of the church as it lives out the continuing story of the people of God.

## **Modern Secular Leadership Theory**

This dissertation embodies a methodology that is dialogical and integrative. The attempt is to integrate a narratively constructed outline of Christian leadership as it has developed in the Christian tradition with other, secularly derived understandings of the nature of leadership. Just as Jesus deepened and transformed the Old Testament shepherd model of leadership and later Christian thinkers crafted their own theological understandings, this dissertation looks at the way in which the biblical shepherd/servant metaphor can be and is helpfully adapted to the challenges of contemporary ministry in

the context of the renewal and revitalization of local congregations.

### **The Need for Leadership**

Experts on leadership often comment that society suffers from a shortage of leaders—people who can envision a better future and have the skills necessary to gather people in support of that vision, organize, train, empower, and then release them for mission and ministry to their culture. Churches in need of renewal and revitalization have many of the same characteristics as other organizations in need of renewal and revitalization. One of the most basic needs is for leadership (Bolman and Deal 8). This study focused on the being of leadership, the worldview, character, values, practices, and activities that characterize leaders. This focus is consonant with the view that future leadership will be focused on issues of the character and “being” of the kind of leaders who are able to renew existing congregations (Hesselbein and Cohen 122).

As discussed below, the many studies of the characteristics of leaders give varying lists of the qualities of leaders, yet the core characteristics seem to be (1) belief in oneself combined with the humility to listen to others, (2) a passion for the job at hand which provides the necessary energy and focus combined with an awareness of other worlds, and (3) the kind of love for people that allows a community to be formed and maintained (Handy 8-9).

### **Transformational Leadership**

Much attention has been given to what is called “transformational leadership,” or the ability to lead an organization into a period of change during which the organization raises its level of accomplishment. This kind of leadership is important for mainline/old-line churches, because the renewal and redevelopment of local congregations requires transformational leadership. Revitalization and renewal always involves an outpouring of

the Spirit and a new adaptation of the congregation to its environment.

The concept of transformational leadership began with James MacGregor Burns in his seminal work, Leadership. For Burns, leadership is a reciprocal process of mobilizing, by persons with certain motives and values, various economic, political, and other resources in order to realize their independent or mutual objectives (425). In his work, Burns distinguished between two types of leadership—transactional and transforming. Transactional leadership covers most of the work of leaders in which an exchange of value occurs between leaders and followers (425).

Transactional leadership characterizes most of the work that leaders do in the day-to-day management of politics, business, and other public and private organizations. Transformational leadership, on the other hand, involves organizational discontinuity. Transformational leadership occurs when leaders act to shape the goals and values of an organization in order for it to reach a higher level of performance (Burns 425). Transformational leaders have the capacity to take an organization to another level of accomplishment in meeting human needs. This type of leadership is the kind that is involved in the renewal and revitalization of organizations—including churches.

According to Burns, of all the kinds of leadership, the one that involves the renewal of an existing organization requires the most exceptional skills in order to be successful (169). This kind of leadership demands exceptional leadership, political skill, commitment, persistence, courage, selflessness, and self-abnegation (169). Because of the complexity of the situation, transformational leaders face demands that are not present in leading new or stable organizations. Given the inertia of an existing organization, an inevitable need exists for exceptional energy and a willingness to compromise within the boundaries of the morality of change (170).

Faced with an existing organization and culture, a transformational leader always encounters resistance and real limits to what can be accomplished. Because reform leaders are not attempting to build a new organization or replace it through revolution, they accept existing structures and must act within the limits placed upon them by the existing organization and its culture (Burns 200). Existing structures have resilience and resist change, and renewal leaders must understand and accept this fact. Given the importance and power of existing structures, leaders of renewal efforts must maintain a balance between transactional leadership (keeping the organization going) and transformational leadership (taking the organization to a new height) (200).

Transformational leaders exhibit characteristics different from transactional leaders. For example, transformational leaders normally possess a strong set of internal values and ideals. They are self-motivated, and they are effective at motivating individuals in ways that support the common good as opposed to individual self-interest (Northouse 134). Four factors seem to characterize transformational leadership: (1) charisma or “idealized influence,” whereby the leader becomes a role model for the group; (2) “inspirational motivation,” whereby the leader communicates high expectations to, and elicits high performance from, the group; (3) “intellectual stimulation,” whereby the leader stimulates followers to be creative and innovative; and (4) “individualized consideration,” whereby the leader coaches and mentors individuals as they develop the capacity to transform an organization (135-37). Thus, for Northouse, transforming leadership is a process by which the charisma of the transformational leader inspires and empowers others in the organization.

In their 1985 book Leaders: Strategies for Change, Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus outline three basic tasks that are important for transforming leaders: (1) creating

focused attention by vision, (2) creating meaning through communication, and (3) creating trust through positioning the organization.

Visioning involves creating a mental image of a possible and desirable future for an organization (Bennis and Nanus 89). Such a vision allows individuals to function effectively and creates energy and enthusiasm (91). As Bennis and Nanus explain, “By focusing attention on a vision, the leader operates on the emotional and spiritual resources of the organization, on its values, commitment, and aspirations” (92). Not any vision will do, for a vision requires the kind of understanding of the organization and its environment that may only be found in those who read, listen, and study the past and the current environment in which the organization operates (96-98). The transformational leader’s art is the ability to face reality and gather and accurately interpret information in order to lead change (101).

The second necessary ability of a transformational leader is the ability to communicate the vision in a compelling way (Bennis and Nanus 106-09). This communication involves the capacity to shape organizational culture or what Bennis and Nanus call the “social architecture” of the organization (110). The transformation of the culture of any organization requires that leaders create vision, develop commitment to the vision among those in the organization, and provide the institutional and cultural support needed for the vision to be accomplished (141).

Finally, the transformational leader must “position” the organization in such a way that trust in the leader’s capabilities is assured (Bennis and Nanus 153). The two conditions for trust are (1) a vision that is clear, attractive, and attainable and (2) clarity (or perhaps transparency) in the alignment of the leader toward the vision (154). In other words, people must understand the vision and see the leader as a person who embodies

the qualities necessary for the vision to be accomplished. In order for a vision to be attainable, the leader must be seen as capable of designing, establishing, and sustaining the organization in a way that will enable it to prosper in the external environment (156).

“Positioning” is the process by which the organization creates a niche for itself in a complex, changing environment in a way that is unique, important, and appropriate given the resources available (Bennis and Nanus 162). Included in the positioning process are the tasks of overcoming resistance to change, brokering the needs and demands of important constituencies, and setting the basic values and norms that will govern the organization (185-86). In order to accomplish this task, transformational leaders must deploy themselves in ways that create the conditions under which change can occur. Although charisma is nice, transformational leaders themselves more often refer to the need for persistence, self-knowledge, a willingness to take risks and accept losses, consistency, and the ability to learn and adapt as the key characteristics of transformational leaders (187-88).

Neal M. Tichy and Mary Anne Devanna analyze transforming leadership in a way that is important for the narrative approach taken by this dissertation. For Tichy and Devanna, the transformation of an organization is a drama that unfolds in three acts. In the first act, the organization comes to recognize the need for revitalization (5). In the second act, the leadership of the organization confronts the need for a new vision (6). In the third act of the drama, the necessary change is institutionalized in the organization (6).

Transformational leaders are the protagonists in the drama of renewal who confront the tensions of struggle (1) between the forces of stability and those of change, (2) between the forces of denial and those of stability, (3) between organizational fear of

(and hope for) the future, and (4) between the managerial (maintenance) mind-set and the mind-set of leaders who desire change (Tichy and Devanna 27-28). Interestingly, though transformation is a heroic task, successful transformational leaders often carry out their task in a way that is almost the antithesis of a heroic style of leadership (90). Generally, transformational leaders do not seek to lead in crisis; rather, it is forced upon them by circumstances (92-93). Nevertheless, when faced with circumstances that require transformational leadership, successful renewal agents face reality and engage in the kind of individual and corporate introspection that enables a transformation to occur (94).

For Tichy and Devanna, successful transformational leaders have seven characteristics: (1) they self-consciously identify themselves as change agents; (2) they are personally courageous; (3) they believe in people and empower others; (4) they are driven by values; (5) they are life-long learners; (6) they have the ability to deal with complexity, ambiguity, and uncertainty; and, (7) they are visionaries (271-80). An evaluation of this list must take into consideration that the focus of Tichy and Devanna is not on character issues but upon the kind of activities that transformational leaders conduct during the transformational drama. The essence of transformational leadership is the “capacity to adapt means to ends—to shape and reshape institutions and structures to achieve broad human purposes and moral aspirations” (187). Such leaders have the capacity to form and stick to goals, to structure institutions and accomplish these goals, and to motivate people to accomplish the tasks necessary for the accomplishment of these goals (187).

In 1990, former Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, John Gardner, published what has become one of the most important studies of leadership. For Gardner, “leadership is the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership



team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader or shared by the leader and his or her followers” (1). Interestingly, Gardner understands that renewal is an essential part of the nature of organizational leadership (4). Most leadership today takes place in the context of large, intricately organized systems. Such institutions are fragile and, therefore, are in constant need of renewal and revitalization. Gardner notes, “All human institutions must renew themselves continuously; therefore, we must explore this process as it bears on leadership” (xiii).

J. Gardner recognizes the narrative quality of leadership and so recounts that “[a] great civilization is a drama lived in the minds of a people” (13). Leaders, therefore, are intricately bound into a relationship with those they lead as both leaders and followers are trying to make sense of the world they inhabit and make changes in that world that they feel desirable. The “drama lived in the minds of people” (13) is the story by which people live. Transformational leadership becomes necessary at times when the story by which people are living loses its power to structure experience meaningfully and orient their lives properly toward reality. The duty of leaders is to affirm and reaffirm the fundamental values of a group. This task is intimately related to the task of renewal since values decay over time (13). As Gardner explains, “Values always decay over time. Societies that keep their values alive do so not by escaping the process of decay but by powerful processes of regeneration (13). As a result of the inevitability of organizational decay, transforming, renewing leadership is always necessary.

J. Gardner understands the relational nature of leadership. Leaders and followers, or “constituents,” are bound together; thus, “leaders are almost never as much in charge as they are pictured to be, followers are never as submissive as one might imagine” (23). Thus, leadership is a reciprocal relationship in which leaders acquire power and status

and followers confer it (24). Because of the relational nature of leadership, effective two-way communication is necessary for successful leadership (26). Thus, trust is essential for leaders to function (33). Charisma is a specifically Christian element in Gardner's leadership theory, relating as it does to Paul's use of the term charisma (34). The charisma of the transforming leader is the means by which such a leader deploys his personality in service of a transforming vision. Finally, strengthening and empowering followers is an important relational element in leadership (36).

J. Gardner outlines nine tasks that constitute the most significant duties of leaders, the two primary of which are goal setting and motivation (11). The nine tasks of leadership are (1) visioning, (2) affirming values, (3) motivating people, (4) managing, (5) creating unity, (6) explaining and teaching, (7) acting as an organizational symbol, (8) representing the organization, and (9) renewing the organization (13-21). To be effective, leaders must foster the process of institutional renewal (21). This duty of leadership is intimately related to the setting of goals, because in the setting and attaining of goals beyond the maintenance of the status quo, leaders effect positive change (13-21).

J. Gardner distinguishes several attributes of leaders: (1) physical vitality and stamina; (2) intelligence and judgment in action; (3) willingness (eagerness) to accept responsibilities; (4) task competence; (5) understanding followers and their needs; (6) skill in dealing with people; (7) need to achieve; (8) capacity to motivate people to a higher level; (9) courage, resolution and steadiness; (10) the capacity to win and hold trust; (11) the ability to manage, decide, and set priorities; (12) confidence; (13) ascendance, dominance and assertiveness; and, (14) adaptability and flexibility of approach (48-54).

According to J. Gardner, in modern societies, change is rapid and pervasive. In

such a society, continuous renewal is necessary in society and in its institutions (122). All organizations develop strategies for dealing with their environment and accomplishing the ends for which they were formed. Unfortunately, the external environment changes, with the consequence that what formerly worked becomes unworkable. Gardner explains this phenomenon as follows:

The means and methods were originally designed to achieve some specific end, but when circumstances change and new means are called for, it turns out that the old ones have become sacrosanct; the means have become ends in themselves—no longer effective perhaps, but enshrined. People forget what they set out to do.... So the mature organization ends up with a web of customs, procedures, written and unwritten rules that is extremely hard to cut through. (123)

The idea that organizations inevitably become encrusted with tradition and decline is an especially important insight for mainline denominations. Many mainline congregations have long histories, some as old as the nation, and have developed a large set of customs, procedures, rules, and organizational entities that are often ill-adapted to the cultural realities of postmodern America. As Milton Coulter, John Mulder, and Louis B. Weeks note, the modern, corporate, and bureaucratic denomination that was very successful over many years began to decline in the 1950s and “[w]hat Presbyterians and other Protestants are witnessing today is part of the unraveling of the corporate idea of the denomination” (Hadaway, Mainline Protestant Decline105). Transformational leadership is required in order to deal with the organizational failures of mainline churches to adapt to a changing cultural environment.

Given the complexity of the task, inherent in renewal is the need for leaders to (1) renew and reinterpret values; (2) liberate energies that have been imprisoned by outmoded procedures and habits of thought; (3) reenergize forgotten goals or generate new goals appropriate to new circumstances; (4) achieve by appropriate analysis new

understandings and, therefore, new solutions; and, (5) foster the release of new human possibilities through education and lifelong growth (J. Gardner 122). To be effective, contemporary leaders must live with the idea of renewal as a permanent feature of organizational life (122).

Unlike those who form organizations, those who lead renewal must understand the culture and potential of that which they seek to change. Thus, “[l]eaders must understand the interweaving of continuity and change” (J. Gardner 124). Of special interest to leaders who are in the midst of renewing organizations is the way in which the long-term purposes and values of an organization affect the process of renewal. As Gardner notes, “These purposes and values also evolve in the long run; but by being relatively durable, they enable a society to absorb change without losing its distinctive character and style. Purposes and values do much to determine the direction of change” (124).

One issue that faces renewal leaders is the fact that the “problems of an aging organization are systemic” (J. Gardner 125). Even creative leaders, inclined to undertake the renewal of an organization, face the reality of stagnation. The unwillingness of people to face reality creates the “trance of non-renewal,” in which people can look straight at a flaw in the system and not see it (126). The idea of a “trance of non-renewal” is also an important consideration for the renewal of mainline denominations. Because many social elites belong to these denominations and their churches, resulting in adequate funding, these organizations and their churches can often avoid facing reality for a long time.

For J. Gardner, renewal as an organizational process occurs in steps. The first step is the release of talent and energy:

If they are concerned for renewal, both recruiters and those concerned

with leadership development must have an eye out for the maverick quality that enables young potential leaders to escape the bondage of “what is” and point the way toward “what might be.” (126-27)

This kind of person is characterized by an imaginative, independent, original mind and spirit, possessing the “capacity to cast new light on old ideas” (127). These characteristics require that great renewal leaders be “people developers” (127).

The second step is the ability to motivate people toward change. “For a leader who is concerned with renewal, there is hardly any subject more important than motivation “ (J. Gardner 128). Any organization that is interest in renewal must place highly motivated persons with the gift of motivating others in positions of power (128).

A third quality that renewal leaders need to possess is a tolerance of a measure of dissent and diversity (J. Gardner 128). For renewal to occur, easy, open, and fluid communication must be possible among those in the organization (129). Leaders who lose sight of the realities of the organization and prefer the status quo are dangerous to an organization and to its future. Thus, many times necessity requires outsiders to lead the renewal (130). Renewal leaders need to be on the front lines and visible to those they lead so that they experience the reality of the organization they lead and its problems (129).

Vision is an essential element of renewal leadership:

Of the popularly expressed requirements for leadership, one of the most common is that leaders have vision, which can mean a variety of things: that they think longer term; that they see where their system fits in the larger context; that they can describe the outlines of a possible future that lifts and moves people; or that they actually discern, in the clutter and confusion of the present, the elements that determine what is to come. (J. Gardner 130-31)

This visionary element involves timing. “Wise leaders sharpen their sense of things to come” (131).

Because leaders play a significant role in the process of renewal for institutions

and of society as a whole, they need to have a measure of self-care (J. Gardner 132). The key to renewal is the release of human energy and talent (136). This requirement means that leaders often find themselves physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted. Since the process of renewal takes a toll on leaders, they must have times of renewal (132).

Stress can seriously affect leaders and their ability to provide renewing leadership. One source of stress is hostile criticism (133). A second source of stress is the loss of privacy that any kind of leadership (and perhaps especially pastoral leadership) entails. A third source of stress is work overload and all that goes with it—fatigue, loss of sleep, the encroachment on time normally spent with family and friends, and lack of leisure to read and reflect (133). A fourth source of strain not often mentioned is the struggle and controversy that goes with top leadership (133-34).

In order to handle the stress that goes with leadership, leaders need the “courage to be idle” (J. Gardner 134). Leaders have a responsibility to take care of themselves and this responsibility includes needed rest, diet, sleep, exercise, relaxation techniques, reduction in substance abuse, and so on. Leaders need a place of retreat and something to do that is nonverbal. Leaders need a haven from the battle. Finally, leaders need friends and associates who are willing to be both supportive and critical (134-35).

Leaders who would renew their organization need to be renewers of organizational culture. Culture, the body of ideas, custom, assumptions, and institutional patterns transmitted from one generation to the next, has a powerful impact on the entire process of renewal (J. Gardner 135). Culture “is an immensely powerful element in determining how the group sees its needs and moves to meet those needs. It provides both constraints and opportunities with respect to the ways in which leadership can be exercised” (135). Leaders who would renew an existing organization must understand the

limitations and opportunities that the unique culture of their organization places on their organization.

Howard Gardner makes an important contribution to a narrative understanding of transformational leadership. For Gardner, leaders accomplish their goals primarily by means of constructing stories that followers adopt (9). Leaders communicate these stories in a variety of ways, most powerfully by the way in which they embody them (10).

Leaders undertake three kinds of leadership: (1) ordinary leadership (similar to Burns' transactional leadership); (2) innovative leadership by which a leader brings new attention and a fresh twist to the story that gives direction to a group; and, (3) creative or visionary leadership by which new visions of reality (new stories) are constructed that are embedded in new structures (10-11). What Burns calls transformational leadership: seems to embody elements of what Gardner calls innovative and creative leadership.

Within a traditional organization or discipline, most participants are familiar with the foundational story of the group (H. Gardner 11). This familiarity creates both challenges and opportunities for the leader. Positively, familiarity with the foundational story allows leaders to make subtle changes in the story of the group. Negatively, of course, the existence of a story makes difficult or impossible certain changes that the leader might consider appropriate. Innovative leadership is made more difficult by another characteristic of organizations. Broadly based institutions, such as the church, involve people with vastly differing apprehensions of the constitutive story of the group. In the church, many people bring relatively undisciplined and vague understandings (12). Finally, leaders must understand that their stories compete with other stories that may seek to supplant, suppress, or complement the leaders' proposal. These "counter-stories" vie with the leader's story in important ways (14). For the churches of North America,

the modern and postmodern stories are just such counter-stories.

Howard Gardner's leadership theory involves several constants of leadership: (1) the story the leader relates, (2) the audience or group that the leader intends to impact, (3) the organization within which leadership is exercised, (4) the embodiment of the story in the life of the leader, and (5) the expertise that the leader brings to the task and that may be necessary for the leader to succeed (290-95). Central to Gardner's theory is the issue of embodiment. The authenticity of the leader is crucial to this authenticity in the eyes of the followers (293). Embodiment is also a part of the moral dimension of leadership (297).

In his book Leading Change, John P. Kotter distinguishes eight leadership tasks that a transformational leader must accomplish in order for an organization to successfully change:

1. A sense of urgency must be established;
2. A guiding coalition must be created;
3. A vision and strategy for change must be developed;
4. The vision and strategy must be communicated within the organization;
5. Members of the organization must be empowered to accomplish the change;
6. Short term wins must be gained;
7. The changes must be consolidated for the process to continue; and,
8. The changes must be anchored in organizational culture (21).

The key to this kind of transformation is "leadership, leadership, and still more leadership" (31). Transformational leaders must have the qualities that allow them to provide the kind of leadership that permits the tasks of leadership to be accomplished.



## Servant Leadership

Traditional leadership theories were heavily hierarchical. One of the first voices to react against the traditional model of leadership was Robert K. Greenleaf in his groundbreaking book, Servant Leadership. Greenleaf believes that modern society is in a period in which its institutional forms (business, government, and charitable) are in need of a new paradigm of leadership. The older, hierarchical model of leadership was manifestly unable to meet the needs of society. Under these circumstances, the need is for what Greenleaf calls, “Servant Leadership.” Leaders, Greenleaf believes, rebuild the sense of community lacking in modern society as they provide servant leadership within communities, businesses, political, and other institutions they serve (38-39).

Unlike many leadership theorists, Greenleaf has a special interest in churches since they have a special role in the leadership of society. As Greenleaf explains, religion is essentially a matter of healing the alienation of people from the cosmos. He calls the process of healing human alienation “rebinding” because the root of the word “religion” means to rebind (80). Unfortunately, Greenleaf believes that churches have failed in accomplishing the task of healing human alienation (219).

For Greenleaf, the very dynamics of leadership vision, values, staying power, community formation, and the like are essentially religious tasks (81). A society that needs to become more loving and more just and provide increasing opportunities for people needs religious organizations (80). As the Church builds leadership strength, the kind of leaders it develops will have a transforming effect on other social institutions (82). This transforming effect is important because Greenleaf believes that the entire institutional arrangement of society is flawed and in need of “comprehensive rebuilding” in order for institutions to become more human and serve the needs of people (243).

Thus, an inherent connection exists between the entire idea of servant leadership and the kind of leadership needed for the renewal of local congregations.

### **Values in Transformational Leadership**

In their 1995 book, Values Based Leadership: Rebuilding Employee Commitment, Performance and Productivity, Susan Smith and Thomas J. Kuczmariski point out the need for values-based leadership in the face of organizational and institutional decline. The lack of values and norms for behavior has harmed all American social institutions (20). Historically, individuals received immense social support in the formation of character and in developing patterns of behavior. Extended families, neighborhood organizations, churches, community leaders, schools, and other institutions assisted persons with developing behavioral patterns (24). Unfortunately, most of this support has been severely weakened in recent years. The result is cultural decline.

Like Greenleaf, Susan and Thomas Kuczmariski and Kuczmariski believe that in order to reverse the decline in values in America organizations are needed that reestablish values and norms through their management, compensation, leadership, and empowerment strategies (25). Effective organizations create community and a sense of belonging by creating and reinforcing strong norms of behavior that result in a sense of community (176-77). The qualities that reinforce a strong, value-based leadership style include active listening, empathy, positive attitudes, integrity where commitments are concerned, high-energy levels, self-understanding, and sensitivity to the needs, values, and potential of others (190).

### **Leadership in the Twenty-First Century**

In the midst of a cultural need for leaders, many observers believe that a new paradigm or understanding of leadership is developing. Against an older paradigm that

said leadership was a function of status within an organization and often equated leadership with management ability, the rapidly changing context of North America has resulted in a new understanding of leadership that is relational in nature and seeks to understand the inner dynamics of the way in which leaders and followers relate (Shriberg, Shriberg, and Lloyd 211-12). Leaders cannot exist without followers, and the dynamic between leaders and followers is essentially relational (Rost 5). One element of this new paradigm is an understanding of the way in which leadership integrates the spiritual and practical aspects of leadership.

### **Spirituality and Transforming Servant Leaders**

James A. Autry has developed a secular model of the importance of character, personhood, and spirit in the workplace. For Autry, the behavior of leaders manifests the character, personhood, and spirit of the leader (1). Five ways of being reflect the character and spirituality of a servant leader: (1) authenticity, (2) vulnerability, (3) acceptance of people, (4) presence to people, and (5) useful service to people (100). Authenticity comes from self-knowledge and self-acceptance (13). This is the kind of self-acceptance that produces courage and confidence in a leader. Vulnerability is the willingness to be honest about your feelings in the workplace, including honesty about doubts, fears, concerns, and mistakes (15). Only those who have a fair degree of self-confidence can be vulnerable. Acceptance is the willingness to be open to ideas. It does not mean a lack of critical analysis, discussion, or judgment; it means being open to a person's ideas (17). Presence is the leaders' abilities to remain attuned to all of their responsibilities and still be fully present to people and focused on the moment (18). Drawing on the work of Greenleaf, Autry defines usefulness as the ability to make oneself of service to others in the organization (20).

Servant leaders have six qualities that set them apart:

1. Servant leaders are more interested in caring for than controlling people;
2. Servant leaders focus on caring for people and building community;
3. Servant leaders let go of their own ego and bring authentic;
4. Servant leaders focus on making the workplace a good a place to work;
5. Servant leaders pay attention to people; and,
6. Servant leadership requires love (Autry 20-21).

This outline of servant leadership can be summarized as involving (1) authentic personhood, (2) attention to people as individuals in a caring relationship, and (3) community building within the organization.

### **Summary of Transformational Leadership Qualities**

Secular writers provide insight into the dynamics of leadership. Although the precise nature of any list of the dynamics of transformational leadership may differ, many similarities exist among the qualities that experts list, including some qualities that are found in all lists. The foregoing review of the various schools of transformational leadership makes possible a useful summary of the character of transformational leaders.

**Character.** Over the years, many studies have been conducted of the characterological sources of leadership. These studies have concluded with many, many lists of the kinds of character that are needed for leaders to function. These lists do not agree in full, but some similarities and core attributes emerge from the studies. Followers must sense that their leaders have fundamental integrity. Leaders must possess wholeness and congruency between what they say they believe in and who they are (Jenkins and Jenkins 114). From fundamental integrity flows the most important single aspect of leadership—trust (O’Toole 28). Followers must trust their leaders to act in their best

interests and to shepherd them toward the achievement of organizational goals. To lead, leaders must have trust, and to have trust, leaders must be trustworthy.

**Vision.** All students of transformational leadership agree that vision is an essential element of transforming leadership. Vision is not simply creativity. It is the ability to discern a preferable and attainable future for an organization. It is a realistic, ideal image of the future of an organization (Kouzes and Posner 85). Vision involves an image of what the leader wishes to create as a result of the activities of an organization (Senge 61). As such, it is not simply a mental image but a source of motivation and inspiration. The power that generates transformation is unleashed as people gain a single, coordinated vision of the future. This power helps align the organization and gives coherence and purpose to a number of seemingly disconnected activities (Staub 59). Without shared vision, an organization will almost certainly experience conflict and wasted energy (Kotter 70).

For a vision to be effective, it must be (1) visually imaginable, (2) desirable to stakeholders in the organization, (3) capable of being accomplished, (4) focused enough to provide clear guidance to decision makers, (5) flexible enough to allow for individual initiative, and (6) easily communicated to persons who need to understand it (Kotter 72). Where transformational vision is present, the potential exists for successful transformation, while the absence of vision is associated with many failed transformations (8).

**Motivation.** Again, all scholars agree that the ability to inspire confidence and motivate others to action is important to the process of leadership. Burns offers the following seminal definition: "Leadership over human beings is being exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize, in competition or conflict with

others, institutional, political, psychological, and other resources so as to arouse, engage and satisfy the motives of followers” (18). The words “mobilize” and “arouse” are motivational words. Leaders must be able to create followers by mobilizing people and encouraging them to act.

Motivation is a complex phenomenon. It involves the ability to gain the attention of people, to sell people on the change that is desired, and to enlist them in the organization’s revitalization. Motivation and meaning are related. People desire meaning and purpose, and transformational leaders understand, consciously or unconsciously, the process of engaging others in a common task that elevates both the follower and the leader (Peters and Waterman 83).

**Community building.** All the scholars reviewed agree that beyond motivating people is the need to build community. The values of an organization and the way in which they are expressed in its life create a symbolic world in which the organization lives. Symbols embody and express an organization’s culture—“the interwoven pattern of beliefs, values, practices, and artifacts that define for members who they are and how they do things” (Bolman and Deal 217). That embodiment is why the symbolic role of leadership is so important in effecting organizational change (J. Gardner 18).

The transformational leader must be a “social architect” who creates norms, values, and customs that define the organization (Bennis and Nanus 110). The ability of transformational leaders to create and change culture, which enables them to overcome the “strong undertow of cultural forces,” is of critical importance during the process of revitalizing an organization (114). For those interested in servant leadership, community building is the most important role of the leader because people need a sense of community when they are engaged in work. The creative and spiritual energies of people

are released in relationship and community (Autry 90-93). No vision and no transformation can be achieved without the transforming power of community.

Transformational leaders spend time changing the nature of the organization so that it embodies a new vision and a transformed set of values.

**Management.** The tendency to denigrate management as opposed to leadership is illustrated in the popular phrase, “Managers do things right. Leaders do the right things” (Covey, Seven Habits 101). Despite this fact, transformational leadership requires the ability to manage people and organizational dynamics. According to J. Gardner, the kind of managing that leaders must do includes (1) planning and priority setting, (2) organizing and institution building, (3) keeping the system function, (4) agenda setting and decision-making, and (5) exercising political judgment (15-16). Although Gardner does not include this ability, choosing associates, motivating them, and evaluating their performance is among the most important duties of a leader (Autry 38). The managerial role of transformational leadership means that practical knowledge of and competence in the basic skills needed for the organization’s success are important aspects of transformational leadership. To be effective, “every leader must possess and demonstrate good management knowledge and skills” (37). These skills include finding the right people, training people, creating standards for performance, evaluating people, and other mundane tasks of leadership (41-75).

**Training.** Transformation requires having people and transformational leaders understand the value of training. Changes in vision, goals, and strategies require that employees be trained in the new ways of activity (Kotter 106). The kind of training that must be present in transformational situations is training in new behavior, skills, and attitudes (108). The most effective kind of training that transformational leaders do is to

embody and practice the new vision, values, strategies, tactics, and plans of the organization (Kouzes and Posner 187). In addition to the embodiment aspect of the teaching role of the vision leader, a practical need exists to communicate the plans for transformation and the skills by which transformation can be accomplished. As J. Gardner explains, “Leaders teach” (18).

**Empowerment.** Transformational leaders empower others. Most people have an abundance of unused creativity, talent, and energy, which transformational leaders are able to unleash to serve a transforming vision (Covey, “Three Roles” 153). Traditional leadership theories often imply that power is a fixed quantity and that any gain of power by followers involves the loss of power by the leader (Kouzes and Posner 162). Transformational leaders understand that power is expandable and that the more one gives away to others, the more the leader acquires (164). As leaders deploy their talents, establish vision, create a social architecture that undergirds change, move followers to a higher level of consciousness, and liberate their talents and abilities, the leaders empower followers in service of the vision (Bennis and Nanus 218).

The ability to trust followers and have faith in their abilities is the motivating force behind the willingness of leaders to release followers. John Gardener reinforces this point:

When faith is present in the leader, it communicates itself to the followers with powerful effect. In the conventional mode people want to know whether the followers believe in the leader; a more searching question is whether the leader believes in the followers. (199)

In a sense, empowerment is the final movement in leadership, as the leader releases followers to lead themselves in the process of transformation.



## Conclusion

Secular literature demonstrates that transformational leadership is different from the kind of leadership that maintains an existing organizational structure. Transforming leadership brings an organization to a new peak of performance and is essentially revitalizing in its focus and intention. Transforming leaders, therefore, have different characteristics than transactional leaders. Of special importance is the visionary aspect of transformational leadership and the energy and skills needed to impart the vision to others. Management literature has focused on the “being” of transformational leaders, especially the kind of character that transformational leadership requires. Although the exact qualities of a transformational leader are rendered differently by different writers, a fair unanimity exists concerning the general nature of the gifts required of such a leader.

First, the transformational leader must have the mental and emotional qualities necessary for the kind of acceptance of reality, deep analysis, and visionary resolution that leadership requires. Second, transformational leadership requires the communication and interpersonal skills that enable the leader to be self-aware, build trust, understand the facts, communicate the vision, and build consensus concerning the course of action that must be taken. Third, transformational leadership requires the management skills to discern the necessary steps for the vision to be accomplished, recruit the essential persons to execute the visionary plan, and maintain organizational focus while the plan is being accomplished. Fourth, transformational leaders must have the charisma and cultural awareness required to transform the culture of a declining organization. Fifth, transformational leaders must have the skills necessary to build community. Sixth, transformational leaders must have the personal qualities, including a servant spirit, that are required to renew an organization.

## **A Shepherd/Servant Model of Transformational Leadership**

Having looked at (1) the biblical and theological roots of Christian leadership theory and (2) modern transformational leadership theory, this section brings the two into conversation in order to develop a deeper understanding of the dynamics of shepherd/servant leadership in the context of the local church. In developing and sustaining the conversation, the primary focus is on the biblical narrative and its theological exposition. While both secular theories and theological reflection are involved in the dialogue, a theological understanding of the biblical narrative will control the development of a shepherd/servant leadership model in order that the inner reality of the nature of renewing ministry may remain grounded in the biblical witness to Christ. Of particular importance in this conversation and in bridging the gap between the sacred and the secular is the notion of servant leadership as it has developed in both secular and religious contexts and the missional church movement as it developed from a conversation between Christ and the culture of late twentieth and early twenty-first century North America.

### **The Dialogical Method**

Critics of church growth literature observe that much of modern evangelical thought is characterized by thoughtless adaptation of secular theories and methods. As a result, church growth can easily degenerate into marketing, counseling into secular pop psychology, and so forth. This study attempted to overcome the tendency of evangelical scholarship to collapse into the cultural norms of modern thought forms by adopting a deliberately dialogical method in which the biblical narrative remains the dominant source for categories of thought and action.

Postmodern science has learned that the kind of objectivity that naïve nineteenth

and early twentieth century science postulated is impossible. Instead, postmodern science like postmodern leadership theory has become relational. This study was an attempt to bring an understanding of shepherd/servant leadership into a conversation with the best understanding of transformational leadership. The objective was to develop a deeper understanding of the nature of Christian leadership as it relates to revitalizing local congregations as a result of this interdisciplinary conversation. This interdisciplinary, dialogical approach avoids the distortions of a kind of dualistic thinking that twists and deforms reality (Loder and Neiderhardt 9).

In the area of practical theology, the “indisruptible unity of God and humanity in Jesus Christ requires that the spiritual and the material, visible and invisible, the transcendent and the immanent be understood together as mutually corrective, enriching and informing of each other” (Loder and Neiderhardt 9). In the case of Christian leadership theory, this idea is especially important as Christian leaders attempt to indwell the biblical narrative and experience the transforming power of Jesus Christ in their lives and ministries (Loder 129).

### **The Shepherd/Servant Metaphor and the Biblical and Theological Pole**

In his book Calling and Character, William Willimon discusses virtues that underline the ordained life. He adopts the image of church leaders as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers sharing in the serving ministry of “equipping the saints for the work of ministry” (18). While I agree with Willimon’s starting point and his choice of central images, he fails to do justice to the full range of pastoral virtues and to ground his discussion sufficiently in the biblical narratives. Jesus embodied the messianic vision common among his fellow Jews in a unique and transformational way. The full range of virtues that biblical leaders need in providing leadership to local congregations

is that range of virtues that Jesus reflected in his ministry as it developed in the context of first-century Judaism.

**The shepherd/servant metaphor.** This study began with Thomas Oden's previously quoted observation in Becoming a Minister: "No image has influenced the practice of pastoral care more than its chief formative metaphor, the good shepherd caring for the vulnerable flock amid a perilous world" (41). A central biblical passage in understanding how the shepherd metaphor merges into and with the servant metaphor is found in 1 Peter 5:1-4:

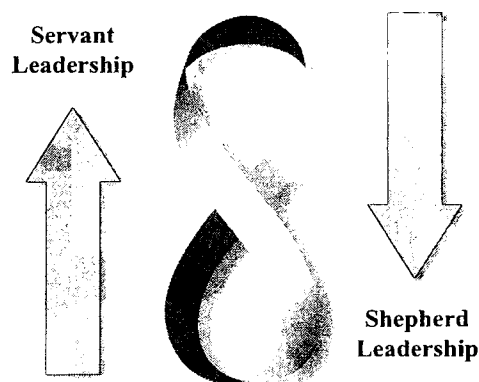
To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow-elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

In this text, the notion of "Shepherd Leadership" and the metaphor of the leader as shepherd ("Be shepherds" and "when the Chief Shepherd appears") merge and are interpenetrated with the Servant metaphor for leadership ("eager to serve; not lording it over"). Furthermore, the primacy of "being" is important. The fundamental importance of character in the life of the Christian leader is emphasized by the injunction to "be examples" (v. 3). The importance of caring for people, avoiding greed, and having motivation to serve (v. 2) all point to issues of character and being.

The use of the term "Great Shepherd" creates a narrative connection for the meaning of the shepherd metaphor. Anyone who wants to know the meaning of being a "shepherd leader" will find it embodied in the life of the Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and in the biblical witness as it preceded and succeeded the definitive revelation of

Christ. In a shepherd/servant model of leadership, the biblical motifs of service and shepherding, often thought of as being opposites, are held together in a dialogical unity under the pressure of the biblical narrative and God's definitive revelation in Christ. The paradoxical nature of Christian leadership requires leaders to acquire complementary shepherd/servant characteristics as they embody Jesus' ministry in their own contexts.

This biblical model has two poles that complement each other: a shepherd pole, which includes the dynamic, forceful, and vigorous leadership aspects of shepherding a flock, and a servant pole, which includes those aspects of Christian leadership that involve pastors in service to their congregations. Figure 2.1 represents graphically the unparadoxical joining of shepherd and servant characteristics in a Christian leader.



Source: Loder 41.

**Figure 2.1. Shepherd/Servant Leadership.<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>5</sup> A Möbius Strip is a topological space created by adjoining the ends of strip that has been rotated 180 degrees. The unique properties of this strip were discovered by A. F. Möbius, after whom it is named. In his book, Loder uses a Möbius strip to suggest the asymmetrical work of the Holy Spirit as it combines the paradoxical truths in a single knowing event. In this paper, the figure is used to represent the paradoxical combination of servant and shepherd qualities in the life of the Shepherd/servant leader. As the leader "indwells" the biblical narrative in the life of a concrete congregation, the Holy Spirit inspires the human spirit toward a concrete embodiment of Christ in the midst of the people of God.

The biblical story of Israel, and in particular the narratives of the life and death of Jesus, provide a transformational narrative—a ground for the operation of the Holy Spirit as it inspires leaders to embody the Spirit of Christ in new and unique ways in the life of a local congregation (Loder 129). By indwelling the narrative of Israel and of God’s revelation in Christ in the context of a local congregation, a transformational leader moves the congregation from a period of loss, lack, or conflict into a period of renewal.

In his seminal work, The Tacit Dimension, Michael Polanyi describes how the process of indwelling works within the context of character formation and moral action. The process of indwelling is that process by which people interiorize moral and religious teachings such that they become the tacit ground for judgment and actions (17). In the case of the interiorization of the biblical narrative of the life of Christ, the process is one by which the character of Christ, as it is rendered in the Gospels, is incorporated into the personality of pastors to such a degree that pastors are unconsciously guided in their day-to-day practice of ministry by that narrative. Pastors lead congregations into a deeper relationship with the God of the Bible as they indwell the story the Bible tells (Newbigin, Gospel in a Pluralistic Society 97). In the case of the renewing pastor, this indwelling becomes even more important since congregations in need of renewal must find a new and transforming way to live out their response to the gospel.

The process of interiorization does not, however eliminate the uniqueness of each human actor and his or her reaction to concrete situations. In every concrete situation the human spirit goes through a process of sensing a problem (such as the need of a local church for renewal), formulating the problem in such a way that human reason can address it, and investigating potential solutions. As the human actor performs these tasks, the human spirit seeks a solution that it finds satisfying within the tradition of Christian

thought and action. Finally, an insight into the solution appears. This insight is followed by a process of verification and further refinement. Throughout the process, the Holy Spirit is operating in and through the human spirit.<sup>6</sup>

### **A Narrative Resolution: Shepherd/Servant Leadership**

The preceding exposition of the biblical and secular sources of transformational leadership enables a synthesis between the narrative world, in which the practice of Christian transformational leadership is formed and exercised, and secular leadership theories. The role of the leader is to both tell and embody the biblical story in the life of a local congregation in such a way that it is led into a period of renewed vitality and effectiveness. This new story line embodies a vision of the future that is appropriate to the context of a particular local congregation. The leader must indwell the biblical story in such a way that a local congregation can find a new place in God's story.

Thus, despite the unique character of every renewal and every transformational leader, the character of effective leaders, and their stories, is founded in the story of God's gracious act in Jesus Christ. For local congregations to enter a time of new missional vitality, they must be led by persons who have found a new and transforming ground for their leadership in the story that Scripture tells—the story that culminates in God's love for humanity shown in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

### **Practices of Preparation and Silence**

The first characteristic of shepherd/servant leaders is that they have endured periods of preparation for service to God.

**Narrative foundation.** Oddly, this discussion of the qualities of Christian

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<sup>6</sup> This process is the subject of James Loder's Transforming Moment where he discusses the role of the Holy Spirit in transformation and its relationship with the human spirit (93-122). In this

transformational leaders based on the life of Jesus begins with the time before his ministry started since no doubt exists that Jesus experienced a time of preparation. Luke reports that “the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him” (2:40). After the incident when he strayed from the family during a Passover visit to Jerusalem, the readers are told, “Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and human beings” (Luke 2:52). In other words, the silent years of Jesus were years of preparation for ministry. Similarly, in Galatians, Paul reminds his readers that after his conversion on the Road to Damascus he did not rush into ministry but endured a time of hidden and silent growth (Gal. 1:13-18). In fact, every disciple and transformational Christian leader must serve a period of preparation and character formation before they can function with integrity as transformational leaders.

**Secular dynamic.** A key element for transformational leadership is a willingness to engage in the kind of personal and corporate introspection that permits leaders to understand their strengths and weaknesses (Tichy and Devanna 94). The kind of judgment required of transformational leaders includes the kind of personal self-understanding that allows leaders to “lead from the center.” Transformational leaders need a kind of perceptiveness that can only be born of experience and a degree of solitude. Howard Gardner notes that leaders “must find the time and the means for reflecting, for assuming distance from the battle or the mission” (36). Like Moses, leaders need to spend time “on the mountaintop” (36). As Gardner concludes, “Periods of isolation—some daily, some extending for months or even years—are as crucial in the lives of leaders as are immersions in a crowd” (36). Times of isolation are times spent in



thought and in the inner development of the leaders, the kind of inner development that allows leaders to embody the revised narrative of their organizations in a transparent and real way.

**Shepherd/servant resolution.** An important aspect of preparation is that leaders have been followers. A lot is contained in the story of Jesus in the Temple. Not the least is the revelation that Jesus “went down to Nazareth and was obedient to them “ (Luke 2:51). One of the reasons that larger churches increasingly hire pastors with large church associate experience is that such experience involves a mentoring relationship whereby the character necessary to lead a large, corporate church is born. The fact is, in order to lead, a person must first be able to follow—demonstrating the ability to understand and listen to the needs of others and work effectively with them (Staub xiii).

What Christian leaders do before their active ministry of leadership will, in many ways, define their subsequent ministry. Disciplines of study, prayer, and guidance are born in a relationship in which future leaders study, pray, and are guided. Those who have not had this kind of relationship need to have this kind of experience in a disciplined way by other means. Examples of other means include having a spiritual director, being a member of an accountability group, sharing with a support group, having a spiritual friend, or being mentored by a more experienced pastor.

Once leadership in ministry is undertaken, times of “preparation and silence” must be experienced in order for a transformational leader to function. The need exists for retreat, for prayer, for what mainline churches call “professional education,” for “Moses on the Mountain” times—times to climb higher and gaze out into the Sinai desert of ministry and service and to seek the face of God. Only those who have learned to be silent and listen can lead from a deep, transformational experience of God.

Transformational Christian leaders must indwell the biblical narrative, find, and maintain a close relationship with God through the Spirit (Guder et al. 186).

Transformational Christian leaders also must encounter God and take time to listen and be filled with the Spirit of Christ if they are to lead congregations into revitalization (Herrington, Bonem, and Furr 19-24). The process of transformation occurs as the biblical narrative is internalized and the renewed story of a local congregation is conceived and achieved in and through the life and ministry of the transformational leader under the inspirational power of the Holy Spirit. Without this deep narrative and spiritual ground for leadership, renewal often degenerates into technique and change for the sake of change.

A principal quality of Shepherd/servant leaders is the ability to foresee the kinds of changes that are necessary in order for the congregation to adapt to the changed environment. This foresight requires the development of a kind of creative intuition concerning the patterns of the present and the likely future of the congregation (Greenleaf 23). A wide experience gained in times of preparation and personal renewal is part of creating the kind of awareness that leaders need in order to see the life of the congregation as it is and as it might be (27). Without this kind of experience, the capacity for transformational leadership is unlikely to develop. Without a continuation of this distance from the congregation, a distance that permits the leader to sense the deeper, spiritual needs of the congregation, leaders cannot continue the task of transformation and renewal from stage to stage in the life of congregations.

### **Practices of Vision Development**

The second characteristic of shepherd/servant leaders is that they have formed and embodied a vision of the future capable of motivating their followers.

**Narrative foundation.** Jesus was a visionary leader who embodied a vision of the future of God's people. This vision was not unconnected to the vision of those he led and of the community within which he ministered. It developed during his years of preparation and personal development. The Jews of the first century held a vision of the Messiah as a deliverer, a savior who would restore the kingdom of David, though they had no fixed notion of the character of this Messiah (Wright, New Testament 319). Biblical texts like Daniel 7 formed the center of this messianic expectation (Lockyer 25 ff.), in which the Messiah was the stone that would topple the kingdoms of this world and establish "an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and a kingdom that will never be destroyed" (Dan. 7:14). The idea of the Messiah and the hope of a restored kingdom of Israel were intimately linked in Jewish thought and tradition. What Jesus was able to do was to reconstruct and transform the traditional understanding of these themes from Israel's history in a new and dynamic way.

Though scholars differ, I believe that Jesus was self-consciously aware of his messianic vocation and thus "the focal point of the true, returning from exile Israel. He was the king through whose work God was at last restoring his people" (Wright, Jesus 477). As such, he was enabled to enact and embody three major themes from the history of God's people: (1) the return from exile, (2) the defeat of evil, and (3) the restoration of Zion, the city of God, including the rebuilding of the Temple (481). Jesus' vision for Israel involved a complete redefinition of central themes in search of a way in which the ancient promises of God to Israel could be achieved under the pressure of its circumstances as a scattered and conquered people. Jesus accomplished a retelling of Israel's story—a retelling that brought together seemingly unconnected and submerged strands of messianic thought into a new and compelling story of God's gracious dealings

with all humanity.

All of these features are important aspects of the messianic restoration of Israel. As the Messiah, Jesus called people to follow him, thus reconstituting the people of God. His battles with disease, the demonic, and death embody the defeat of evil. His long march to Jerusalem, death, and resurrection constitute the symbolic transfer of the image of Zion to the whole people of God, now reconstituted as the Church following the resurrected Lord. Jesus accomplished this reconstitution through the image of the kingdom of God, his overarching term for the ministry God had given to him and his reason for calling others into the service of that vision (Mark 1:15-17).

**Secular dynamic.** The role of vision is extremely important in transforming leadership. The essence of the capacity of transformational leaders to create change is their ability to articulate a vision that shows the organization a way into the future (Covey, "Three Roles," 153). A vision is more than a mental picture that has been translated into words. Transformational leaders must create a narrative—a story line—that embodies the vision and that both leaders and followers indwell as they move an organization into a preferred future. This story or narrative is essentially a vision of the life of the organization or group that is told by leaders and embodied in their actions (H. Gardner 42).

The vision of leaders, powerfully communicated in the stories that leaders tell, binds a group of people together into a community. This community is, to some degree, enacting a drama in which the organization of which they are a part is moved from an inferior or declining state to a new and superior time of growth and adaptation to the environment. Transformational leaders and their core groups of followers are the protagonists in this visionary drama. a drama in which the forces of chaos are put at bay

and a time of new order and growth is created.

**Shepherd/servant resolution.** Pastoral leaders must have a clear mental image of the future developed under the inspiration of God by the Holy Spirit. This mental image must be of a future that is preferable to the present (Barna, Power of Vision 28). In the case of turn-around church situations, the pastor must have the capacity to discern and articulate a vision that is realistic, compelling, and accepted among leaders and others in the congregation (Turnaround Churches 62-63).

Vision has its own power to motivate people. A properly articulated vision speaks to the desires of people for renewal and growth and excites people about the potential for change (Barna, Turning Vision 78). When people sense that an organization has an achievable, clear vision for the future, they are inclined to action to accomplish that vision. Development of a biblically grounded, Christ-centered, Holy Spirit-empowered vision for the future of a local congregation is the first and most central task of the Christian transformational leader.

Like Jesus' adaptation of the messianic vision to the concrete circumstances of first-century Palestine, transformational leaders must be willing and able to indwell the biblical narrative of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus in an authentic manner and in a way that responds to the life situation of contemporary people. This vision must be derived from and cohere with the biblical narrative and must be capable of motivating people. From this personal indwelling of the biblical narrative and leaders' personal bonds with the community, a vision capable of transforming the life of the local congregation develops. Without this first step, transformational change cannot occur.

This vision—this reconstructed story of the life of a local congregation—varies from community to community and from congregation to congregation. Variance is

necessary since a local congregation is always renewed and revitalized within a specific culture and community. The key to visionary leadership is the ability to shape an existing congregation “around the ministry of Jesus Christ, his life, his death, and his resurrected power: in such a way that a new and vital ministry is formed within a particular community of believers” (Guder et al. 117).

### **Practices of a Gatherer of the Flock**

The third characteristic of shepherd/servant leaders is that they can gather people around their vision.

**Biblical foundation.** Jesus was first and foremost a gatherer of people, the lost and scattered people of God. The parable of the lost sheep illustrates this characteristic:

What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost. (Matt. 18:12-14)

The picture of a shepherd as one who gathers lost sheep into the flock of God is deep in Christian tradition. A primary task of the restorer of Israel was to gather the lost and scattered sheep of Israel.

The Apostles continued and expanded the gathering ministry of Jesus as they took the gospel from “Jerusalem, through all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The gospel accounts and Acts, in one way or another, contain Jesus’ commission to his followers to share his gospel, gather new members for the family of God, disciple them, and secure their citizenship in his kingdom (Matt. 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18; Acts 18). Paul was chosen by Christ to continue the apostolic ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15-17). In these ways, his disciples carried out Jesus’ mission to

announce the kingdom of God and draw people into God's gracious reign. The Church continues this mission to this day (Guder et al. 106-07).

**Secular dynamic.** Since organizational change is impossible for any single person to effect, every leader must gather together a coalition of persons who are committed to the vision and who will assist the leader in effecting change (Kotter 51). The essence of transformational leadership is the ability to gather people around a vision and motivate their commitment to change. Every description of transformational leadership includes the ability to motivate people to support the change proposal of the leader or leadership group. Effective transformational leaders do not necessarily begin with complicated, long-range plans. In most cases, once transformational leaders begin their attempt at securing the future of an organization, one of the first things they do is to gather around themselves the best possible people (Collins 41).

**Shepherd/servant resolution.** Not only is Christ a gatherer of the flock, so are his under-shepherds. Most Protestant theological education places its primary emphasis on biblical studies and upon the kinds of skills associated with the preaching ministry of the church. Nevertheless, Jesus asked for a personal commitment that required becoming a part of his flock. Jesus began his ministry by gathering people as he began the process of reconstituting the end-time people of God. Karl Barth reflects on the duty of Christians to witness to others:

In all the organization of all the churches, fellowships and sects, is it not the purpose in some form and with some degree of urgency to save human souls, to show men the way of redemption, to cause them to become Christians for the sake of their personal salvation and the experience of salvation, and with the same end in view to confirm and strengthen and nourish them as such, to maintain and more deeply establish them in Christianity? (563)

Jesus' ministry involved attracting first century, Palestinian Jews. Although twenty-first

century ministry is different, contemporary pastors must develop the practice of gathering people. The missional Church is, after all, a gathering Church, faithful to the Great Commission (Guder et al. 183-84).

Under the influence of Christendom, many Western churches have ceased seeing the ministry of saving the lost as the duty of the whole church, not simply the duty of the ministry or a special group within the church. Proclamation is not exclusively, or even primarily, the duty of the clergy. It is the duty of the entire New Israel. In fact, experience teaches that ordinary laypeople are likely to be the most effective evangelists in the New Israel of Christ. Proclaiming the good news and calling people into a relationship with Christ and the local congregation is an essential element of apostolic ministry and evangelists. The apostolic shepherd/servant leader will not, therefore, allow evangelism or commitment to the Great Commission to lie at the periphery of the task of Christian leadership. It is central. The spirituality of the shepherd/servant must include the willingness to reach out to others.

### **Practices of a Community Builder**

The fourth characteristic of shepherd/servant leaders is that they can build and create community.

**Narrative foundation.** Jesus called twelve average people. He shared his life with them. He saw their potential. He trained them; he loved them (John 13:39). He prayed for them (John 17:6ff). Then, he set them loose to change the world. In all of this, one fact stands out: Jesus put his disciples first. People were central; relationships were central. His mission was conducted in and through relationships with people. The nature of God was finally and fully revealed to Christians in Jesus Christ, and by emulating him in relationship to others that believers participate in the inner life of God.



When Jesus invited the disciples to follow him, he invited them to join him in the creation of a community of spiritual brothers and sisters. He invited them to enter the process of becoming his spiritual friends. In their final time together, Jesus visually and verbally understood the relationship: “You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you” (John 15:13-15). The life of the community of disciples was such that they became friends of the incarnate God.

The life of the early Church was also a life in community. In the Upper Room before Pentecost, the disciples and the other followers of Christ met for prayer and fellowship as they awaited the promise of the Spirit (Acts 1:14). After Pentecost, the church developed a dynamic community:

They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

These verses constitute the enduring description of the “New Community” of faith that God is building among believers by the power of the Spirit.

Since Jesus lived as part of a faith community, and since the apostles were disciplined through their experiences in community with Jesus, every Christian should have a similar life-transforming experience. Small groups call people into relationship with Christ, allow people to share their Christian walk, deepen their prayer lives, are sources of teaching and loving care, offer guidance in difficult times, and provide a source for

new leadership.

**Secular dynamic.** Modern transformational leadership theorists understand clearly that community building is essential to any form of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership involves the creative destruction and guided evolution of community in order to build a new culture (Schien 331). If people believe that they are safe and cared for as part of an organization, they identify more readily with the organization and feel the kind of commitment that enables radical change (Pinchot 28). One of the primary duties of any leader is the creation and transformation of community. Transformational leadership that revitalizes an existing organization differs from the kind of entrepreneurial leadership that creates a community or the kind of managerial leadership that sustains community once created. For a community to be rebuilt, servant leadership must be willing to love and care for the community (Greenleaf 39).

Community is especially required when human services are rendered by human beings (Greenleaf 38). This kind of community building exists on several levels. The formation of the community begins with the leader's gathering a core group (Schien 212). From that foundation, others are brought into the change community until a community of persons who share the vision of the transformational leader has been formed (212). This larger community impacts the entire organization with a new sense of community.

Caring for people and for the institutions they inhabit is an essential aspect of leadership (Greenleaf 243). Those who care for people and institutions must be interested in the wholeness and healing of people, and they must also be willing to acknowledge that their own healing is a part of their motivation for leadership (36). This healing ministry need not be the kind of ministry that one associates with Pentecostal sects. Nevertheless, the healing ministry of the Church is not an option, especially for churches

who are engaged in the process of transformation (Pearson 16). Transformational leadership recognizes its continuity with the messianic leadership of Jesus and his healing ministry, which was one of the primary notes of the reconstituted leadership of Jesus.

**Shepherd/servant resolution.** The Church of Jesus Christ exists as the messianic people of God called into being by the witness of Christ and bound to him as their living messianic king. As the Church is built up, “there takes place in the world a new and strange event of the gathering, upbuilding and sending of the Christian community” (Barth 752). The upbuilding of the community occurs as the Creator Spirit creates, disciples, and strengthens those God has called to be his people and empowers them for further ministry. This dynamic relationality represented in the life of the Church reflects the very life of God in its midst.

Christians celebrate a God who exists in a transforming relationship. God not only reveals himself as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; in some mysterious way, God exists as one essential being having three distinct persons. These persons exist in relationship with one another in the perfect love of the Godhead. This relationship has profound implications for the Christian life. As persons who are made in the image of God, humans were made for relationships—with God, with other persons, and with creation (Gen. 1:26-27). Human beings are not complete without profound relationships.

The Church is to be made up of people who are in relationship with one another. A church that is merely a place for religiously inclined people to meet on Sunday morning is not the kind of church God intended. God meant the Church to be a place in which people are in relationship with God and with one another. Since God is love, and the same love he showed when he “sent his only son” exists between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Church can be the body Christ intended only when Christians

exist in communities of love (John 3:16).

Mainline congregations have often looked down on the so-called “sects” that create strong community as part of their distinctive characteristics. Although churches can and do develop bizarre and even harmful community (as the Branch Davidian sect proved), still the church of Christ is called to build strong community. Revitalized churches are ones in which strong bonds and a deep sense of belonging exist—a characteristic that mainline congregations sometimes lack (D. Smith 90-92).

One of the lost arts of mainline Christian leaders involves practices included under the rubric of the healing ministry of Christ. In charismatic churches, the healing ministry goes on unencumbered, but the rise of modern medicine and the specialization of religion have resulted in a generation of mainline pastors who are reluctant to be described as being in the healing ministry. Some have sought to recover the healing ministry in mainline churches. Unfortunately, on the whole, the ministry of healing is on the fringe of many mainline and evangelical groups. Even the most casual reading of the Gospels discloses the fact that Jesus not only healed, but he also empowered and directed his disciples to do the same (Matt 10:1; Mark 6:6-13; Luke 9:1-6). As John Koenig explains, “[H]ealing is an indispensable part of the coming wholeness that God intends for all creation. This means that the practice of healing is a central part of the reconciling activity of God in the world” (150).

The Church needs leaders who understand the need for a spiritual approach to healing and wholeness and who make this community building ministry part of their lives and character (see Oswald 9-20; 199-208). The daily process of providing support and care within the body, often neglected by those who are seeking transformation, is central to the task of transformation, since these simple acts of care and support form the

transformational community.

The healing and caring ministries of the body of Christ are ministries for the body itself, but the impact of these ministries extends far beyond the boundaries of the community in which such healings take place and have consequences beyond the local church. This healing ministry is part of the call of the Church to mend and restore broken people and a broken creation through ministries of personal and social wholeness (see Ogden 104 ff.). As the Church heals persons within its body, it reaches out into the lives of countless others with whom those healed come in contact in a transformational manner.

No element of congregational transformation may be more important than the process of the creative destruction of unhealthy community and its replacement with authentic Christian community. This replacement requires attention not only to the individual healing of people but also to the corporate healing of the institution as a whole. If the end-time people of God are to be reconstituted as a community experiencing the promised *shalom* of God then transformational leaders who are able and willing to undertake building a new community of persons are required. This time-consuming and difficult task is central to the renewal of a local congregation (Herrington, Bonem, and Furr 46). Simply put, no one can renew a congregation alone; thus, the process of restoring and renewing community is centrally important to the revitalization of a local body of Christ (47).

Of course, levels of community exist within the local body of Christ. Every successful transformational leader must gather a core group of individuals who are committed to the task of transformation and who have the energy and ability to lead the process of renewal and revitalization (Kotter 51-66). Jesus had Peter, James, John, and

the rest of the apostles; every transformational leader who is renewing a local congregation needs a similar small group. In the same way, every transformational leader needs an inner circle. Nevertheless, the dynamics of Christian community cannot stop with a “guiding coalition.” Transformational shepherd/servant leadership creates a loving community that remembers and rehearses the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord and reaches out in loving service to one another and the larger community (Newbigin, Gospel in a Pluralistic Society 227-33). The creation of this community is at the center of the renewal and revitalization of the church.

### **Practices of a Teacher of the Flock**

The fifth characteristic of shepherd/servant leaders is that they can teach people the skills needed to build community and accomplish their vision.

**Narrative foundation.** Jesus was a student of Scripture, and abundant evidence exists in Scripture for the supposition that Jesus took time to study and to become exceedingly familiar with the Torah (Luke 4:1-13; 14-20). His study was such that he could teach with authority (Luke 4:32). The apostles were also graced with the gift of teaching. In Acts, Peter and John preach and teach with such power, even when brought before the Sanhedrin, that the leaders of the people were astonished that ordinary, unschooled men were teaching with such assurance and power (Acts 4:13). Stephen, one of the first deacons and the first martyr, related a new and powerful interpretation of the history of Israel when brought before the leaders for a trial (Acts 7:1-50). Barnabus and Paul were important leaders in the early Church precisely because of their gifts as teachers (Acts 11:25-26). The image of the Christian leader is deep in the life of the early Church and in the narrative of which leaders are a part.

**Secular dynamic.** Transformational leaders teach (J. Gardner 18). In order for

culture to be changed, leaders must be willing to engage in the process of learning and personal change. Transformational leaders are life-long learners (Tichy and Devanna 276). In order for the personal learning of the leader to be important in the transformation of an organization, it must be communicated to others. Since most people organize their thinking in the form of narrative, leaders need to have the capacity to tell stories (in the case of church leaders, religious stories) in a way that contributes to the transformation of the organization (Tichy 258). Transformational leaders must be teachers who share their successes and failures and can articulate the need for the organization to change as well as the means and methods for change to occur (260-61).

**Shepherd/servant resolution.** One of the oldest tasks of the church leader is to teach the Scriptures and to lead congregations into a deeper encounter with the wisdom of Scripture. Acquiring “care and diligence in the sacred writings” requires that a pastor be a constant student of the work (St. Ambrose 1). Being a life-transforming teacher of the gospel is a pastoral virtue. The practices that sustain this virtue include studying the Scriptures, studying theology, observing human nature and human behavior in such a way as to be able to communicate the gospel in meaningful ways, and developing communication skills to communicate the gospel effectively (Peterson 61-99). Constant study is the baseline pastoral practice for Protestant pastors. In order for pastors to be transforming leaders of their congregations, they must be both learners and teachers—growers as well as a coaches of others as they grow (Tichy 260-61).

Prayerful study is an essential element in the life of the shepherd/servant leader. Leaders must prepare not only to teach and preach, but they must also permit the studied Word to sink into their souls. Leaders are changed and transformed before the congregation is changed, transformed, renewed, and revitalized. As Willimon explains:

“The Christian gospel is inherently performative, meant to be embodied, enacted in the world. To speak the Gospel skillfully without attempting to perform the gospel is a false proclamation of the gospel” (43). In order for the gospel to be embodied, it must not only be read and studied as an object—it must be regularly prayed over and contemplated. It must be mulled over and internalized. This capacity of shepherd/servant leaders to embody the gospel and the particular vision that the gospel implies for a local church is one of the ways that transformational leaders communicate their story and vision within the confines of a local body of believers.

The Great Commission includes the commandment to be about the business of teaching new believers to obey the commands of their Messiah (Matt. 28:16-20). Disciple-making has as a central concern the bringing of people to a higher and higher degree of spiritual maturity. Thus, the “leadership task of the church is to bring the body of Christ to full operational efficiency through training” (Hull 89). The term “operational efficiency” may offend some people, but it implies that people are not simply being disciplined to meet their own personal needs and desires, but to be part of the missionary task of the Church. From this perspective, missionary shepherd/servant leaders must be willing not only to teach the biblical story and its underlying principles, but to embody and model this story in their own everyday lives as they teach and disciple new believers as part of the transforming teaching ministry of a church.

### **Practices of an Empowerer of the Flock**

The sixth characteristic of shepherd/servant leaders is that they empower people to accomplish the vision of the gathered community.

**Narrative foundation.** A distinctive feature of Jesus’ ministry is that it was a lay ministry. Jesus was not one of the religious or social elite of his day. When he began his



ministry, the people of his hometown were tempted to treat him as a simple layperson, saying, “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” (Luke 4:22). The Scribes and the Pharisees rejected Jesus as the Messiah partially because of the fact that he was a layperson, untutored in the biblical and theological complexities of first-century Judaism. They could not believe that such a person could be the Messiah.

Jesus’ disciples were, by and large, unlettered persons who could not have been familiar with the complexities of first-century Jewish thought (Acts 4:13). Jesus took these unlettered and untutored men and taught and empowered them. In the course of his ministry, ignorant laypeople were exposed to the power of the Messiah, and they were given charge to act on behalf of this Messiah. Mark describes one such episode:

Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits. These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear sandals but not an extra tunic. Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them.” They went out and preached that people should repent. They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them. (Mark 6:7-13)

This passage is especially instructive because the disciples go out and call the people to God (thus returning them from the exile of sin), drive out the forces of evil (represented by the demonic), and otherwise reconstruct the end-time people of God. Although still in training for their apostolic task, the disciples were already being empowered and released for their own life changing and community-building ministries.

When the disciples marveled at his mighty deeds of power, Jesus responded, “I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12). In other words, untutored laypersons will find themselves empowered by God to do even greater

things than Jesus Messiah has done. Anyone who has faith in Jesus will experience his power. This power from faith has profound implications for lay ministry; it shows that ordinary laypeople can expect to experience the power of God as they enter into the kingdom of the Son of God as disciples of Jesus Messiah.

Jesus shaped the lives of his disciples in profound ways but always with an eye to their personal empowerment. As previously indicated, Jesus actively sent his disciples out in mission, turning over to his unlikely friends his mission of calling into being the end-time people of God. Paul seems to have developed a theology of ministry that involved using the spiritual gifts of those around him. For example, his theology of worship was intensely participatory. He wrote to the Corinthians, “What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church” (1 Cor. 14:26). His theory of the Church as the body of Christ relies heavily on the participation of every Christian in the life of the body:

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. (1 Cor. 12:4-7)

Leadership of this kind requires empowering leaders.

**Secular dynamic.** Except for vision, hardly any characteristic of transformational leadership is more commonly noted than the ability to empower others. Transformational leaders believe in people. They believe that people have talent, ability, and the creative power to employ their talents (Covey, “Three Roles” 153). By empowering persons who have internalized the leader’s vision and the story of transformation in the life of a community, a transformational leader gives dynamism to the process of transformation.

Empowerment is not simply giving people the freedom to innovate or letting people “do their own thing.” Empowerment is a process by which people who have been brought into the community or organization receive its vision, are trained with specific skills necessary for the vision to be accomplished, and are provided with the appropriate structure within which to deploy their skills in the service of the vision (Kotter 101-15). Empowerment flows from the prior activities of visioning, community building, teaching, and creating the right circumstances within which the empowered follower can act in service of the new vision for the organization.

**Shepherd/servant resolution.** The Church is to be a community in which all people, not just the clergy, are ministering in the power of the Spirit. Functional (body analogy) and hierarchical differences may exist, but these differences should not limit individuals in practicing their ministry gifts. To the extent that the church has a hierarchy, that hierarchy is defined and limited by Jesus’ notion of servant leadership. As Larry Rasmussen puts it, “Christians look to Jesus as an example of leadership and to the early Christian communities as places of exemplary participation” (123).

Shepherd/servant leaders who would renew and revitalize local congregations must give top priority to equipping laity for effective ministry (Barna, Turnaround Churches 49). Studies show that until people believed in themselves enough to engage in effective ministry, they failed to believe that the church as a whole can be revitalized (49). For leaders to be effective, they must be able to multiply ministry and become leaders of others who are engaged in ministry and leading others to engage in ministry (Galloway 79). Effective leaders must not try to do everything or be a part of everything. Instead, like healthy parents, they must disciple and release laypersons for ministry.

Shepherd/servant leaders understand that the congregations they serve were

created for mission. Therefore, the goal of their leadership is to empower people for ministry in the name and power of Christ (Ogden 163). The goal is to release people for life-transforming ministry within and outside the renewed and revitalized congregation.

### **Practices of a Sacrificial Servant and Protector of the Flock**

The seventh characteristic of the shepherd/servant leader is that they are willing to sacrifice themselves in order to protect and transform the community they have gathered.

**Narrative foundation.** Jesus calls himself the Good Shepherd, saying, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11). Of all the ways in which Jesus redefined traditional Jewish messianic expectations, none was more radical than his prophesy that the Messiah would suffer and die at the hands of the religious leaders of Israel (Luke 9:21, 43-44; 18:31-34). His disciples found this particular aspect of Jesus’ teachings most incomprehensible (Luke 9:45). Peter rejected this aspect of Jesus’ teaching and, in so doing, earned the strongest of rebukes (Mark 8:32-33). This rejection by Peter that led to rebuke is not surprising since Jesus was challenging the existing story line of Israel—a story line that required the Messiah to defeat the enemies of his people (Wright, *Jesus* 591).

Paradoxically, followers of Jesus must not only accept the fact that they follow a rejected and crucified Messiah, they must take up this very same cross and follow him (Mark 8:34-35; Luke 9:23). The story of Acts is at least partially the story of the way in which the apostles, and particularly Paul, continue to suffer rejection and violence just as Jesus had suffered (Acts 9:16). Paul recounts his sufferings for Christ (2 Cor. 11:23-29). At the end of his life, he sees himself as “being poured out like a drink offering” and participating in the death of Christ (Phil. 2:17; 3:10-11). His life has been a “suffering for the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:8). The story line of the Messiah included a cross and so must the

story line of his shepherd/servant leaders.

**Secular dynamic.** Transformational leaders do not take unnecessary risks nor do they act in ways that will inevitably cause them to be martyrs (Tichy and Devanna 271). Instead, they take prudent risks and are willing to endure the ridicule, social pressure, and criticism that can be a part of providing leadership (273). Yet, transformational leadership involves sacrifice. Very few students of transformational leadership engage the issue of whether and to what extent leaders must be willing to suffer in the process of leadership, but common sense indicates that leaders must be willing to sacrifice time, energy, and relationships to the task of institutional transformation.

Certainly, a kind of humility and personal will to endure the process of change are characteristic of the kind of leaders who transform organizations (Collins 21). Transformational leaders are willing to sacrifice their own ego gratification for the good of the organization they serve (25, 36). The ability to sublimate personal ego demands (a kind of cross bearing) is the essence of servant leadership—a leadership that puts the good of the whole and the future of the organization before the personal success of the leader. Beyond the sacrifice of ego demands is the reality that change can be painful and often transformation includes conflict. By bearing this pain and enduring conflict, transformational shepherd/servant leaders bear their crosses in the midst of transformation.

**Shepherd/servant resolution.** Christianity is an embodied faith. Christian leaders are not disembodied spirits, nor are they spirit guides. They are real world leaders of real world institutions. The leadership style of Jesus was definitely a kind of servant leadership, and the service involved sacrifice. Courageous protection of the sheep requires that the shepherd/servant leader be willing to speak and act against the demonic

forces of the twenty-first century: materialism, sensuality, consumerism, and a focus on entertainment and success.

The story of the trial, crucifixion, and death of Jesus is the largest body of text in all the Gospels. The cross is at the center of the gospel and at the center of Christian leadership. As Willimon explains, the vast majority of Mark's Gospel is "preparation to crucify Jesus, Jesus' crucifixion, or the aftermath of Jesus' crucifixion" (96).

Transformational leaders should consider carefully Jesus' own words: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mark 8:34).

The cross-bearing aspect of Christian leadership is fundamental in the Reformed tradition because this tradition has always focused on the priesthood of believers and the service of the Church to the world. The cross is "a central metaphor for the Christian life" (Rice 178). Those who have experienced the grace of God are not "saved" for their own personal and selfish happiness but are freed from self-centeredness in order to serve and love others (168). In order to transform a local congregation, leaders must have the ability to take risks. As St. Ambrose notes, "For if a shepherd feared to say what is right, what else is that but to have turned his back by not speaking" (53).

Yet, wise protectors must know more than simply when to speak, when to act, or when to engage their egos in defense of the flock. They must also know when to keep silent. Indeed, leaders must have been silent long enough to study and listen until the danger to the flock is understood in all its complexity. "Quiet leaders" are willing to suffer through indecision and bear the cross of delay and complexity. They know how to bide their time and buy time in order for the best solution to emerge (Badaracco 53). This time spent waiting for solutions can be, in itself, a cross to bear.

## **Practices of a Manager of the Flock**

The eighth characteristic of the shepherd/servant leader is that they are able to manage the community that they have created.

**Narrative foundation.** The messianic vocation of Jesus provides clues concerning some features expected of lay ministry in the messianic kingdom of Jesus. The followers of the Messiah are expected to be doing the deeds of the Messiah. In fact, the disciples of the Messiah will do even greater things (John 14:12). Carrying on the work of Christ is not, however, going to take place in some disembodied spiritual sphere but within the life of community that Jesus formed and continues to form. This community, like any human community, requires some degree of organization and management.

The messianic theme, with its connotation of the restoration of Israel, carries with it the notion that some form of organization will be involved. All kingdoms have organization. Jesus specifically created an organization in the form of the twelve. The twelve disciples seem to be symbolic of the leadership of the twelve patriarchs of the tribes of Israel. Thus, the twelve are a symbol for the leadership of Israel, now reconstituted as the end-time people of God under the leadership of Jesus Messiah.

The early Church soon found that it needed an organization. Jesus himself seems to have created some kind of organization for his people. Peter seems to have been a first among equals (Kingsbury 132). Peter, James, and John seem to have formed an inner circle around the Messiah and received special training and revelation in preparation for their leadership task (Luke 9:28-36). Beyond the twelve, Luke makes references to the “seventy-two messengers” whom Jesus sent out (Luke 10:1-7, 17-23).

Before Pentecost, in the Upper Room, Peter emerges as the leader of the twelve

(Acts 1:15). The twelve felt the need to replace Judas to bring their number back to the full complement of twelve. As the church grew, believers felt the need to increase the management of the Church by appointing deacons who would administer widows' daily portions of food (Acts 6:1-7). From the earliest days, the Church in Jerusalem seems to have acted as some kind of decision-making body for the Church (Acts 11; 15:1-33). James, in particular, seems to have had some kind of oversight responsibilities (Acts 15:13-20). In the same passage in which James seems to be providing leadership to the early church, mention is made of elders (Acts 15:22), and Paul and Silas seem to have commissioned elders wherever they went (Acts 20:13-27). At the end of his ministry, Paul makes reference to the offices of elder and deacon as if they were established offices in the Church (1 Tim. 3:1-4:16).

**Secular dynamic.** From time to time in recent leadership scholarship, a tendency has emerged to denigrate the day-to-day management of organizations. This implied belittling of the process of management is often captured in the saying, "Leaders do the right things. Managers do things right." The fact is that most leaders work in and with large, complex organizations and institutions, entities that must be managed as well as led (J. Gardner 81). Thus, leaders must first and foremost be managers, because the way in which their leadership will be felt and the vehicle through which transformation will occur require the constant management of the day-to-day affairs of the organization. An organization that is in constant turmoil and without good management seldom attains excellence.

Often, the kind of breakthroughs that lead an organization to a new level of achievement are not the result of a single act of visionary brilliance, but the result of a series of decisions, the cumulative effect of which is the achievement of change (Collins



69). This kind of leadership includes the willingness to address the kind of details by which an organization lives on a day-to-day basis.

**Shepherd/servant resolution.** Leaders who would transform local congregations participate, and inspire others on their staffs or lay ministry teams to participate, in the self-sacrificial ministry of Christ. Part of the sacrifice that leaders must be willing to make is the sacrifice of management. Even the smallest church must be managed. Committees or “ministry teams” must be formed and staffed. The church must be cleaned, repaired, and (hopefully) expanded as the church grows and matures. This process of cleaning, repairing, and expanding means that the leadership of a local congregation, like the leadership of the early Church, must be willing to be involved in the details of management.

Managing is the process by which people are organized to do ministry. It involves using an organizational structure to achieve the results that the organization intends. In the process of management, organizations, including churches, make incremental progress toward change (Allen E. Nelson 85). No matter how brilliant or compelling a vision, much of its accomplishment takes place in the guise of the day-to-day transactional leadership of the congregation. Leaders who ignore this aspect of ministry almost never achieve excellence in ministry.

### **Practices of a Symbol of Hope for the Flock**

The ninth characteristic of the shepherd/servant leader is that they are able to serve as a symbol of hope during the process of renewal of a congregation.

**Narrative foundation.** The resurrection was the supreme symbolic achievement of hope in the ministry of Jesus. At the crucifixion, the disciples were scattered, fearful, and without hope. The resurrection brought them back together as the end time people of

God. The resurrection was and is the historical ground of the hope of God's people wherever and whenever they suffer rejection, failure, and even death. The resurrection is the ground of the assurance that the kingdom has come in Jesus and will continue to come into the world until "every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (Phil. 2:10-11). Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, comments on this hope:

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. (Eph. 1:15-21)

Paul DeBlasie reminds readers that "[w]hen all of life's resources have seemingly been spent, when one's back is against the wall, when it seems like there is no way out, this is the time God can come through" (39). Lesslie Newbigin notes that one of the marks of a Christian culture is a confident hope grounded in the reality of the resurrection (Gospel in a Pluralist Society 101). The resurrection began the process of reconstituting the scattered twelve as the leaders of the New Israel as Jesus breathed hope into the darkness of their disappointment at the death of their leader.

**Secular dynamic.** Transformational leaders are often called to shape values by embodying and exemplifying them so that the congregation is called to transcend the current struggle and continue in the process of transformation (Peters and Waterman 83). In this embodying role, transformational leaders give hope to the congregation that they will succeed and that they will prevail in renewing and revitalizing their local congregation.

In addition to acting as a symbol of hope, transformational leaders create hope by

structuring circumstances in which the group sees visible evidence of their ultimate success. Congregations need short-term success along the path to provide hope and to (1) reinforce the vision they are seeking to accomplish, (2) relax and celebrate along the way, (3) see short-term, but significant progress, (4) undermine those who may be resisting the vision, (5) keep people, especially significant leaders on board, and (6) build momentum (Kotter 123). This entire process is necessary in order for the hope of renewal and revitalization to endure during the times when visible progress is lacking.

**Shepherd/servant resolution.** Pastors are inevitably symbols of their congregations (J. Gardner 18). When a group is threatened in the midst of strife or change, it needs a visible symbol of unity and hope for the future (18). Just as Jesus' transfiguration and resurrection function to give the disciples hope that their sufferings were not in vain, so the "little resurrections" that a congregation sees and celebrates on the road to renewal give hope that the vision cast by transformational leaders can, in fact, be accomplished.

This characteristic of shepherd/servant leaders places enormous responsibility on the leader. Christian hope is not a secular hope that all will be well. Nor is Christian hope blind confidence in the face of hard facts to the contrary. Christian hope is not simply acting as the voice of what Christians wish would be (Newbigin, Gospel in a Pluralist Society 101). Christian hope is the willingness to act in situations that seem hopeless based upon what God has already done in Christ and with the confidence that what God has done in Christ, God can and will do in a local congregation.

### Conclusion

The task of rebuilding local congregations is not easy or simple. The rebuilding of institutions is always a difficult task. Robert Greenleaf notes the interesting fact that the

root of the word religion is to “rebind” (80). What is needed among those who would renew mainline congregations is the willingness to rebuild and rebind persons to these congregations. Those who are called to the task have a calling that is difficult, time consuming, and subject to long periods without any visible evidence of success. Yet, those who have or develop the kind of character traits necessary have an unparalleled opportunity for service to their congregations and communities.

The foregoing dialogue enables an outline of the elements of shepherd/servant leadership. The shepherd/servant model holds aspects of secular leadership theory in tension with traits derived from the biblical narrative (see Table 2.1). The remainder of this dissertation attempts to analyze the relevance of this model of leadership to the renewal of the local church.

**Table 2.1. The Characteristics of Shepherd/Servant Leadership**

<b>Secular Pole</b>	<b>Narrative Pole</b>	<b>Resolution</b>
Character	Preparation	Character
Vision	Vision	Visionary leader
Motivation	Gatherer	Gatherer of community
Community building	Kingdom building	Builder of community
Management	Biblical order	Transactional leader
Teaching	Equipping	Equipping teacher
Empowerment	Empowerment	Empowerer of disciples
Service	Sacrifice	Sacrificial servant
Symbol	Resurrection hope	Symbol of transformation

Mainline churches will not be able to acquire the dynamic characteristics of transformational congregations unless and until they can acquire a deeper relationship with God, an empowering of the Spirit, and a more effective dialogue with the realities of

early twenty-first century American life. Therefore, a new kind of leadership will be required, leadership capable of transforming mainline institutions into more effective witnesses of God's love for the world in Christ.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

#### **Introduction**

This study responds to the need to identify the characteristics of leaders who can shepherd local congregations into a period of renewal, revitalization and new and increased ability to serve Christ in their communities.

#### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study was to discern correlations between a biblically derived shepherd/servant model of church leadership and the revitalization of seven local congregations in the Presbytery of Memphis, a local judicatory of the PCUSA. The focus of the study was upon discerning the characteristics and qualities of transformational leaders who were able to renew and revitalize these local congregations.

#### **Exploratory, Qualitative, Multi-Case Study**

This study was an exploratory, qualitative, multi-case study of the phenomenon of transformational leadership in the context of seven churches located in the Presbytery of Memphis. The goal was to explore the phenomena of transformational leadership in the context of revitalizing local congregations. In order to explore the phenomenon, a model of transformational leadership derived from the biblical narrative was developed. Seven churches that had experienced growth and vitality in recent years were selected. The principal pastoral leaders who led the church into a period of renewal and increased vitality were interviewed. The object of the interviews was to determine the personal leadership characteristics and practices of these pastors. The pastoral interviews were then confirmed by another interview of a person or persons. Finally, other data was gathered about each church whose pastor was subject of the study. The interviews were

subjected to a qualitative, ethnographic analysis using Ethnographic 5.0. The sorted data was then further analyzed.

The process used was iterative and progressive involving a repeated process of observation, collecting, and thinking about the data gathered (Seidel 1-2). Observations were recorded as field notes on the original, coded, and sorted transcripts. Where the transcript had been subjected to ethnographic coding and sorting, notes were inserted as part of the ethnographic analysis. From this procedure of noticing, collecting, coding, and thinking, the results of the study emerged.

### **Design of Study**

The study was designed to supplement an existing demographic study of the Presbytery of Memphis in order to seek a better understanding of the characteristics of pastors who have led congregations that experienced increased vitality and growth in the midst of the general decline experienced by mainline churches. As to the Presbytery of Memphis, the study is intended to assist local congregations in understanding the kind of leadership necessary in order for a period of revitalization to occur. More broadly, this study hoped to add to the understanding of transformational leadership and the way in which transformational leaders operate to renew local churches so that they became transforming churches in the Presbytery. The study also hoped to have heuristic value in suggesting the value of a shepherd/servant leadership model for local church leadership, a model whose validity can be explored by others.

### **Social Location**

Under the pressure of postmodernism, qualitative researchers have become much more attuned to the way in which the social location of the researcher affects the outcome of a study (Denzin and Lincoln 9-10). For almost twenty years, I have been involved in

various renewal movements in the Presbyterian Church (USA.). Prior to becoming a pastor, I served as a deacon and elder (lay leader) in one of the largest evangelical churches in the PCUSA. While in seminary, I founded a renewal ministry that attempted to support conservative and evangelical students. That ministry continued after my graduation. After graduation, I served a local congregation that experienced significant numerical and spiritual renewal. Prior to my arrival, it had been one of the most troubled churches in the Presbytery. The First Presbyterian Church of Brownsville, Tennessee, is one of the subjects of this study. In addition, while in Brownsville, I formed Living Waters House, a spiritual direction center for pastors, church leaders, and their families. One of the foundational purposes of Living Waters House is to support church leaders so that they may give better leadership to their local congregations.

In 1999, I left Brownsville and was, at the time of the study, the co-pastor of Advent Presbyterian Church, another of the subjects of this study. Based on weekly attendance, Advent is the largest church in the Presbytery of Memphis. At the time I arrived at Advent, it was experiencing problems growing out of a relatively weak adult discipleship program and dissension among staff members and between the staff and one particular group of adult leaders. Since my coming to Advent, the adult discipleship program has grown, and some staff and volunteer problems have been moderated.

Finally, from its formation in 1996 until January 2003, I was a member and ultimately chairman of the Committee on Renewal, Redevelopment, and Presbytery Planning of the Presbytery of Memphis. In this position, I led the Presbytery into a study of its member churches and have been deeply involved in resolving problems in declining and conflicted churches. From 1 January 2003 until 1 January 2004, I was the Chairman of the Coordinating Council of the Presbytery of Memphis, a group that functions as the



executive committee of the Presbytery between its meetings. In this role, I was involved in most of the basic organizational problems of the Presbytery.

Whenever a single observer is significantly involved in a research project, the potential exists for selective perception and bias (Patton 148). Obviously, I bring to the study a particular theological perspective (moderate evangelicalism) and a bias toward congregations that embody orthodox Christian faith and practice. Since I have pastored both large and small congregations, I do not think that I am biased toward larger or smaller churches. In order to moderate the impact of any bias, one of the persons consulted during the course of the study (Dr. Sam Laine, the current Chairman of the Committee on Redevelopment, Renewal, and Presbytery Planning) is a person who holds different opinions than mine on many of the issues facing the PCUSA.

### **Research Questions**

This study focused on two research questions designed to discern the presence or absence of the characteristics of the biblically derived shepherd/servant leadership model. The questions were designed to assist in discerning whether and in what way characteristics of a shepherd/servant leadership model were present in pastors studied.

#### **Research Question 1**

Did the pastors of churches that met the criteria for this study perceive themselves in ways consistent with the presence or absence of character traits suggested by the shepherd/servant leadership model?

#### **Research Question 2**

Did significant persons who were part of the leadership team (usually the Session) of the congregation perceive the presence or absence of the same shepherd/servant leadership model leadership traits?

## **Methodology**

This study was a qualitative exploratory study of the leaders who demonstrated the ability to grow churches amid general decline.

### **Qualitative Methodology**

The methodology used for the study was qualitative. An attempt was made to look at the leaders and churches being studied in a variety of ways in order to discern how leaders perceived themselves and made sense of the leadership roles into which they were placed (Berg 6-7). As a qualitative study, the emphasis was upon the use of a variety of techniques in order to piece together a better understanding of transformational leadership within the context of local congregations. As such, a variety of methods were used to gather information: interviews, questionnaires, existing studies, and documents gathered in the course of the research, as well as the results of personal observation.

Leadership in a local church is a personal and relational phenomenon. Qualitative research is particularly appropriate when humanistic concerns and values are important (Patton 123-24). Leadership is often “context specific,” so that the nature of community being led and its particular context are of great importance in studying the effectiveness of a particular leader. Because transformational leadership is intensely personal and involves a human response to change, a qualitative methodology was thought to offer the best methodology for conducting the study.

### **Participant Observation**

A feature of the design of this study was that I qualified for study as the pastor of two of the congregations that met the requirements for the study. Participant observation has several common features: (1) the existence of special interest in human meaning and interaction as viewed from the perspective of insiders; (3) location in the “here and now”

of the situation studied; (3) an emphasis on interpretation and understanding of a human phenomenon; (4) an opportunistic, open-ended process of inquiry that stresses redefinition depending on the significance of findings; (5) a design that stresses in-depth, qualitative analysis; (6) the establishment of significant relationships in the field studied; and, (7) the use of observation with other methods in gathering information (Jorgensen 13-14).

The requirements for an effective participant observational study were met in the case of this project. I was an insider in the context of the study, located in the Presbytery of Memphis. The study emphasized the interpretation of the human phenomena of transformational leadership as it has evidenced itself in the Presbytery of Memphis. As a qualitative study, the project was opportunistic and open-ended, subject to redefinition at any time, and was conducted in the context of an in-depth study of transformational leaders. As the pastor of two of the churches studied and as a leader in the Presbytery, I have established significant relationships with the field studied. Multiple methods were used in conducting the study. These multiple methods and the multiple leaders studied minimized the impact of the personal aspect of the study on the results.

### **Interview Process**

The study primarily relied upon semi-structured interviews with pastors and congregational members based upon the Interview Guides attached as Appendixes A and B, respectively. Consistent with the nature of semi-structured interviews, the Interview Guides contain a list of basic questions and topics to be covered during the interview process (Bernard 191). A semi-structured interview approach is particularly useful when dealing with leaders and/or managers, bureaucrats, and others who are accustomed to making efficient use of their time (191).

Each interviewee was asked to fill out an Interviewee Questionnaire (see Appendix C). The Interviewee Questionnaire was designed to gather basic information about each person interviewed in preparation for the interview so that the interview could be conducted as efficiently as possible. Each interviewee was also asked to sign a consent letter (see Appendix D).

### **Focus Groups**

A focus group interview consists of an interview with a small group of people (Patton 335). Where possible, the congregational interview was conducted with a focus group of two persons, and not one member. Focus groups were used in the hope of allowing more data to be gathered concerning the leadership of a particular pastor and greatly reducing the potential for bias (Patton 336). It also enabled a greater number of views to be heard where it was available. Creating a focus group was not always possible. In those cases, interviews were used.

### **Documentary Sources**

Finally, to the extent possible, relevant documents, such as histories of the local churches studied, advertising information, employee manuals, long-range plans, mission statements, training materials, vision statements, worship aids, and the like, were gathered in order to create multiple sources of information concerning the leader in his or her local congregation.

### **Subjects**

The study was designed based upon the number of congregations which demonstrated renewal and or revitalization during the period studied and the availability of pastors who served those congregations during the period of renewal.

## **Design and Sources**

One of the more difficult problems of designing a qualitative study is choosing an appropriate population of subjects (Berg 29).

**Sources for selection.** The subjects for the study were chosen based upon a review of statistical data concerning the Presbytery of Memphis. This data came from a variety of sources. First, the Committee on Revitalization, Redevelopment, and Presbytery Planning has for some years been studying the condition of the Presbytery and has reported its conclusions to the Presbytery of Memphis (Committee on Renewal 1). Second, the PCUSA has an Office of Research Services, and conversations took place with that office. Then, information was received from the Office of Research Services concerning the churches of the Presbytery. Finally, the General Assembly maintains statistical data that is available in written and electronic form, and that data proved useful in determining which churches were to be the subjects of the study. Information concerning churches of the Presbytery of Memphis was gathered from all these sources.

**Purposively chosen sample.** The population studied was a purposively chosen sample population. In a purposive sample, researchers use their special knowledge or expertise concerning the group to select appropriate subjects (Berg 32). I have been a member of the Presbytery of Memphis for almost nine years. Until 1 January 2003, I was the Chairman of the Committee on Renewal, Redevelopment, and Presbytery Planning and was the Chairman of the Presbytery Council from 1 January 2003, until 1 January 2004. In these positions, I was in charge of the Presbytery study and of a Presbytery long-range planning and visioning process conducted during 2003. Each of these roles permitted some degree of insight into the congregations studied. After reviewing the statistical data, and considering other information available (including, in some cases, the

lack of information), seven churches and their pastors were chosen for further study.

**Method of dealing with a selection bias.** Selection bias is a major issue in qualitative studies (Bernard 111). Leaders were chosen because of the spiritual and numerical growth of the congregations they served. The hypothesis was that the existence of this growth was positively correlated to the existence of transformational leadership. In order to minimize the element of bias, and in order for a church or a leader to be eligible for the study, the congregation must have grown numerically for four of the five years studied, unless special circumstances existed. Quantitative statistical data from the Presbytery study and other sources were used to make this determination in order to eliminate the potential for bias in selection. At least two congregations that I would like to have studied were eliminated as a result of the quantitative criteria for inclusion in the study. In addition, no reason existed for me to doubt the continuing validity of the information.

### **General Criteria for Inclusion as Interviewees**

In order to qualify for the study, the following criteria had to be met:

1. The growth criteria mentioned in the preceding section had to have been met;
2. My conclusions concerning qualifying churches were checked with the current chairperson of the Committee on Church Renewal and Revitalization of the Presbytery of Memphis who verified the lack of bias in selection and the rational basis for choice;
3. The pastor to be studied must have been the installed pastor of the church during the period of revitalization. In one case, the absence of confirming data led to the elimination of a church from the study. In another case, the installed pastor had left and could not be interviewed, and confirming data also led to the elimination of a church from the study. In a third case, the renewal began after the pastor left under the leadership

of an associate pastor. This associate pastor was interviewed;

4. The confirming interview or focus group, which was used to confirm the results of the primary interview, must have been with or included a recognized leader (or leaders) of the congregation during the time the revitalization process was underway. This person was, in two instances, a staff person or a pastor who had worked closely with the pastor who was interviewed.

### **Leaders and Churches Chosen as Subjects**

The leaders who were chosen for the study were those who demonstrated some capacity to renew or revitalize a local congregation during the period studied.

**Churches selected.** During the ten-year period ending 1 January 2000, total membership in the Presbytery of Memphis fell from 20,441 to 12,555, a decline of 7,891 or 38 percent. Only a very few churches experienced nominal growth during that period. Of these, one experienced a very significant conflict in the past three years, lost two pastors, split, and is now in a state of decline. In at least two situations, the reported data did not fit the facts, or the reported data was not available or was misleading or confusing.

This elimination left seven churches that met the criteria of both inward and outward growth during the period covered by the Report (Committee on Renewal 1-2). Thus, my study initially focused its attention on those seven churches within the bounds of the Presbytery of Memphis: Advent Presbyterian Church of Cordova, Tennessee; Bartlett Presbyterian Church of Bartlett, Tennessee; First Presbyterian Church of Brownsville, Tennessee; Faith Presbyterian Church of Germantown, Tennessee; Germantown Presbyterian Church of Germantown, Tennessee; Highland Heights Presbyterian Church of Cordova, Tennessee; and, Woodland Presbyterian Church of

Memphis, Tennessee.

**Leaders studied.** The pastors chosen for interviews were Dave Schieber (Advent), Chris Scruggs (Advent and Brownsville), Michael Thomas (Bartlett), Greg Darden (Faith), Denton McLellan (Germantown), James Quillin (Highland Heights), Tim Foster (Highland Heights), and John Sowers (Woodland). In each case, one or more members of the congregation or staff members familiar with the renewal were interviewed in order to verify and expand upon the results of the interview.

### **Instrumentation and Data Collection**

The primary methodology for this study was semi-structured interviews based upon instruments created for the study.

#### **Interview Guides and Questionnaires**

In order to conduct the study, two Interview Guides were prepared, one applicable for pastors and one for lay leaders (see Appendixes A and B). Each interviewee was asked to fill out an Interviewee Questionnaire (see Appendix C). The Interview Guides were used to ensure that all interviews covered the same areas pertinent to discerning the presence or absence of qualities consistent with the shepherd/servant leadership model. Each lay interviewee was also asked to fill out an Interviewee Questionnaire. A consent letter (see Appendix D) was received from every person questioned.

#### **Interviews and Records**

Each interviewee was interviewed for a period of approximately one hour. A court reporter, who was also a seminary student, recorded and transcribed the interviews using a microcassette recorder and other techniques. A copy of the interview was sent to each pastor subject in order to verify its accuracy.

Field notes are an important part of qualitative research (Patton 239). During the



course of the interview, some field notes were made to the extent that information was being given that I felt was of such significance that I needed to record it in notation. In addition, since recorded conversations do not always reflect affect and other factors, I used field notes to record emotional and other responses that could not have been accurately represented by the recording alone.

Finally, as part of the methodology, other relevant information concerning each church and pastor was collected to gain further insight into each church and pastor. This information included such items as advertising and programmatic materials, employee manuals, long-range plans, mission statements, training materials, vision statements, and worship aids. These materials were gathered in order to create multiple sources of information concerning the leaders and their local congregations.

The field notes and other documentation gathered were used to supplement and provide a check on what was reported in the interviews (Patton 245). They were of invaluable help in interpreting the data and in gaining perspective on the results of the interviews.

### **Ethnographic Analysis**

Subsequent to the gathering of data and the transcription of interviews, they were subjected to an ethnographic analysis using Ethnograph 5.0, a computer program designed to facilitate the analysis of data collected during qualitative research (Siedel 1). Ethnographic analysis is particularly well suited to the analysis of interview transcripts, field notes, and other qualitative data. The interviews were reduced to transcripts, which were then imported into Ethnograph 5.0 for analysis.

The initial transcripts developed as part of the data collection process were subjected to an initial review by me and margin notes were made and highlighted in order

to facilitate further analysis. The transcripts were imported into Ethnograph 5.0 for further analysis. The initial transcripts were filed for later use in verifying and supplementing the ethnographic analysis.

The imported transcripts were coded using key words relevant to the Servant/Shepherd model of leadership. The coding consisted of assigning relevant key coding words to specific lines of the transcripts. Any given line could be relevant to one or more (or none) of the code words. Some lines were coded under as many as three to five key words. Approximately fifty code words were used in this initial analysis. Subsequent to an initial coding, each transcript was reviewed and coded a second time. The coded transcripts were then printed and analyzed by me. Subsequent to analysis they were also filed for later use in verifying and supplementing the ethnographic analysis.

All coded files were imported into and became part of a single project in order to facilitate the sorting of the data and to make possible cross-file analysis of similar data from each of the transcripts. The coded transcripts were then sorted using Ethnograph 5.0 in order to extract from each transcript textual data relevant to each element of the shepherd/servant model of leadership. The sorted transcripts were then subjected to further analysis in order to develop a picture of the various aspects of each specific element of the model. After printing the sorted data, it was subjected to further textual analysis. Frequently, a coded extract was compared against the original transcript in order to verify context and to analyze the sorted data against the broader data. Occasionally, a transcript was recoded on the basis of earlier analysis. Emerging interpretation was recorded on the sorted transcript files.

### **Model**

The purpose of this study was to make some preliminary judgments concerning

the effect of leadership that conforms to the concept of a shepherd/servant leadership model created as a result of the review of literature conducted in Chapter 2.

In social scientific research, variables are measured by their indicators (Bernard 34). In the case of this study, the indicators for the shepherd/servant model of leadership were leadership character and practices consistent with the elements of the model summarized below:

1. Practices of preparation and silence,
2. Practice of vision development,
3. Practices of a gatherer of the flock (preaching and evangelism),
4. Practices of a teacher of the flock (teaching and preaching),
5. Practices of community maintenance (community building and pastoral care),
6. Practices of an empowerer (lay ministry and lay leadership development),
7. Practices of a sacrificial servant (sacrifice, self denial, and servanthood),
8. Practices of a manager of the flock (administration and management, and
9. Practices of a symbol of hope.

The Interviewee Questionnaires were designed to seek out information in the interview process that would confirm or negate the presence or absence of these characteristics.

Table 2.1 on page 111 graphically represents these characteristics.

### **Other Factors**

Many factors need to be considered in assessing the data. For example, most, but not all, of the churches that met the criteria for this study were in areas experiencing population growth. They were not, however, from similar demographic areas since some were suburban and some were rural in nature. All the churches studied were predominantly white. As a result, race, often a significant variable, was not studied.

## Hypothesis

A hypothesis is a single statement that attempts to explain or predict a single phenomenon (Simon 37). The hypothesis of this study was that churches that met the requirements for inclusion in this study would possess pastors who exhibited the characteristics of shepherd/servant leadership.

## Analysis and Interpretation of Data

After gathering the data, a process of analysis and interpretation was followed in order to understand the data gathered better.

### Analysis

In analyzing and interpreting the data, the following procedures were used;

1. Data gathered about subjects was organized into files by congregation;
2. All interviews were reduced to unedited, verbatim transcripts and filed;
3. Copies of the transcripts of leader interviews were sent back to the leader for confirmation of the accuracy of their contents;
4. All transcripts were subjected to ethnographic analysis in order to find statements related to the shepherd/servant model of leadership;
5. The analyzed material was filed corresponding to aspects of the shepherd/servant leadership model;
6. The data was inductively analyzed in order to discern the presence or absence of patterns and themes, and categories relevant to the shepherd/servant model of leadership; and,
7. Other data, including the results of confirming interviews and data gathered by site visits, was studied and analyzed in order to discern the leadership style of the pastor.

## **Interpretation**

Subsequent to the collection and collation of data and the inductive analysis of the data, the data was compared to the shepherd/servant leadership model that was being tested in order to determine the extent to which the model provides heuristic value as an interpretive framework for understanding transformational leadership as it pertains to the renewal and revitalization of local congregations.

## **Validity and Generalizability**

Validity refers to the accuracy and trustworthiness of the findings of a research project (Bernard 46). The validity and generalizability of this research was subject to a number of variables. The study itself was relatively restricted in scope, consisting of interviews involving only eight leaders in seven churches in a single Presbytery in the PCUSA. The churches studied were all suburban or rural/small community churches. No churches could be termed “inner city.” All were Presbyterian churches located in the Presbytery of Memphis, which includes the urban areas of Memphis and Jackson, Tennessee, and rural West Tennessee, Eastern Arkansas, and the Boot Heal of Missouri. The largest city, Memphis, has just over a million people in its metropolitan area. No churches studied had a majority of members who were in a racial minority and no churches studied had a pastor who was a member of racial minority. Only one of the churches studied had more than one thousand members. The setting of West Tennessee is relatively religious, being part of the so-called “Bible Belt,” which is popularly seen as more traditional and publicly religious than other areas of the country. None of the leaders studied was racially ethnic. Finally, no women among the group qualified for the study.

Based upon the limitations listed above, further study might cast doubt upon the

validity of the narratively derived shepherd/servant leadership model in other contexts.

### **Reliability**

The nature of exploratory studies is to probe research subjects in ways that provide preliminary answers to the questions posed. The study consisted of interviews with pastors and church members from churches in a single presbytery together with a review of publicly available and other materials gathered during visits to the congregations studied. The nature of these interviews was such that the study relied to some degree on the accuracy of the self-perception of the pastors studied. The confirming interviews were designed to provide a check on the self-perception of the pastors, and in most instances these interviews accomplished that purpose. However, significant differences existed in the willingness of the confirming interviewees to speak freely and in the willingness of pastors to provide more than one person to be interviewed. My impression was that this unwillingness of pastors to provide more than one person to be interviewed was not a result of any factor other than the bother of attempting to gather persons to engage in the interviews. In addition, the responsiveness and understanding of the confirming interviewees varied significantly.

Where two or more pastors were involved in the growth, discerning the impact of any one personality was difficult. In two cases, the pastors who were studied were in co-pastorate relationships. In each of those cases, one of the co-pastors was a more significant source of the growth of the congregation than was the second. In each case, one co-pastor had been with the congregation for a significantly greater period of time than the other and so had more impact on the vitality and growth of the congregation.

Finally, the greatest confounding variable was the population growth of the surrounding community. The impact of this factor was admitted by at least three of the

pastors to have been the most significant factor in the very rapid growth that they experienced for a portion of the time their congregation grew. In both cases, the congregations continued to grow once surrounding neighborhoods were fully built up but at a substantially lower rate.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Mainline churches face the challenge of renewing and revitalizing hundreds and thousands of local congregations if they are to maintain their current size and scope of ministry. However, pastors who have the leadership skills necessary to reverse the decline of a local church are in short supply. This shortage is particularly true for congregations that have been declining for some time.

This study was designed to increase understanding of the nature of transformational leadership in the context of the local church by examining the leaders studied in the light of a narratively derived shepherd/servant model of leadership. The shepherd pole is the directive, initiating pole of transformational leadership in the context of a local congregation. The servant pole is the need-meeting pole of transformational leadership as it seeks to meet the need of a local congregation under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The model is incarnational as it is based on the messianic leadership of Jesus. It is narratively derived from the Gospel narratives of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Transformational leadership is essential if the decline of mainline congregations is to be reversed. In each of the congregations studied, the leader exhibited a significant interest in the growth and vitality of his congregation and the capacity to lead a local congregation into a time of spiritual and numerical growth.

The purpose of this chapter is to set forth the results of the study. Its primary concern is to report the results of interviews with pastors who led congregations that were renewed and revitalized and with members of their congregations. In reporting the data, an attempt has been made to correlate the contents of interviews with the elements of the narratively derived shepherd/servant model of leadership, which forms the independent



variable studied in connection with the research conducted.

**Profile of the Subjects**

The following sets forth a brief description of the seven churches and pastors interviewed.

**Advent Presbyterian Church**

Advent Presbyterian Church of Cordova, Tennessee (Advent), is twenty-five years old and is the second largest congregation in the Presbytery of Memphis. By worship attendance, it is the largest. Advent was formed in the Cordova area of Memphis, which was at the time a farming community dominated by a few families. In the 1970s, the Cordova area began to grow, and the Presbytery determined to plant a congregation in the area. The congregation has grown steadily over its twenty-five year history but has had to overcome periods of stagnation and difficulty during its history. The congregation has historically been predominately middle class. Today, the area is changing in its demographics due to the proximity of a mall and the incorporation of Cordova into the city of Memphis. Table 4.1 shows its five-year membership and attendance history.

**Table 4.1. Advent Presbyterian Church**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Worship</b>
1997	1177	660
1998	1267	N/A
1999	1190	N/A
2000	1226	803
2001	1256	856

The Rev. Dr. David Schieber, who is currently the co-pastor of the congregation, formed Advent in 1978. A native of the Northeast, Dr. Schieber was motivated to move to West Tennessee and form Advent by his deep interest in evangelism and in particular “risk evangelism,” a program promoted by one of the predecessor denominations of the PCUSA. Advent has always had a very strong children’s and youth program, and Dr. Schieber is the former Chairman of the Board of LOGOS International, the sponsor of the LOGOS midweek program. Dr. Schieber is a graduate of Louisville Theological Seminary and earned a D. Min. degree from that institution.

I am the current co-pastor of Advent. After practicing law in Houston, Texas, for fourteen years, I felt called into ministry. After graduating from Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, I pastored the First Presbyterian Church of Brownsville, Tennessee, before coming to Advent in 1999. I am a doctoral student at Asbury Theological Seminary. I am currently the Chair of Council of the Presbytery of Memphis and the Assistant Spiritual Director of the Bartlett Great Banquet Community.

### **Bartlett Presbyterian Church**

The Bartlett Presbyterian Church (Bartlett) of Bartlett, Tennessee was formed by the relocation of an older Presbyterian church in the Bartlett area: Curry Memorial Presbyterian Church. In 1986, a congregation dating back to 1942 was moved to the current location and renamed. This church had been a country church located in a rural part of Shelby County, Tennessee. In the 1970s, Bartlett began to grow and become a suburban community located on the perimeter of the city of Memphis.

In the ten-year period covered by this study, the church grew from 166 to 189 members. Worship attendance grew from sixty to 129. In addition, the church grew spiritually as a result of the formation of the Bartlett Great Banquet community.

Table 4.2 shows its five-year membership and attendance data.

**Table 4.2. Bartlett Presbyterian Church**

Year	Membership	Attendance
1997	189	132
1998	198	137
1999	210	161
2000	203	161
2001	189	129

In 1992, the congregation called the Rev. Michael Thomas to be its pastor. Rev. Thomas brought to the congregation a familiarity with what is known as “The Great Banquet” movement, and he currently serves as the Spiritual Director of the Bartlett Great Banquet Community. This community has several hundred members. Recently, he accomplished the merger of Bartlett and Raleigh Presbyterian Church (Raleigh) to form Grace Presbyterian Church, which he serves as co-pastor. Raleigh was in a changing neighborhood and could no longer continue its ministry in its current location. Rev. Thomas studied at Louisville Theological Seminary and is a doctoral student at Columbia Theological Seminary.

### **Faith Presbyterian Church**

Faith Presbyterian Church (Faith) was formed in 1981 as a new church development in the Germantown, Tennessee, area. This church has grown both in numbers and internally. Recently, the congregation was instrumental in assisting the

Presbytery in resolving several long-standing issues with troubled congregations. Table 4.3 shows its five-year membership and attendance data.

**Table 4.3 Faith Presbyterian Church**

Year	Membership	Attendance
1997	252	N/A
1998	284	185
1999	306	220
2000	333	183
2001	259	179

The congregation had five pastorates, including two longer interim pastorates, in its first fourteen years in existence. In 1995, the congregation called the Rev. Dr. Greg Darden to be its pastor. Dr. Darden had previously pastored a congregation in North Carolina before coming to the Presbytery of Memphis. Dr. Darden was also a Chaplain in the United States Navy, having reached the rank of Commander. Faith recently merged with two other congregations and has shown substantial growth as a result outside of the reporting period covered. Christ United Presbyterian Church was merged with Faith in 2002, and Covenant Presbyterian Church merged with it in 2003. Both of these congregations were in changing neighborhoods and could no longer continue in their present locations. Dr. Darden studied at Columbia Theological Seminary where he earned a D. Min. degree.

#### **First Presbyterian Church, Brownsville**

The First Presbyterian Church of Brownsville, Tennessee was formed in 1826 in

the farming community of Brownsville. Regular services began in 1829 when its first building was completed. During most of the Twentieth Century, the church was relatively stable, but in the 1970s it began a period of sustained decline. In the 1980s, the congregation went through two unsuccessful pastorates. The result was further decline and a serious degree of conflict. It was the oldest congregation studied. In addition, it was the only congregation studied that grew despite the lack of growth in the city in which it was located and in the surrounding county (Haywood). A new pastor arrived in 1994, and the church began to grow after this long period of decline and conflict. Table 4.3 shows a five-year history of its membership and attendance.

**Table 4.4. First Presbyterian Church, Brownsville, Tennessee**

Year	Membership	Attendance
1997	167	130
1998	178	138
1999	185	139
2000	191	126
2001	190	141

Brownsville, Tennessee, is located in Haywood County, the third poorest county in Tennessee and one of the least populated with only about twenty-thousand inhabitants. Prior to my arrival, the past two pastors had left the congregation under situations involving conflict. The congregation had dwindled to only about 106 members. In the ensuing five years, the congregation grew substantially, both in numbers and in spiritual vitality. Under my leadership, the church began a ministry of the Presbytery known as

“Living Waters House,” a spiritual direction center for West Tennessee. I am the Assistant Spiritual Director of the Bartlett Great Banquet Community and on the Board of Directors of Living Waters House. I left Brownsville in 1999 to assume a co-pastorate at Advent.

### **Germantown Presbyterian Church, Germantown, Tennessee**

Germantown Presbyterian Church was formed in 1838 when seven charter members formed what was then a congregation of the Presbytery of the Western District of Tennessee. For many years, this church was a country church until the 1970s when Germantown began a period of rapid growth during which it became one of the most desirable suburban communities in the Memphis metropolitan area. Table 4.5 shows its five-year history of membership and attendance:

**Table 4.5. Germantown Presbyterian Church**

Year	Membership	Attendance
1997	911	401
1998	925	579
1999	966	670
2000	985	610
2001	982	603

The Rev. Dr. Denton McLellan served the Germantown congregation from 1973 until 2001 when he retired. Under his leadership the church grew from about two hundred members to its current size. Dr. McLellan served as an associate pastor at the Idlewild Presbyterian Church and served smaller pastorates in Mississippi prior to coming to

Germantown. Under his leadership the church also built its current sanctuary space and added a gymnasium to its facilities. Dr. McLellan studied at Union Theological Seminary in Richmond, Virginia, and has a D.Min. degree from Princeton Theological Seminary.

### **Highland Heights Presbyterian Church**

Highland Heights Presbyterian Church was formed in 1929 in the Highland Heights area of Memphis. The congregation was adversely impacted for many years by the decline of the Highland Heights neighborhood in which it was located. Its pastor recognized that the church could not survive in its former location and embarked on a multiyear process of moving the congregation to a new location. Recently, the congregation moved from the Highland Heights area to the Cordova area, one of the fastest growing parts of the Memphis metropolitan area. Table 4.6 shows its five-year membership and attendance data.

**Table 4.6. Highland Heights Presbyterian Church**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
1997	295	185
1998	325	220
1999	355	232
2000	313	N/A
2001	350	280

The Rev. Dr. James Quillin became the pastor of Highland Heights in 1986. Under his leadership, in the ten-year period ending in 2001, Highland Heights grew from 272 to 350 members and from 157 to 280 in worship. In 1994, under his leadership, the

congregation voted to move. From 1994 until its new facilities were finished, the congregation worshiped in the facilities of Evergreen Presbyterian Church, which is located adjacent to Rhodes College in the Midtown area of Memphis. Dr. Quillin studied at Columbia Theological Seminary and earned his D.Min. degree at Memphis Theological Seminary.

Recently, the congregation built an educational building and retained the Rev. Tim Foster as the co-pastor of the congregation. Rev. Foster is a graduate of Columbia Theological Seminary. Before coming to Highland Heights, Rev. Foster was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Greenfield, Tennessee.

### **Woodland Presbyterian Church**

In 1951, Second Presbyterian Church planted a new congregation in the Colonial subdivision of Memphis. In 1973, the congregation formed the Woodland Presbyterian School, which currently has students from kindergarten through eighth grade. Table 4.7 shows its five-year membership and attendance data.

**Table 4.7. Woodland Presbyterian Church**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Membership</b>	<b>Attendance</b>
1997	343	N/A
1998	344	220
1999	350	224
2000	357	184
2001	363	187

After a period of decline, the congregation recently began to grow under the



leadership of the Rev. John Sowers. Rev. Sowers came to Woodland in 1996 as an associate pastor. After a recent merger with Macon Road Presbyterian Church, located in a changing area of Memphis, the congregation was rechartered as Woodland United Presbyterian Church, and Rev. Sowers was called as the organizing pastor of the new congregation. Rev. Sowers studied at Austin Theological Seminary and is a doctoral student at Fuller Theological Seminary.

### **Results of the Study**

The study primarily relied upon interviews of the pastors, other staff, and laypersons at the seven churches studied. The reported results were the result of an analysis of the interviews conducted of pastors, staff, and members of the churches studied.<sup>7</sup> Set forth below are the results of the study as it related to the shepherd/servant model of leadership and its constituent parts.

#### **Coherence with Shepherd Servant Model**

This study was designed to explore the validity of a narratively derived shepherd/servant model of Christian leadership in the context of renewing local congregations. The study was designed to discern whether the shepherd/servant metaphor for The Messiah found in the biblical narrative provides a guide for pastors. The hypothesis that guided this study was that congregations that met the guidelines for inclusion in the study would have pastors who exhibited characteristics and practices consistent with the shepherd/servant model of leadership. As set forth below, the results of the study were consistent with that hypothesis.

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<sup>7</sup> The interviews were conducted under a promise of anonymity. Therefore, quotations reported below were, in some instances, edited to remove material that might directly identify the person being interviewed. Otherwise, editing was limited to shortening lengthy quotations, removing extraneous materials and removing obvious grammatical and other linguistic errors.

Almost without exception, the leaders interviewed saw themselves as “servant leaders.” For the pastors interviewed, the content of what constituted servant leadership varied, yet each of the leaders seemed to place servant leadership in the context of the ministry of Jesus. One leader stated Jesus was his model:

I think Jesus forms the example for me, as I see him leading his disciples, talking to his disciples, modeling for them what needs to be done. I see that as a very important part of my own development as I look at Christ and see the time he spent with a few leaders.

Interestingly, in this particular case, in the confirming interview, one of the laypeople interviewed described the pastor:

I think he tries, you know, to be as much like Jesus as he can be, which is the ultimate goal of all of us, you know. I think he comes pretty close to achieving it, and to see someone in human form that can do that, you know, then that gives ... the rest of us hope and inspiration that, well, if he can, then I can certainly try.

Several pastors connected the biblical narrative with the image of building up the body of Christ or the kingdom of God. For example, one pastor developed an incarnational model of ministry based on his position within the congregation:

You have to be willing to not just be a servant in the sense of meeting people’s needs, but you have to be willing to be a shepherd in the sense of recognizing that pastors do know more than the congregation generally knows. And, we are trained to preach, to teach, to care for people, and we are responsible to use those skills to build up the body of Christ—and we can’t pass the buck.

This shepherd/servant model for ministry centers on the life of Jesus, or as one congregant explains, “I think he tries to exemplify Christ in the way he lives.”

The concentration on servanthood did not mean that even the most self-effacing among them were simply focused on meeting the felt needs of the congregation. In

addition to serving the felt needs of their congregations, each of the pastors studied consciously led a congregation into a period of increased growth and vitality. This “shepherding function” seemed to derive not so much from a felt need of the congregation, which in general would have been satisfied with less than they actually accomplished, as from a deep commitment to grow a congregation. In most cases, this commitment flowed from a personal commitment to Christ and to the Great Commission.

A good example of this commitment comes from an analysis of the interview of one of the pastors who was faced with a controversial building decision. His church was located in one of the most rapidly growing areas of Shelby County. Formerly a church located in a small, rural community, it worshiped in a structure that was built for a small congregation. Many members and the Presbytery recognized that the church needed a new sanctuary and recreational facility, yet, strong voices of opposition existed. Many members desired for the congregation to retain its character as a small, family-oriented congregation.

For a long time, this pastor tried to remain neutral and guide the debate without taking a stand. The results were not favorable. After visiting with a congregant who had significant experience in the business world and in politics, the pastor decided that he needed to take a different tactic:

I had tried to sort of be neutral—above the fray—and allow the decision to emerge from the group. And, I thought, you know, that this is a coward’s way of doing it. So, I did. I did early on, after we—after the Session had made its decision, I made my position well-known, both from the pulpit as well as articles in the newspaper and things like that, letters to the congregation. I made it very clear that I was committed to this because I felt this was the will of God for this church at this time.

One former staff member of this particular pastor described this decision, by a person

who avoided conflict and rarely led except by consensus, as the most difficult decision this person made in ministry.

This incarnational model of ministry does not place the pastor above the rest of the congregation. As one pastor explained, “My model of ministry is not one from on high. My ministry model is one from within.” Yet, it can and does require that pastors meet the needs of the group by, among other matters, discerning the will of God and being willing to lead the group in the direction that the Spirit seems to be leading. This behavior constitutes the Shepherd pole of the shepherd/servant model.

The pastors interviewed appeared aware of the tension between shepherding and serving their congregations. The conflicting need to “be out front” and at the same time “be a servant” of the congregation was verbalized in a variety of ways. It was especially apparent in cases where the pastor had to lead a congregation into a new phase of ministry under conditions of conflict. In three cases studied, the pastor had to position the congregation for future growth by moving, building or making staff and program changes. In each case, process involved a painful process that included some amount of dissent and conflict. In these situations, the pastors involved sensed a high degree of role conflict.

### **Results Regarding Research Question 1**

Did the pastors of churches that met the criteria for this study perceive themselves in ways consistent with the presence or absence of character traits suggested by the shepherd/servant leadership model?

**Practices of preparation and character formation.** Each pastor had to be spiritually prepared to provide transforming leadership through a renewal ministry. This particular category was very difficult to summarize because of the scope of the category

and the variety of answers given by those interviewed. The central characteristics being studied are those practices and character traits that prepared a pastor to conduct a renewing ministry in a local congregation. Despite the differences among the pastors, those interviewed shared several themes in common.

One of the most common sources of preparation was the presence of a strong and positive model for ministry. All of the interviewees' comments cannot be reproduced. One pastor took up seven pages of a coded interview describing relationships that he had with pastors who had profoundly affected his leadership. Each one of those pastors had successfully led churches of various sizes and, in some cases, grown them significantly. This person even reminisced that he often heard the voice of one of his mentors when he preached.

Another pastor, who grew up as a Methodist and in an independent church, described his primary mentor:

Probably the person who is most responsible for my being a Presbyterian pastor is -----, who was the pastor of ----- Presbyterian Church and came to ----- after I had graduated when I was working for the college. We were actually at the time members of a Methodist church.... [T]here are qualities about ----- that I admire and seek to emulate. I have made a joke that if on my tombstone some day it said, "Here lies the poor man's -----, I would be very satisfied with that. -----'s love for Jesus Christ is so transparent. His Christocentricity stands at the center, pun intended, of his ministry.

Understanding how a minister who has a Christocentric vision of ministry is powerfully affected by successful role models in ministry who shared that vision is not difficult.

The same point was made in different ways in other interviews. For example, a pastor who had several successful role models made this observation about one of them as a Christ-centered, Spirit-empowered role model:

He wasn't dominating physically. He was a short man. He wasn't dominating intellectually. But he was dominating spiritually, and you had the experience when you were around him that the Holy Spirit was working in his life and working through him to bring the congregation to a new point. He was not forward thinking about worship. He was a traditionalist. He wasn't forward thinking about church organization. But, what he could do was take any organization and help people sense the Holy Spirit in its work.

Once again, the Christ-centeredness of the role model was lived out in such a way as to influence, and powerfully influence, a younger pastor.

The existence of a powerful and important role model was a constant theme among the pastors studied. Interestingly, with one exception, the role model was not someone whom most Presbyterian ministers would know. Good role models do not have to be famous. More important was that the role model take a personal interest in the younger pastor at a critical stage in his or her development.

Consistent with the active spirituality posited by the shepherd/servant model, only one of those interviewed would classify as a practicing mystic. Most preferred to describe their prayer life in practical terms. Some even went so far as to admit that they had no regular quiet time. Yet, they regarded being formed by prayer and Bible study as an important part of ministry. Each pastor directly and/or indirectly indicated the importance of Bible study and prayer in their personal life. One interviewee described a spirituality that was "pietistic in a lot of ways, but grounded scripturally." Another described his spirituality as "pietistic ... more along the lines of biblical mystical." Another pastor overtly described his spirituality as biblical, saying "I think in Biblical terms, think in Biblical stories."

A commitment to Scripture was mentioned over and over again in the interviews, as was the importance of prayer in the process of renewal. One pastor interviewed began

his ministry of renewal by walking around the block on which the church was located and praying for God's guidance in renewing the congregation. Two of the pastors specifically mentioned the role that prayer and prayer vigils played in the process of renewing the congregation.

Another pastor who admitted that his prayer life was not extensive or mystical described his spiritual orientation as "pietistic" (a favorite word among some Presbyterians):

But, I would say in answer to your question, probably pietistic—that being defined within the Reformed tradition and not what a lot of people mean, you know, when they talk about someone being pious today.... I think it's—it's tied more not to a mystic doing of experience or even a devotional experience, even though that needs to be one aspect of it. But I think it has to be fleshed out in terms of life and in terms of how your—how your piety is lived out.

This statement illustrates the active and practical side of the spirituality of those interviewed. These were not disengaged spiritual guides but active leaders of a concrete congregation. They were not "theologians in residence." They were shepherds/servants building local congregations.

Pastors interviewed were primarily activists, and their spirituality was an active, practical kind of spirituality centered in Scripture. The role of the Bible was both explicit in what they said and implicit in the kinds of things they described themselves as doing. At least one was regarded by himself, his co-pastor, and others in the congregation as primarily a Bible student and teacher.

Most of the pastors admitted that their prayer life could use improvement and that their quiet times were often sporadic. One pastor, who admitted to not having a regular extended time of prayer, still felt prayer to be a central aspect of his ministry:

I regard prayer as vitally important. I will pray probably six or twelve times a day, you know. I wish I could say that I had time each day to pray for an hour, but I just don't do that. But, I will have been at prayer for various things all day long. I like to pray at everything. You know, it is to the point that even when my family—when we go out to public restaurants whenever it is before we eat we pray. And I have four teenaged daughters and that just still, you know they are very good about bowing their heads and having us pray in that regard.

Pastors interviewed spoke of family quiet times, praying with spouses and children, praying during a particularly difficult day and many times a day, singing spiritual songs, and preparing for Bible studies or sermons more often than they spoke of mystical experiences and retreats. One spoke of his spirituality, using this kind of language:

I grew up in a family where I was almost fed Scripture in my mother's milk, you know. We have—I mean both sides of my family, both sides of my wife's family—have been Presbyterian for a long time. And, so my quiet time is more than meditating on the Scripture I am going to preach on. Does that make sense?

This pastor prays with his wife and small children, with the other pastor with whom he works, at meals and at other times in his admittedly busy and long days of ministry. His quiet times are often spent using the same kinds of devotional materials as would any of his parishioners and engaging in the same kind of traditional quiet time experiences. Interestingly, several pastors interviewed described using William Barclay, a popular devotional commentary, both in their own times of study and as part of sermon preparation.

The active, outward orientation of the pastors did not preclude discipline in the art of prayerfully seeking the will of God. However, times of silence and preparation were primarily practical in their orientation and focused on incarnating Christian faith in the



midst of the congregation. Although several were “mystical” in their personal spiritual lives, their primary orientation was practical and activist. The “mystical” element was either complemented by the activist side of their personalities or placed at its service.

The exact form that this Spirit-empowered Christocentricity took in the life of the pastors was important, though in each case different. Each had been prepared in different ways for the ministry of renewing churches, some similarities existed. For example, five of the eight pastors interviewed had parents who moved often when they were young. Each mentioned this frequent relocation as important since it forced them to learn to make new friends frequently and adapt to new situations. One of the five described the results of his frequent moves as a significant factor in his ability to renew congregations:

I think ... one of the characteristics that I think has helped me here considerably is the fact that I grew up as a dependent child in the service. My dad was career Navy. We moved from base to base every three years or so. And I had a very cosmopolitan outlook about life and the idea of meeting new people and coming in contact with people on a regular basis and having to establish new relationships.

Three of those interviewed had parents or grandparents who were either in ministry or in a Para church ministry when they were young. Each of them felt that this experience was important to their development as pastors. The experience of growing up in a pastor’s family most likely has a similar result to being in a military family since pastors generally move more than once in a child’s life and sometimes more frequently.

Several interviewees had prior experiences from which they drew in renewing their congregation. One had worked with “turn-around” situations in business prior to entering ministry. Another had worked in business while attending seminary as a second career student. This person had experiences in troubled churches during that period. Two had prior experience involving churches that needed to be renewed and revitalized.

One described his current church as one that needed revitalization and was known in its Presbytery and among its members to need some degree of revitalization when he came:

I would say that in my first pastorate ... was a church redevelopment. I went there as pastor of that church that was an aid supported church of the Presbytery. It received a yearly allowance and I went there with the understanding that I had five years to make it self sufficient and to get off the aid of the Presbytery and to revitalize the church. I stayed at that church for seven years. We were off Presbytery aid in three years. We had developed and increased the membership of the church in that time to a point that we became a self-sustaining congregation by the third year that I was there. We developed youth programs. We developed, with the help of my wife, a Mother's Day out program in that church. And brought that church really back from the point of coming close to being closed to a vital congregation again.

Prior life experience, and particularly relevant life experience, was a common (though not universal) factor among those pastors who renewed congregations. Yet, in every case, the preparation of the pastors for the work of revitalizing a congregation was not just spiritual. Each had practical experience upon which they drew in working in the congregations they served.

The mode of formation for ministry described by virtually all of the interviewees was consistent with an incarnational model of leadership centered on the revelation of Christ found in Scriptures—a model that focuses as much on living out one's perceived model of Christlikeness in practical ways. Each pastor was prepared in some way for the particular congregation renewed, and each had unique characteristics, a "fit" for that congregation. Yet, they were all different.

**Practices of vision development.** Out of their personal preparation, each pastor was able to develop and sustain a vision of what their church could and should become. Although, the exact nature of the vision varied, as did the means they used to institute the

vision, the visionary nature of their ministries was a consistent theme among those interviewed.

Consistent with the practical spirituality of most interviewees, their practices of vision development were practical. Yet, some surprises occurred in the ways in which they went about personally gaining their vision. For most, it was an intuitive process. Several of the pastors interviewed intuited immediately that the congregation needed to undergo a period of renewal. Most of these visited with the search committee or others concerning the renewal of the congregation before they accepted the call. Several came with a general vision of what would be necessary for renewal to occur.

One pastor described his personal vision as existing from his first day at work. “From day one when I knew that I was coming here, I really believed that this would be nothing but a large church—over a thousand members. I really believed that was a possibility.” This pastor intuited his vision, which over the years has been accomplished. The church he came to is now over 1,200 members.

Other pastors were more intentional about visioning than others. One pastor described his regular process of visioning:

I was pretty disciplined to use a structure that would help that be a time of prayer and visioning. And the members were quite happy to have their pastor doing that. In addition, ... I would take about—a longer time away every year. It could be as part of a vacation or a trip to Montreat. I even did silent retreats at Saint Columba’s. But I tried to take a time every year when for a day or so I thought about what God might be leading the congregation to do over the next year. Or the next six months, but usually it was a year.

This pastor used a formal process for visioning that involved a long-range planning committee made up of members from various groups in the congregation and extensive involvement from the session and the congregation itself. However, he also took personal

time to “listen for God” and discern the will of God for the congregation he served.

The practice of going away for intensive periods of visioning was rare, but where practiced it was effective. Even those pastors who did not have special times set aside for visioning were often aware that attending conferences and having times away with ministry colleagues where ideas could be shared was important.

For some of those interviewed, the entire notion of visioning was connected with the gospel stories of Jesus. For these pastors, how the gospel fashioned the vision was less a matter of a formal plan than a matter of internalizing a story. One pastor who fell into this category had no formal vision statement in his church, a sense of vision existed:

Well, I suppose my vision development is a gospel driven vision development. And, I am a—you know, I am a gospel guy. I probably focus more on Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in my ministry than I even do on the epistles. And, probably because I am a story—you know, I really love stor[ies].... I look at the ministry of Jesus and I see the visionary way in which he led, that he was compelled to be the shepherd to the sheep that needed a shepherd, which he wanted and ached to see the harvest.

Interestingly, those interviewed in this pastor’s church, which had no formal vision statement or long-range plan, were able to verbalize the vision embodied by their pastor and articulated in the interview better than many other churches with formal vision statements.

Those with a less intuitive approach to visioning, often made an explicit attempt to ground the renewing vision in a biblical text and in the revelation of Christ. Two of the long range-plans reviewed were specifically grounded in one or more passages from Scripture. In several cases, the pastors worked hard to develop a biblical basis for the renewal. In both these instances, even ministry areas had separate scriptural bases for their ministries. All the pastors interviewed indicated that their plan was grounded in

Scripture in one way or another.

For example, in one case a dying church developed its long-range plan around the Great Commission. The mission itself was to “make more and better disciples” in their community and “beyond.” In another case, the vision surrounded the image of Jesus as the vine and the congregation as branches.

Each of the pastors interviewed embraced some kind of visioning process. Frequently, this visioning involved members of the congregation or its governing bodies. Interestingly, most of the pastors interviewed, if they chose members to participate in confirming interviews, chose people who were either on the long-range planning committee that created the vision statement for the church or were those who were very active in carrying out parts of it. In every case, the session of the congregation was involved in process. In most cases some congregational input existed and in some cases this input was extensive. In one way or another, each pastor was central to the visioning process of the congregation.

In one congregation studied, the pastor knew that moving was essential if the church was going to grow in a changing neighborhood. The visioning process began with a number of people in the congregation who recognized that, if the congregation did not relocate, it would die. In this same church, a Presbytery executive played a crucial role in the process when he came and did a question and answer session and led the congregation through a visioning process. In another case, the pastor knew that a building program was necessary, but a key layperson in the congregation played a role in showing the pastor how that goal required him to take an active role in accomplishing it.

The process of vision creation differed among the pastors. For some pastors, no formal process existed. Some pastors possessed a personal vision for the congregation

long before it was put in writing or approved by a governing body of the congregation. One pastor admitted that his congregation's vision statement was his creation and that he more or less copied one from another congregation. Interestingly, this particular statement was among the most understood and followed among the congregations studied. Another pastor considered this vision statement the finest in the Presbytery.

For others pastors, the visioning process was long and complicated. One pastor interviewed had led two congregations into a time of renewed vision. In both cases, the process of approving the vision took about eighteen months. A committee formed that undertook the task of creating a long-range plan for the congregation. The committee read books on visioning and on local congregational growth and revitalization. The committee conducted some kind of survey of the congregation and drafted their own personal mission statement for the congregation. The committee took the time to merge all the statements into one until they had a short statement that was accepted by all. Finally, because these were Presbyterian congregations, the final product was approved by the session. Thereafter, a long-range plan was created and approved using a similar process. This kind of process was common among those who used committees to prepare the vision or similar statement of the congregation.

The pastors interviewed were adept at communicating their vision, even where, in some cases, it was never formalized. Many of the laypeople interviewed thought that their pastor had a very clear idea of where he was taking the congregation, even if it was not in writing and even if they personally did not know what it was. One pastor was recently called to active duty in the Navy and was physically gone from his church for an extended period of time, yet the congregation could continue to function and grow in his absence:

[W]hen I was recalled to active duty, the elders just picked up and certainly we had interim help here. ... But they were not familiar enough with the program of the church and the people of the church to really give a lot of guidance to the direction of the church. But the elders knew which way to take things and ... I don't think ... the church missed a beat totally in my absence. That is not to say they weren't glad to see me come back, but they had enough of a common understanding of the vision of the church and the purposes of the church that had been developed over the years by my articulating of the vision that they could carry on.

Interestingly, this church does have a formal vision statement, but it is not well known in the congregation.

In another case, the pastor prefers to keep the vision in his head, yet he communicates its basic message—the need to reach people for Christ—to his parishioners. Although no one could quote the vision statement with accuracy, the vision appeared to guide the leadership of the congregation in any case. In fact, during the research, this congregation demonstrated a high degree of understanding the vision although it had never been formally adopted.

In another case, the congregation members thought that, although the renewing pastor was no longer the pastor of the congregation, when he left they understood their basic mission that could carry on the process of renewal without his presence. The confirming interviewees credited the former pastor with preparing them to understand and carry out the vision in his absence. This particular pastor consciously prepared his congregation for the day that he would no longer be present. Jesus' preparation of his disciples was a constant role model for his ministry.

In another instance, a local church pastor developed a vision for the use of church property for a ministry. The funds needed for the mission were substantially more than the local congregation could be expected to provide. Parishioners remembered that the

pastor began by communicating the vision and asking people to pray for the vision, even though at the time accomplishing the vision seemed unlikely. One of the parishioners described the way that visioning became part of the congregation's life:

I had never seen a church get a vision for something new like that and go after it. And it happened with LOGOS and it happened with Living Water's House. It happened with starting to do more contemporary things in worship, instead of all traditional things. And you know, to do Wednesday night programming and so on. All of these things were small groups, new stuff in this church. So, I was aware of it and saw it happen.

In this particular case, the pastor preached at least one sermon a year related to the vision of the congregation and what things needed to be accomplished in the coming year for the vision to be accomplished. The vision of the congregation was also communicated by the bulletin, newsletter, and in numerous other ways.

In another case, the vision had six subcomponents: exalting God, embracing each other, equipping the congregation for ministry, evangelizing others outside the congregation, empowering members for ministry, and achieving excellence in ministry. The pastor preached at least one sermon a year around each vision component and deliberately tried to work one component into each sermon preached. The vision is communicated in new members' classes, in church brochures, on its website, in the church newsletter logo, in the leadership training for new session members, and even in the décor of the fellowship hall of the church.

Yet another pastor returned to the importance of story in communicating the vision to a congregation:

I have come to grasp story telling more as getting people to see a metaphor, getting people to see in their mind's eye, which is a vision. And that's very important.... Story telling is making it clear. Story telling, for me, is letting you see the metaphor that works, the vision and catch it.



Even pastors who did not think of themselves as storytellers recognized that a vision was not important to a congregation until it became part of the life of the congregation—until the story embodied in the vision became embodied in the life of the congregation. At that point, the content of the vision was able to direct the mission and ministry of the congregation not just as it was understood by the session or the staff but because it was part of the life of the congregation itself.

The final visionary characteristic of the pastors interviewed was that they consciously implemented the vision. It was not merely something to put on the front cover of a bulletin; it was implemented in the life of the congregation. One pastor interviewed explained it this way:

I am also a person who likes to identify a common vision, strategies to achieve that vision, tactics to achieve the strategy and goals and markers to see that the tactics of the strategy are achieved. So that we can see some kind of measurable growth. That we have done in several ways.

The pastors involved did not always have such a clear and managerial way of articulating it, but all of them to one degree or another cared about accomplishing their vision.

For some, the vision was as simple as a list of things that they wanted to accomplish before they retired or moved on to another call. To yet another, the vision was a sense that, until certain things happened, the “time to move on” had not come. Nevertheless, for at least some of those interviewed, the vision was a process of setting goals and monitoring the accomplishment of goals. In one of the churches studied, the pastor and session reviewed the long-range plan annually and supplemented the vision with new plans and goals to meet. In another case, the pastor hoped to call such a committee together to study how the plan was being accomplished and what changes were to be made in it.

Once again, the spirituality exhibited by the interviewees was consistent with the active spirituality posited by the shepherd/servant model. The pastors interviewed were not passive instruments of a visionary dream nor were they spiritual consultants. They were actively involved in the process of visioning and accomplishing the vision.

**Practices of a gatherer of the flock.** Each pastor studied was, in one way or another, an evangelist and gatherer of the flock of Jesus Christ. A common feature among all of those studied was an interest in the health and growth of the congregation. Once again, both similarities and differences existed among the pastors studied in many of the overt practices of evangelism. Yet, all the pastors interviewed agreed that gathering people together as a Christian community is central to the pastoral task, and each had a series of practices that assisted him in achieving the objective of growth.

One pastor, who was by no means the most evangelical or the most personally involved in evangelism in his church, described evangelism as central to his decision making concerning the church.

My decisions in the church are based on a couple of just personal things that I am sort of crazy about. Number one, will this help this church grow or will this hinder our growth? And if it hinders our growth, I will move Heaven and earth from keeping it from happen[ing].... If a church doesn't grow it's going to die. You have got to replace the people that are dying and moving off or you are going out of business.

Most of the pastors studied viewed growth positively, and growth was one of the major foci of their ministries. Nevertheless, these pastors were not after growth for growth's sake. In fact, several mentioned that their underlying concern was the growth of the kingdom of God. This idea was expressed in its clearest form by a pastor who left a large church to begin a new church development in an unfamiliar part of the country:

I came to the conclusion that success has nothing to do with the numbers

of people you serve. It has everything to do with the willingness to risk and build something for the Kingdom. And, I was at that point when I thought maybe I should move to a church of 2000 and then three thousand when I took this particular course in risk evangelism and led our church through that process. And it was at that point that I was contacted by people here in Memphis and in the Presbytery and wanted to know if I would take a risk with them. Those were the exact words they used. And I said, oh, you are asking a lot. And that is how I ended up here. I was willing to take a risk and found that to be much more fulfilling than moving on to bigger and larger churches.

This growth orientation was exhibited in various ways, but each of the pastors had this fundamental orientation towards evangelism. Consistent with the “Shepherd” pole of the shepherd/servant model, the pastors interviewed were personally focused on the need to gather people.

In common with most of those interviewed, this pastor saw growth as a mission of the church:

So while we end up in the long run gaining people, you end up losing people too that don't want to buy into that value of we exist for others and not just ourselves. And that has happened a lot... But what we try to do is just continue to emphasize that we build because we have a mission and the mission is to accommodate other people. And to use what is given to us and what we have as a training ground, a magnet that will attract other people.

This pastor exemplified a common theme of the pastors interviewed: All the pastors interviewed went to great lengths to avoid conflict over non-essentials; but, where avoiding a conflict would place the future of the church at risk or would inhibit its growth, these pastors endured the conflict for the sake of the gospel imperative to gather people into the flock of God.

All but one of the pastors interviewed saw growing their churches and leading people to Christ as central to their ministries. The “gathering” of God's people was an

important priority, in some cases the most important priority. This “gathering” of God’s people is central to their identity as pastors:

“I am—I am a pastor who deeply desires to grow a church. I cannot understand my ministry without understanding it as being someone who is called to grow a church.

Q: So growth is important to you?

A: Yeah. I would say growth probably—and growth both—you have prayed this in your prayer, growth both numerical and spiritual is very important to me. But, yeah, I—almost every decision that I make here as pastor I make not only for the people who are already here, but in anticipation of who else can come here in the cause of Christ.

Renewing pastors had a deeply ingrained, incarnated commitment to the growth of the body of Christ, a commitment that sustained and guided their ministries even when few if any external results to their efforts were observed.

The kind of growth that these pastors hoped to see did not merely spring from a personal orientation towards growth. The pastors studied and continue to study techniques to assist the church in growing. One church constantly opened its doors to seminars on evangelism, discipleship, and church growth. They also consciously visited growing congregations and attended meetings where church growth was a topic.

The pastors involved experimented with evangelism programs. One pastor, for example, has been involved in several well-known programs in the past ten to twelve years. Another pastor whose church has grown consistently over the years and has even attracted entire congregations to join his church expressed the feeling of many that study and improvement in evangelism was an important aspect of church growth:

I constantly read about church growth and evangelism. I try to stay as current as I can on what is happening in the church at large and how programs are working. I am very concerned about that. We have had different types of evangelism programs here, but I fear that one of the

things that we do not do as well as, not only a church here, but probably as—certainly as a denomination, we are good about attracting those who have had some experience with church and to have had some history of participating in church, but we are not very good at attracting those who have never been a part of the church. So we fail in that account on evangelism and I would say that my skills are not sufficient yet to count that as a true.

This orientation towards growth was grounded in a continuing search to find ways to improve their abilities to gather others into the body of Christ. Interesting to note was the degree of self-awareness in the comment concerning what the denomination is and is not good at doing. This attitude evidences an orientation toward improvement and overcoming weaknesses, which was a common element in the ministries of these pastors.

Each of the pastors interviewed maintained some personal involvement in evangelism. At least one participant thought that his ministry needed to refocus on personally contacting potential members. This pastor had read a book he recalled, entitled Romance of the Doorbell, early in his ministry at a time of discouragement. Here is how he described this early ministry:

When I was out knocking on doors, this friend of mine, when I was discouraged at one point, said “Read that book.” And I read the book and there was a line in the book that simply said, “The pathway to any door bell is a potential spiritual adventure for the person on the inside of the door as well as yourself.” And I found that to be really true and that motivated me. And it really was true. I mean, even people that would say, oh, we have a church would talk to me and possibly a month later show up at our church, having indicated no interest prior to that. It was a great way to contact people and it probably should be something that I am doing right now in the life of this church, marching to more door bells, meeting more people, being available to people. That was really a very important greeting in the life of this church.

Q: So personal contact with people?

A: Yeah, absolutely.

This pastor personally rang 1,500 doorbells a year in the early years in order to build his congregation.

The pastors involved evidenced differing degrees of personal involvement in evangelism; however, each pastor had a deep, personal involvement of some kind in growing his congregation. Most wrote notes or letters to newcomers. Some made visits. Many were more than willing to ask a visitor to join. Despite their many differences, the pastors interviewed demonstrated a common willingness to become personally involved in the process of evangelism was evident.

Each pastor had certain ideas concerning how to reach people for Christ. The larger and most rapidly growing churches were the most structured for outreach. Rural congregations were less structured and relied upon the personality of the pastor and personal relationships to a greater degree than larger, urban congregations. Yet, the common denominator was the personal involvement of the pastors in designing and implementing the program.

The answer of one pastor of a suburban congregation is typical of the group if somewhat more formal than some answers given by others:

We have a fairly formal [process]. It's based strictly on our needs and our demographics. We have more first-time visitors than we can really cultivate. So what we do, the first-time visitor to this church, if they leave us an address or if we can find an address, gets a visit that week from two members of the church with some literature and cookies or some kind of gift. And they stand on the doorsteps and they say thank you for visiting our church and we hope you come back.

If they come back three times, they get a phone call from a member of our evangelism committee trying to set up an appointment with me or my co-pastor to come and talk to them. This first visit is not to twist their arm to join the church, it's to get to know those people and let them get to know us. They go on—when they come back three times, they go on the newsletter list. We try our best to get them in a Sunday school class.

Q: Do you personally, you and your co-pastor do that, or is that done by a layperson?

A: Well, what is done is our laypeople just do that. Our greeters, they will mention Sunday school and say we have a Sunday school class for you if you would like to go. And sometimes they will take them up and show them where the class is.

Q: Sometimes they won't?

A: Sometimes they won't.

Q: Do you personally make calls on people then?

A: Yes.

Q: Every week?

A: Depends on when we can get—we do not make any calls on visitors without an appointment. Now, what I am finding is that about two-thirds of them don't want us to come to their houses. They come here to our office.

This interview illustrates the way pastors both structure an evangelism program involving laypersons and remain personally involved in the program. Although the precise nature of the personal involvement changes as the church grows larger, pastors still must have practices that personally involve them in the evangelism process. In the larger churches, letters and notes are also used to develop a personal relationship between the pastor and a visitor. The procedure followed by this pastor was fairly typical of the churches studied.

The pastors interviewed displayed a distrust of any “off the shelf” evangelism program, but each of them made comments concerning some aspect of the need for the church to be hospitable, and each of them made reference to the need for the church to be a welcoming place for visitors. When asked what program the congregation used, the most frequent answer was, “We don't really use a single program.” Most had developed

their own program based on their experience in the local churches they served.

A common theme mentioned over and over again was the need for a hospitable church. One pastor, who did not consider himself an evangelist, explained it this way:

I think one thing I might say, and this kind of ties in with my whole understanding and practice of evangelism, more and more the thing: I think in recent years that I have been attracted to is the necessity for a church taking with utmost seriousness what it means to be a hospitable church. And I think far too many Presbyterians are not. I think, I think one of the reasons our church is not only not growing, but losing members, is, one, a lot of congregations do not want to grow.

This pastor referred to the fact that many congregations simply don't want to take the time to be hospitable to newcomers. This pastor had his church develop a hospitality desk in the front foyer of the sanctuary to welcome visitors (a feature that three of the churches interviewed had incorporated into their structure).

One pastor interviewed illustrated the power of hospitality. This pastor invites newcomers over to his home for a meal. One of the confirming interviews showed the importance of this kind of personal involvement of the pastor in showing hospitality to newcomers:

I think right off the bat, every time we have, like you get people coming in to visit the church, it's not too long after that they are over at his house having dinner. He draws you right in. You are over at the pastor's house having dinner within, you know, a month of coming to a church. I think that is very important.

Q: He invites people to dinner.

A: Yes, at his house. It's nothing for show here at the church, but they have people over for the dinner at their house. And they do that frequently. And I think that is very attractive because you get to know them and, yeah.

Q: So would you say he has the spiritual gift of hospitality?

A: Yes.



This pastor, whose parents were Young Life leaders, reflected a deep interest in a relational form of evangelism grounded in his own personal hospitality to newcomers. Interestingly, this pastor also believed that his church was becoming a hospitable congregation.

The character and practices of the pastors interviewed was consistent with the shepherd/servant model. Renewing pastors had a passion for evangelism and devoted substantial personal attention to the organizing and leading evangelism in the local congregation. Each participated in some way in the actual process. In some cases this evangelism was despite personal shyness or introversion. Even when busy with the demands of a larger congregation, these pastors found time to participate in the gathering of the congregation.

**Practices of community building.** The pastors interviewed were all concerned with the creation and maintenance of authentic Christian community. Their focus on creation of community was both personal and involved a significant amount of managerial and interpersonal skills.

Each of the pastors studied focused a great deal of attention on the creation of authentic community. None of them felt that community building was easy in the context of early twenty-first century America. As one pastor explains, "Community is hard to build." Another pastor admitted that he believed that building community was one of his biggest failures. Even those who had built strong identification within the congregation thought that the building of community had been very difficult and that it was fragile when built. The results reflect, more than in any other aspect of shepherd/servant leadership, the way in which a culture of individualism causes problems for shepherd/servant leaders.

The intensely personal and relational nature of the creation of Christian community was reflected in the way pastors answered questions related to community building. One pastor explains this way: “[The church] is a reflection of my relationship with Jesus Christ, and my relationship with Christ is the most important part of my life.” Another pastor noted that community flows from the spiritual connectedness of people:

[T]he sense of community really does come from people having experienced a spiritual connectedness, oftentimes in a Great Banquet type setting. And that is how we build community really, is—it’s focused on that more than anything else.<sup>8</sup>

Christ-centeredness and spiritual connection between members was the center of how the pastors saw a sense of community developing. One of the pastors interviewed noted that Christian community is different than secular community. “We aren’t a country club, and if we try to be, we aren’t a good one.”

A pastor of a mid-sized congregation in a growing area is worth quoting at length in order to explain how renewing pastors used worship to build community:

I think that one of the ways we build community here is in our worship services. We are very intentional about our worship. I have, and I have a little, I have a little line that I end all of my correspondence, and my newsletters, and the pastoral notes on Sunday morning with, and that line is, be regular at worship and faithful in your prayers.... Worship is where the best expression I think of the Christian community is found. I think more so than even in mission work or in any family nights together, dinners, programs, things like that. I think it’s in worship that the real community of the church is built.... Actually, there are two things that take considerable time in worship other than the sermon. One is, at both of our worship services on Sunday morning, we have a time in which we greet one another. We just stop worship after about third way through where we pass the peace and we greet one another and we talk to each other. And this may take as much as ten to seven, eight minutes sometimes.... People go down. People come up to the choir. They are

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<sup>8</sup> The Great Banquet is a three-day guided retreat, similar to the Cursillo in the Episcopal and Roman Catholic Churches and the Emmaus Walk sponsored by the Upper Room. There are many other names under which similar programs are done, such as Tres Dias, Via De Christo, and Disciple Walk.

talking. They are exchanging. They are just greeting one another and saying hello to one another and I think that is, that is a very positive thing. For those who are guests with us, it is a means in which they get to meet other people without being singled out. And it is a, it is a tremendous, I think it is a tremendous way in which the warmth of a congregation is expressed in the midst of worship.

Worship was one constant in the way in which churches built community. Members often commented on the “warmth of the congregation” in the context of worship. Virtually all of the churches studied had some kind of time to “pass the peace” or friendship moment. The exception was a rural church where everyone knows everyone else. Yet, in all the churches studied, the worship service was, among other things, a time to build authentic community.

The pastors interviewed recognized that prayer and spiritual development were important in building a sense of community. Once again, these factors began in worship. At least one of the pastors interviewed invited the congregation to participate in the pastoral prayers as part of the worship service:

[The] second thing that we do in worship that I think helps build community is that we take prayer requests directly from the congregation. Every Sunday morning during the pastoral prayers we ask people if they have concerns, and people in our congregation share their concerns right there on the floor. And if it takes ten minutes, if it takes fifteen or twenty minutes, we do this. And it is such an impact, it has had such an impact on our congregation that when we have talked about this both in the Worship Committee and in the Session, this is taking a lot of time, the response that I always get is that this is worth every minute, every minute that we devote to it and we don't want to change this. This is one of the things which makes this congregation close, and it makes people concerned for one another. And so it is an intimate part of building a sense of community and family.

More than one of the pastors interviewed recognized that prayers during worship, prayer vigils, and regular prayer groups were a vital part of building community in the

congregation. One pastor made a broad statement that out of spiritual experiences comes a hunger for Christian community:

I connect this church's desire to provide good hospitality to their spiritual strength and that is because they value this sense of community.... [T]he sense of spiritual connectedness really does come from people have experienced spiritual connectedness, often in a Great Banquet type setting. And that is how we build community.

This notion that spiritual growth builds community was another common theme among those interviewed.

Another pastor, whose church participated in the Great Banquet and sponsored several DISCIPLE Bible studies, thought that the growth in strong, committed Christian community was directly related to the presence of spiritual growth in the congregation. These pastors were not driven to create community for the sake of community. They were trying to create a specifically Christian community, a community based on the common fellowship the members have in Christ. The desire for community flowed from a sense of spiritual connectedness resulting from spiritual growth.<sup>9</sup>

Several of the pastors regarded their personal participation in the kind of community that they were facilitating as important to their sense of community in the congregation as a whole. For some, this participation amounted to attending events such as women's and men's Bible studies, small groups, and so on. For others, it involved their participating in such kinds of groups as they were trying to start in their churches, "circles of concern," "reunion groups," "centering prayer groups," "Bible study groups," and "mission groups." In these cases, the pastors were trying to develop the kinds of spiritual connectedness that results in authentic Christian community. Small group

participation by the pastor was a common theme. One pastor described his personal participation in small group ministry:

I have always viewed being part of a small group as important. One, I need to have some people that I view as friends in the congregation. Two, I think the congregation needs to sense that the pastor is a part of groups in the church and models what it means to be a group member.

This particular pastor was a member of a weekly spiritual accountability group, a small group Bible study group, a financial accountability group, and a centering prayer group, all the kinds of groups that the leadership is attempting to grow in his congregation and all small Christian communities.

In smaller and larger churches alike, a need to work intentionally on the development of community through programming existed. The churches studied varied greatly in size and in the extent of their programming. Smaller churches, and especially those in rural settings, relied more on personal, one-on-one contact among people. A notable preference for person-to-person community building among those pastors with small and rural church experience was evident. Yet, all of the pastors interviewed used programs to build community. In each case the programming of the church was very much connected to the creation of community.

The churches did not use the same programs although some similarities existed. In each case, the pastor worked to create a kind of church program that resulted in authentic Christian community. In smaller churches, the program might be a family night supper. In larger churches, it might be a “Bring a Friend Sunday,” with a meal served. In a smaller church, it might be a prayer chain. In a larger congregation it might be

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<sup>9</sup> DISCIPLE is a Bible study program published by the Upper Room. Originally one thirty-four week introductory survey of the Bible, there are now several additional studies focused on different portions of the Bible.

Stephen's Ministry or a similar kind of program.<sup>10</sup> This kind of program was evident in many of the responses:

Other ways exist, certainly, with family night dinners and programs. Our Logos program helps to build family, certainly. We began it a year ago, and we will be entering our second year. And, you know, our first year we had a hundred and twenty-five adults and children participating on Wednesday nights to begin with. And for us that was a pretty significant move certainly in our limited size as far as facility.... That is, that is very important.<sup>11</sup>

Although the programs differed, similarities occurred in the kinds of programs that pastors used to create community. All of the congregations studied had some kind of a midweek, family-oriented, program that involved both children and adults, often LOGOS. All had some kind of fellowship meals on a regular basis. At least three of the congregations had Stephen Ministry or some other program through which members of the congregation were involved in caring.

The pastors studied had other programs that they relied upon to build community, often programs centered around affinity groups having some common interest. Once again, the kinds of the groups varied, but the following answer is typical:

Certainly we have other areas in which we need to continue to build community, but we have multiple small groups that help reinforce the community of the church.... We have had both over the years, both a formal small group program and an informal small group program. Right now I would characterize it more as informal. It is made up of certain groups certainly in the church. A lot of churches have school classes that become a small group focus. Ours has not been that so much as Sunday schools that have been small groups, but Men's Bible study, Women's

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<sup>10</sup> Stephen Ministry is a congregational care program that relies upon trained lay volunteers who give care to those in need on an ongoing basis. The lay volunteers are given about fifty hours of training before they are commissioned as Stephen Ministers.

<sup>11</sup> LOGOS is a popular midweek program that began in the Pittsburgh area and has spread across the nation to a variety of denominations. The program has four components, recreation, worship, Bible study, and a shared meal in community. Five of the churches studied had a LOGOS program.

Bible study, both day and evening circles, the choir certainly as a small group, the youth groups certainly have provided that conduit for small group participation. One Sunday school class I would say that has become an effective small group in our church is the young married class. That group has coalesced, and they have become very much a very tightly knit group in that regard. One of the other ways that we do that, I think, as well, is with our preschool program. We have programs up here at different points of the year that involve the parents of those in preschool, many of which are, don't come here certainly as Christians or as members of this church. But they bring their kids up here to events that are going, and sometimes they as well come to many of the community events that we sponsor here at the church. We have also done two other community-wide events that have helped build, I think, our image as a community organization and as a place for people to come and not only to learn about God but to be together in a family. And that is in the spring we have a Community Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday before Easter. And that is, that is a big thing, and it draws larger crowds each and every year. And in the fall we have had a Thanksgiving festival for the community that has also drawn in quite a few people.

Other churches had very similar events and programs. Several churches studied had Easter Egg hunts and other special Easter programs. All the churches studied had Christmas activities for the children and adults designed to build community. Other churches sponsored programs as diverse as float trips, adult and youth "high adventure" outdoor programs, and special dinners, such as Valentine's Day dinners. The kinds of community-building programs were as diverse as the churches themselves. The key was the pastors' personal sponsorship, support, and involvement in the program.

One area that needs to be set apart involves the crucial role that caring plays in the creation of Christian community. A marked difference was evident between the younger and older pastors concerning the importance they placed on caring ministry. Yet, virtually all the pastors recognized that their involvement in pastoral care and the involvement of their congregational members was essential in creation of the kind of community that they desired in the congregation.

One of the pastors who excelled in personal evangelism explained this way, “I think that is part of community building, too, and to let others know we really want you here and care about you.” He went on to say how congregational participation was essential as a church grows larger:

Stephen Ministry is just an effort to train up to forty, fifty people in assisting in pastoral care, not necessarily replacing pastoral care giving at all, but it’s extend the ministry of the pastor in a Christian manner that other people will know. Hey, we are not being forgotten. Our church really cares about us and again to create more community in the life of the church that we are a caring people.

Interestingly, this church, the largest in the study, is currently developing a comprehensive congregational care program. Another congregation studied was in the process of creating a similar congregational care program.<sup>12</sup> One pastor thought that congregational care was so important that the first thing he did was to create a shepherding program to provide for caring for members.

Most of the pastors studied did a large amount of pastoral care. One pastor studied spends time each week with the son of a member of the congregation who is mildly disabled. Another remembered a remark of one of his mentors that described “preaching and pastoral care as two things every pastor has to do, no matter how large the church.” Interestingly, the pastors of the largest churches were all recognized as accomplished caregivers and continued to do pastoral care. The pastors of the largest church studied still make hospital visits, counsel and provide other forms of pastoral care.

For larger churches, the systematic creation of community among staff members

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<sup>12</sup> Both these churches were relying heavily on ideas from Melvin Steinbron, Can The Pastor Do It Alone: A Model for Preparing Lay People for Lay Pastoring (Ventura: Gospel Light, 1987) and The Lay Driven Church: How to Empower the People in Your Church to Share the Tasks of Ministry. (Ventura: Gospel Light, 1997).



was an important value. One church studied had some degree of staff dissention surrounding a particular staff member. This problem resulted in a systematic loss of community in the entire staff. The pastor worked hard to overcome this problem, and community building was an important part of old resentments. He described the way he built community on the staff:

We do try to, at least twice a year, have meetings that are totally unstructured, that are just lunch or retreat, or riding four wheelers or having fun. Not so much this year, but in past years we have spent a lot of time trying to create community on our staff.

Most churches studied did not have sufficient staff for this particular characteristic of pastors who renewed congregations to be validated. Some interviews indicated that pastors were very close to their staff members and created a kind of community among them that “bled over” into the congregation as a whole.

**Practices of an equipping teacher.** All the pastors studied viewed preaching and teaching as very important for their ministries. They placed the ministry of the Word at the center of what they do, either explicitly by what they said or implicitly by the amount of time they spent in the teaching and preaching ministry of the congregation. Each person interviewed thought that preaching took up more time than any single activity. Most of the pastors were known in their own congregation to be gifted teachers. Several were thought by staff and members to be outstanding teachers.

Most of the pastors studied regarded the teaching ministry as central to their self-understanding. Characteristic of their response was that of one interviewee, who stated, “I would say that the teaching ministry is the center of my ministry.” Not all those interviewed were specific as to the teaching ministry. Characteristic of their responses was, “But Sunday morning sermon and Scripture reading, is the most important thing I

do.”

Each pastor taught one or more times a week outside of Sunday worship. The amount of teaching varied substantially, but it was important in the ministry of each person. The love of teaching was a theme revisited again and again by the pastors interviewed. Characteristic of the interviews, if somewhat more enthusiastic than most, is the response of one pastor: “I love teaching. I mean I enjoy teaching.”

The love of teaching led those interviewed to use their teaching gifts in as many venues as possible. One response outlined the way in which the teaching ministry was at the center of renewal:

I almost always teach something. I teach a midweek Bible study regularly. I normally teach a Disciple Bible study class, and I normally teach other classes like the New Member Class, Spiritual Gifts classes, and Contagious Christian class. I teach a number of classes around the church whenever I am asked to do it.

A common feature of many of the pastors was their willingness and ability to teach in various venues.

The pastors interviewed taught women’s’ Bible studies, men’s Bible studies, new member classes, special offerings, and a number of different Bible studies as well as preaching on Sunday. One pastor described his teaching schedule as follows:

I have taught a Women’s Bible study for the last seven years during the school year that meets on Thursday, and it is always a Bible-directed study that uses a curriculum based on a particular book or a curriculum that is based on the Bible as a whole. I have taught a lot of Kerygma material [a largely Presbyterian Bible study].... I also teach a Men’s Bible Study weekly.

Two senior ministers interviewed still teach confirmation classes even though they have staff members who could do so.

With two exceptions, all the pastors interviewed viewed themselves as primarily exegetical preachers. Even those who did not think of themselves as exegetical preachers considered the Bible as the primary source of their preaching and teaching. Among the majority that viewed themselves as biblical preachers, no firm division was in their minds concerning the preaching and teaching ministries. One of the most accomplished of the pastors interviewed viewed preaching as different from, but very much related to, the teaching ministry of the church:

I view even preaching as part of the teaching ministry of the church. Over the years, I have learned that sermons need to be inspirational and less filled with content. But I still strongly believe that the hour of the week we spend worshipping God needs also to be a teaching moment. People need to leave worship with a better understanding of the Bible, a better understanding of what it means to live the Christian life, and some inspiration to live that life.

The pastors interviewed were unanimous in centering their teaching ministry in the Bible and in practically exegeting its contents. All were concerned that congregational members become familiar with the Bible and sponsored classes of some kind to make that possible.

Among the more skilled and younger of those interviewed, there was a marked interest in narrative preaching and the importance of stories in preaching. Older pastors viewed the need for expository preaching as at the center of the renewal of the church. Younger pastors tended to believe that an understanding of the gospel story was the most important part of preaching and teaching. This difference may reflect the way that seminaries currently emphasize narrative preaching.

An older pastor, who identified himself as an expository preacher, provided some understanding of the way these two descriptive phrases combine:

I will craft a series of sermons like Elijah and Elisha stories, the children in the wilderness stories, the David stories, and the great stories from Acts. I like to preach the narrative portions of Scripture.... I like to preach the stories. That is what people remember.

Another older pastor, who did not believe that he was much of a narrative preacher, noted that in his later years he was “very much drawn” to “people like Fred Craddock, Frederick Buechner, particularly in the storytelling mode.” An interest in the biblical narrative and in a narrative mode of preaching was a constant theme of all those interviewed.

A common characteristic of those interviewed was an interest in practical application of their teaching and preaching ministries. This combination of biblical focus and practical application keeps their interest in storytelling from degenerating into a simplistic “story” approach to preaching and teaching. One pastor described the biblical text as a “love story” with which ordinary people can connect and in which they can find meaning for their lives.

Those interviewed maintained a twin focus on faithfulness to Scripture and relevance to the lives of those in the congregation. One of the most successful younger preachers explained this way:

I am very personal in my preaching. I am very biblical in my preaching, and I am very practical in my preaching. I teach and preach both in it. I almost always begin my sermon by telling some kind of self-deprecating story about myself, or sometimes I talk about my kids. Of course, they are now going into the eighth grade and sixth grade so permission now must be granted in order to use them. Actually, they are really good about it. But I tell stories that people can relate to.... And I use a lot of humor. You know, I really, work hard to be funny from the pulpit because people will give you permission to be heard if you attract them with humor. But then I also work harder to make sure that the biblical story integrates with their life. And people respond to that.

The focus for this and the others interviewed was response changed lives. The pastor just

quoted went on to say that he makes sure that the biblical story and his story are combined in such a way as to provoke a response.

The focus on story, as important as it was, did not mean that pastors interviewed were unconcerned with deep theological issues:

My conviction is, first of all, the Bible is wonderful. It's a love story. It's practical. It's beautiful. The story of Jesus, the gospel story is the greatest story ever told. And it connects to people's lives and that they don't know it. They don't know the story. So we are going to go, I mean, at least really probably two and a half years from now, at least they will be able to say, man, I know the Gospel of Matthew. I mean, I may not know the rest of the Bible, but I know the Gospel of Matthew. And I think after that I will do a series or two and go to the Old Testament,... then I will probably go back and preach all the way through Romans just because I think they need to know that theological underpinning.

This particular quotation exemplifies a desire to meet the need of Christian culture to connect with a meaningful narrative concerning human life and also to provide people with a theological base for their faith and ways to connect practically with their lives.

These pastors were consciously trying to help people connect the biblical story with their lives.

**Practices of a transactional manager.** The pastors studied were not merely visionaries. They were capable of effectively implementing the vision of the church and managing the community which was gathered and formed under their leadership. Each of those interviewed vocalized the view that administration was not the pastoral duty that most excited them, yet each recognized that even the smallest church requires administrative attention.

One pastor of a smaller congregation expressed his frustration with administration because of the time it took away from ministry and the way he got bogged down in the details of managing the church:

I can do a very good job of administration seen as attention to detail. The problem is I see enough of the details of everything that I can't possibly get to all of them or most of it even.

Q. So you can get overwhelmed by it?

A. Yeah.

Earlier in the interview, he expressed his view of the way this affected the congregation:

This is one of the reasons why our church plateaued, I think. I ended up being, letting myself being entwined in more administrative kinds of details as the church got larger and those duties increased. When I first came here, that was my focus, you know, chase a moving van down the street if I had to in order to find a new member.

Most pastors interviewed expressed some degree of frustration at the burden of administration.

The pastor of a larger congregation (one of the largest interviewed) expressed the same concern about the time-consuming nature of church management and administration:

Q: So you read widely to be sure that you were current in preaching?

A: As best I could, given the demands and responsibilities of being a senior pastor in a growing church. Because, as I said, you end up, you know, spending an inordinate amount of time, I think, in terms of administration, as you well know.

Earlier this same pastor had expressed his views about the time administration of the church required:

Maybe I ought to reduce the time I gave you for preaching and worship because obviously I spent a lot of time in administration, and the larger the church grew, the more time you spend there.

Thus, the overall attitude of some of the pastors interviewed toward management of the

church was negative. That attitude did not, however, mean that they ignored administrative tasks. The evidence indicated that they devoted a lot of time to management and took pride in their administrative skills.

The negative connotation most pastors interviewed had of church management did not keep them from understanding its inevitability and the need for the congregation to be appropriately administered. As one pastor explains, “[As] the church gets bigger and bigger, ... you end up managing more than you do participating.” One of the younger pastors interviewed noted that when he came to the congregation, there was a sense that not even the staff knew what was happening in the congregation. The congregation had no formal information dissemination mechanism— a classic management problem. This pastor undertook to find ways to see that the staff and congregation members could have the information that they needed to coordinate activities. Another of the pastors sensed that his new congregation needed a strong manager in order to overcome the results of years of lax management. He devoted a substantial amount of his first years at a new church to sorting out and resolving a series of management problems.

Despite verbalizing an almost reflexive negative attitude toward management issues, most of those interviewed, and especially those of the larger and most rapidly growing congregations, evidenced a pride in the way that they administered their congregation and an interest in doing it better. One of those interviewed expressed his understanding of the need for management: “I am also a person who likes to identify a common vision, strategies to achieve that vision, tactics to achieve the strategy, and goal and markers to see that the tactics of the strategy are achieved.” This pastor was widely understood by other pastors and by members of his congregation to be a capable and wise administrator.

In some cases, the pastors seemed to be attracted to the challenges of administrating a larger congregation. One pastor evidenced a real excitement about the probable increase in his management responsibilities:

I also think that it is going to become very important here as this church grows and I think the last couple of years we have seen, we have seen it go from a trickle to a stream. And I don't think we are far from a river. I really think we are pretty poised for some great growth. I have recognition, and I think the session has bought into it that that is only going to happen if the staff increases. I also think I have a role as vision caster with staff. We are in the process of hiring someone for children's ministry, someone for youth ministries, and an associate pastor for congregational care. We have moved our music person from half time to three quarter time and she may go full-time real soon. In all those areas, I have, I have a responsibility to make sure that the staff understands whether they are the secretary or the building superintendent or the music director or whomever that they are called here as ministry. I am excited about that. I am excited about working with staff and providing vision for staff.

Although most pastors made negative comments about management tasks, all understood the importance of management in the life of the congregation. Pastors of larger congregations seemed especially to understand the importance of management and administration. Interestingly, pastors of smaller churches were likely to think that the time they spent in administration kept the church from growing, while pastors of larger churches seemed to see administration as a necessary part of evangelism and growth.

At least two of the pastors interviewed had some notion of the way in which Jesus was involved in management with regard to the disciples and viewed their own management responsibilities as flowing from that understanding. The following comment was illustrative:

And I look, I look at the ministry of Jesus and I see the visionary way in which he led, that he was compelled to be the shepherd to the sheep, . . . , that he wanted and ached to see the harvest. And that he did some things in terms of discipleship development that lent itself to the broadening of



his vision. The work he did with the disciples and particularly the three to whom he was closest was great managerial work.

Another pastor noted that he spent over half the hours he worked a week in administration of some kind. Whenever he noticed that he was feeling put out about it, he remembered that Jesus had a lot of people traveling with him that had to eat and have their needs met.

The most successful pastors in the area of administration were not viewed as particularly hard-nosed managers. Their management was generally exercised through their influence on key persons within the congregation and their moral influence in the congregation. One pastor explained this management style:

Personal integrity is really, really important. In the final analysis, that is all you have got. And if you don't have that, you are not going to lead people anywhere because they are not going to follow you if they don't respect you.

The pastors interviewed seemed to understand instinctively that the pastoral ministry requires a special kind of management—one that relies on influence, persuasion, and moral example.

Many of the pastors interviewed intuitively understood the need for management and vision to flow together. One church, which recently finished a long-range planning process, reorganized itself around its vision statement. The pastor of this congregation described the process:

Almost immediately, the session organized itself around the vision statement of the church, so that now ... our ministries are broken up into "Exalt," which is to worship God, "Embrace," which is loving community, "Evangelize," which is to spread the gospel, "Equip," which is to educate and disciple members, "Empower," which is to equip them to minister in the Name of Christ, and "Excel," which involves managing our ministries with excellence. And we are increasingly trying to develop ministries out

of the vision we have for what we could be and become.

This pastor understood that an effective vision would require more than words on a bulletin cover. Over time, an organization to accomplish the vision must develop if the vision is to be incarnated in a local congregation.

Most pastors interviewed saw a relation between their vision for the congregation and their management of it. This relationship was more pronounced among younger pastors, some of whom were influenced by mentors and educational experience. The way in which pastors implemented vision in their managerial responsibility was often through key laypeople in the congregation.

In two instances, the pastors involved began ministries of service to the Presbytery as a whole. In each case, key laypersons had to both buy into the vision and take significant leadership roles in the development of the project. Formal lay leadership positions, such as a session (elders) or a diaconate (deacons) were an important way through which pastors exercised leadership and managed the growth and operations of the congregation. Where staff members were present, pastors recognized that they were part of the accomplishment of the vision. In one case, the primary reason that a particular staff member left involved an inability to accept the guidance of the pastoral staff as they tried to implement changes designed to improve the quality of ministry of the congregation.

In the case of one pastor studied, a visionary decision was made that the congregation would have to move if it were to grow. This pastor had to organize the church to dispose of its current property, work with Presbytery and professionals to find another location, design and build another facility, leave its old location. worship in

temporary quarters for some time, and then move into its new location. The visionary part of this task was important, but the vision could never have been accomplished without attention to numerous administrative and managerial tasks needed to accomplish the vision. Another pastor described it as “leading Israel in the wilderness, with almost as many problems.”

Once again, in the area of management, the pastors involved exhibited the kind of practical spirituality implicit in the shepherd/servant model of leadership. They may not have relished administrative duties, but he took pride in the way they accomplished them. As a rule, the larger and growing congregations had pastors who spent a large amount of their time in administering the congregation and its ministries.

**Practices of empowerment.** No area of the interviews provoked more conflicting data as the area of empowerment. Most pastors interviewed did not think of themselves as particularly good at the art of empowerment. Interestingly, those with whom they ministered did not necessarily share their self-evaluation. Some of the pastors had a marked tendency to equate “lay empowerment” with “job recruitment.” This tendency was especially evident among older pastors, yet even pastors who were not necessarily viewed as empowering were viewed as good at recruiting laypersons to take on responsibilities in the life of the congregation.

All pastors interviewed clearly understood that they needed the help of others if the churches they led were to prosper and become the kind of churches they desired. One pastor experienced this need for help in turning over leadership of a new members’ class to a group of laypersons:

I also thought that it was important to involve laypeople in doing this. And more and more I began to do that and relinquish my time and more and more there were lay leaders who took the lead in that. By the time I left,

they were doing primarily all of the teaching.

Another pastor described the process as “making himself disposable”:

I think it has to be flexible because what is needed in a congregation is going to change as the congregation moves through different phases of its development. A minister who is stuck in one mode will be like a cork in a bottle. The church will never grow above that minister. If he functions as if he has to be the go-to person all the time, and it is a pastor-centered church, you are probably not going to get above two hundred in worship. I have tried to, I have tried to work hard at making myself disposable so that programs don't depend on me there to be a cheerleader or push them. If I have to push a program, I will kill it.

This particular quote illustrates the way a desire to grow motivated the pastors interviewed. Their churches needed revitalization and renewal. Growth was viewed as an important value. Therefore, in every area, and especially in the area of lay empowerment, they were interested in the way empowering laypersons could help the church to grow and accomplish its mission of renewal.

In one case, the pastor began a Cursillo-like program in his church. The program required a lot of lay participation. This pastor evidenced a passion for helping laypersons grow in Christ:

I want people to bloom and grow. And so I am not much interested in people having credentials. I am interested in people having desire. And if they have got the desire that, what is needed here at the church, then I want to be there to help catch them when they fall.

Several aspects of servant/shepherd leadership are evidenced in this statement: a passion for lay empowerment, confidence in laypeople and their underlying capacity for ministry, and a willingness to undertake the work needed to “catch people when they fall.”

Lay empowerment was one of the areas where several pastors explicitly recognized the ministry of Jesus as motivating their interest in lay ministry. They often

directly connected this interest in lay ministry with the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus. The following is characteristic:

Jesus let a lot of things go to his disciples and Lord knows, literally, he could have done it better. But you know, I think he sent them on some missionary journeys precisely so they could find out for themselves. I have to be more open to that. I also have to be better at training these people or seeing them trained. You know, we have some [lay pastors] leaders that have come out of this church. We have some other folks in this church . . . who have served the Presbytery in leadership. So we have some pretty natural leaders in this group. We have a lot of managers in this group. We have a lot of engineers in church. And there are people that are really good at crunching numbers and they are good at the corporate sort of things. And I have some folks who have some unexplored gifts that are spiritual gifts. I think I have got some teachers now in this church. This church has had a dearth of people who have that natural ability to teach and preach. They have been very pastor dependent in that area. And that doesn't happen accidentally. Those folks have to be developed.

In analyzing this and similar statements, the intensity of the way with which some of the pastors interviewed spoke of the need for the church to develop the skills and gifts of lay members is important. This pastor's commitment to lay ministry was directly related to an understanding of Jesus' ministry with his disciples.

Several pastors consciously understood that to emulate Jesus in their congregation, they had to empower people whether they wanted to or not. At least one mentioned Jesus' sending of the disciples on missionary journeys as a paradigm he consciously followed in ministry. Not one of the pastors interviewed considered himself an accomplished empowerer of laypeople, but all did it. Their church members had a higher opinion of their abilities than they did.

Each of the churches studied had some regular means for empowering laypersons for ministry. Sometimes, this empowerment involved formal spiritual gifts programs and formalized ways for laypersons to find a ministry area in the congregation. Nevertheless,

several of the pastors interviewed seemed to understand that the ability to discern and motivate others to ministry underlay any formal program.

Q: How is it that you go about identifying talented people and trying to sense the gifts of individual members?

A: In the life of the church?

Q: Yes.

A: I don't know. I would hope, and I guess I have counted a lot on the fact that I have had a gift of discernment, very helpful to do that. But that is one of the gifts that God gave me, and as a pastor that has been a very helpful gift, to intuitively feel that this person had the gifts and the abilities to do that.

This same pastor spoke of the importance of finding people who can experience ministry in the local congregation:

Finding people with talents and gifts and skills, spiritual gifts that want to use those gifts in a particular area and involve more of them in this kind of team ministry than just assuming that they are part of a committee that will meet and think through programming, you know. I would rather see them attack a problem and deal with it as a mission team.

This pastor had successfully recruited many volunteers and professional staff members from within his congregation. He attributed part of his success to his ability to find laypeople who could join the professional staff of the congregation as the church grew.

Another pastor, who admitted to increasingly relying on lay people to administer spiritual gifts inventories and conduct classes in lay ministry, reflected on the importance of personal discernment and empowerment:

It's one of the problems with being the pastor of a large congregation. I don't have a lot of time to meet one on one with people and help them get plugged into ministry, but I do it when I can. I will give you an example. Recently one of our members came to me with this idea for a new ministry of our congregation. I went with her, helped her gather some materials about how to begin this ministry and issue a call to members of our

congregation, and helped her figure out that she needed some help in organizing this ministry. And I gave her some materials on how to organize a mission group. So, I do spend time doing it whenever the opportunity arises. And its one of those things which, if the opportunity arises, I will make time in my schedule because it's so important to the church.

In the particular congregation studied, groups of laypersons had recently developed a Stephen Ministry program, a Financial Peace seminar, a Purpose Driven Life program, and other new ministries with limited help from the pastoral staff.

The pastors studied gave permission to empower laypeople to do ministry. In one case, a layperson moved back into the area and rejoined his former local congregation. In his prior congregation, he was part of the Stephen Ministry program. He wanted to be part of a similar program when he returned to his former church. Here is how the pastor described his response:

You know, certainly I am not responsible and cannot be responsible for all the programs in the church.... [A]n initiative like that that has occurred this year is last year I had a new elder coming on the session, and he had moved back here. He was one of these who had moved away, and now he is back and had been gone for ten years actually. He was here at the very beginning of the church, left, and came back, but while he was gone the church that he was a part of he became a Stephen's minister. And he came back and said, "I would really like to start this program here." I said, "Fine."

Q: And you have Stephen Ministry now, or you are in the process?

A: We are in the process of training our first class of Stephen's ministers, and I think we have seven or eight in that class. And very pleased with the development and, you know, this particular elder has taken that responsibility and has run with it.

This story illustrates the permission-giving orientation of the pastors interviewed as regards lay ministry.

As with other areas of congregational life, the pastors interviewed understood that

lay empowerment required some kind of organization and programmatic base to be effective. The nature of the programs used differed. One congregation had used several different programs in the past. One used a very simple inventory as part of its new member class. One used the spiritual gift materials distributed by Stephen's Ministry. One described a program his congregation used in some depth:

Q: Do you have a spiritual gift discernment process?

A: We have. We do something called a ministry fair every year. And we try to push it at that those times. Sometimes people respond. Oftentimes they don't, but, yeah. Actually, the one that we have got now, I have adapted a whole lot of that, a good bit of it from Rick Warren's material. I even use his acronym, the "SHAPE" acronym.

Q: You are using kind of his shape process in terms of—just for the benefit of the recording, tell us what SHAPE stands for.

A: Well, the S is an acronym for, spiritual gifts is the S. And that is an inventory that we use. And I actually use one from Net Results for the particular inventory that we use, the magazine Net Results as a resource. It's basically just a way of trying to figure out how you plug in, that is where you are going to be thriving in ministry, where God has called you to do. So you have got your spiritual gift inventory that defines some things about you. The H stands for heart, which is what are you passionate about. What are the things that have made your juices flow and that kind of thing. The A is your attitude, if I am not mistaken. And that is, has to do with placing you in an environment that you are going to be comfortable in. You might have a passion for the work, but if the way that it is done drives you crazy, then that is not the place for you. The P is personality and again that is much the same thing. Not so much the environment as it is the type of work you are doing.

Q: Does it meet your personality?

A: A severe introvert does not need to be a greeter. Lots of wonderful things that they can do but being a greeter is not one of them. How many churches have you been to where people are just. it is almost painful for them to say hello to you. And then E is experiences in the acronym.

In terms of effectiveness, the program chosen seemed less important than the commitment of the pastor and congregation to lay ministry. Where pastors valued lay



ministry, it flourished to one degree or another.

**Practices of a sacrificial servant and protector.** Pastors were very careful in the way they answered questions concerning the sacrifices they had made in ministry.

Generally, this area was difficult to get them to begin discussing. Once the conversation began, they were unanimous in finding areas in which their ministry required sacrifice. In addition, several common themes developed concerning which was the most common factor noted.

Most of the pastors studied recognized that the primary sacrifice they had made was that of time with families. Over and over again the theme of the time requirements of the ministry was mentioned as a factor that adversely affected their family life:

I think perhaps the greatest sacrifice is time. I consider time is probably the most valuable thing that we have. And time from family and my children, my wife—I would say that would be the biggest sacrifice that the church requires.

The same pastor went on to describe in detail the kinds of family sacrifices that are involved, not just for the pastor, but for his or her extended family, spouse, and children:

The church, you know, you always, you always have folks that are sick, ill, dying, marrying, baptizing, growing, having family problems and things like that. And so, and then the weekends are always tied up. So I guess, you know, being able to participate in the extended family is very difficult.

Q: You mean parents, brothers?

A: Parents, brothers, sisters, things like that.

Q: Yeah. That is a good point. I don't want to press this too far. I want to ask one more question that I do always do ask. Would you say the sacrifices have been limited to you, or have they extended to your family?

A: I think my family has made the bigger sacrifices than I have, by far. You know, I think one of the things that has been really difficult for the family is my, in the first church that we served, my wife was very much a

part of my overall work. She was choir director of that church, small church, and she did that and did some other things. But here, she has not had a similar role in the church of any kind like that. And that has been hard. I think from our children, it's, you know, they have a more difficult time because, as the pastor's children they all get treated one way or the other just because of that stigma. And it sometimes, they are not accepted simply for themselves, but there is always the encumbrance of being the pastor's daughters.

This particular theme, the theme of sacrifices involving family was voiced over and over again in the interviews.

The time constraints of pastors—such as evening meetings, weekends filled with preparation for worship and Sunday activities—was mentioned by almost every pastor as a sacrifice. A pastor who had turned around two churches in his ministry spoke about the sacrifice of time:

Q: No matter how much sacrifice. Do you think you had to make family sacrifices other than financial?

A: Time with my kids, time with my wife.

Q: And if I had them in here would they validate that?

A: Yes. When I was solo pastor, sixty, sixty-five hour week was the norm. And I personally don't know any pastor who has ever turned a church around working forty hours a week. That is not enough hours.

Q: No, that is not enough hours?

A: You are going to have to, you are going to have to, and there were times when I would go a month, two months, one time I went three months without a day off. Funerals, weddings, crises in the church, stuff you can't plan for. You just have to do.

The themes of sacrifices of time and family are so interrelated that they are very difficult to separate, but pastors mentioned not just family sacrifice but such sacrifices of hobbies, secular friendships, and hunting trips with old friends, as one of the most

difficult sacrifices involved in ministry. Thus, one pastor mentioned the sacrifice of time he made as a sacrifice of his personal life:

You know, you just can't ever relax and let go. You are always involved in something... [T]he church has gotten larger and larger, more and more time has been spent away from home. As you know, sometimes four, five evenings a week you are out at meetings. And it's not just, in a church this size what it becomes is emotional sacrifice, too because you may be involved in a wedding or two on this weekend followed by a funeral the next day, followed by changing your clothes five hundred times in between to go to one event or another. So, you know, it's in a sense not having a life of your own. That is what I think you have to be willing to do.

This pastor also mentioned that he seldom played golf, a favorite sport, or engaged in other pastimes because of the pressures of building the church.

Several of the pastors, especially older pastors, recognized the financial sacrifices of ministry. Two of the pastors had in the past and were in the current recession foregoing raises because of the financial condition of the congregation. At least one of the pastors recognized that his congregation, which had grown rapidly, had never paid him as much as it might have paid him over the years. He gave verbal expression to the problem of financial sacrifice:

There were several years when the financial situation was a little tight that I voluntarily said, I would like to forego any raise or at least nothing more than a cost of living raise, rather than see the church go in big debt. You know, that comes to mind.

Q: That comes to mind?

A: I am not sure that was always the wisest thing that I should have done, even though I had no problems doing it. I didn't feel like I was, you know, sacrificing anything. I think what happened was by the time I retired, even though I had earlier than that mentioned to them that my salary was not commensurate with most of the other salaries of pastors in similar sized churches.

Another of the pastors mentioned the theme of financial sacrifice:

Financial is one of them. You know, when you are a tither, and we have committed ourselves to tithing, never thought about the fact that that would be followed with six building campaigns. So financially, you are always giving your money away. And that is fine. I mean, that is, but, I mean, it comes with the realization that you may not just be giving 10 percent, you may end up giving 15 to 20 percent of your money away. And I am sure that has had some impact on my family and my kids, not buying them the cars they wanted or, you know, things like that. But that is fine. I mean, they have, they have done well, and it is been a good lesson for them too.

Most of the pastors interviewed had similar feelings about the financial sacrifices they made in ministry. Only one of the pastors interviewed believed that he had made no financial sacrifices over the years.

Each of the pastors interviewed had made some sacrifices for the integrity of their ministry and for the integrity of the ministry of their church. Some had made courageous decisions related to civil rights. Others had been required to make difficult and unpopular decisions in order to protect the ministry of the church. In some cases, most of the members of the congregation could not be told all the facts and so unfair attacks had to be endured. One pastor explained it this way in discussing this kind of problem:

I also think that it came out earlier,... the toll on my psyche of the repeated personal attacks when cleaning up problems has been almost more than I could bear. Really, if my prayer life had not been good, I don't think I would have borne it. I think I would have cracked a long time ago. To be attacked personally when we had to deal with a person who is undermining a ministry, to be attacked personally when you are just trying to solve a management problem, has been really hard.

None of the pastors considered themselves moral heroes, but they could point to sacrifices they had to make to protect their congregations. For some, the need to be involved in denominational politics over controversial issues was a kind of sacrifice and

cross bearing. For others, the sacrifice was to stand up on racial or other issues involving the community or congregation. For others, the sacrifice was stepping in to stop some kind of ministry abuse by a popular layperson in the congregation. In each case, the sacrifice was not the work itself but enduring personal attack in the process, sometimes from friends and allies.

**Practices of a symbol of hope.** The pastors interviewed were asked to relate instances where they had to instill hope into their congregations at a time during the renewal process when whether all or part of the renewal of the congregation would be successful was unclear. Interestingly, most of the pastors who had been in their positions for any length of time could relate such an incident. These incidents were moments of crisis during which the renewal effort might have failed. The nature of the crises involved such divergent things as financial concerns, loss of members, low morale due to prior failures, and uncertainty about the future.

For example, one of the pastors interviewed came to his new congregation between March and April. In April of his first year, a dispute arose with a private school that occupied a part of the building. During that same month, the new pastor discovered that he had cancer and needed an operation. Then, ten families in the congregation had to move because their wage earner received a job transfer. The cumulative effect of all this process was a high degree of uncertainty among the members of the congregation. Then, several companies employing the wage earner in ten church families transferred these families.

The new pastor immediately developed a plan for the resolution of the legal, financial, and other problems that the congregation faced, even though his health was impaired and he was unfamiliar with some of the issues involved. During this time, the

pastor tried to project confidence to the congregation:

[W]hat I tried to project to the congregation at that time was, this is a transition time. God will provide, and we will work through this. And one of the ways that, one of the ways I helped us work through that is that we needed to pick up the slack from these families leaving. We had to pick up the slack.... We had to really generate some more money. So I said, wrote a note to our congregation in the newsletter, ... "I feel like this is a challenging time for the church and the church is going to need support from every one of its members, but also financially. So, we are now increasing our monthly pledge by fifty dollars over what we had already pledged for the year. And we hope that all the other families can do this to some degree so that we can help make up for the losses that we are experiencing." And that worked. I mean, that was well received across the board, and that was one of the things. And then people stepped up to the plate.

Another pastor had to project confidence that the congregation would be successful many times with regard to building campaigns. When asked about the ways in which he instilled hope in his congregation in times of crisis, he responded by describing problems that arise in building campaigns:

There have been several times, focused around building campaigns again. You know, I remember elders coming to me and saying, "We should have never built that sanctuary. Or we should have never built that Christian life center. We should have built a small sanctuary before we built that." And assuring them that we don't exist for ourselves. We exist for others. That is the unique function of the church: to realize that we exist as a mission to others.

I think that has happened in those situations, gosh, when else has it happened? One other one just crossed my mind: when the church growing. I think you hit certain plateaus, two hundred fifty, four hundred, those seem to be two plateaus. I remembered struggling to encourage people to not be complacent with wanting to stay there. Those were areas where I think as a leader I had to say to them, you know, it is not about us. This is about what God wants.

This capacity to convey to the congregation that they are part of God's mission and that God is capable of achieving more through Christians than they suspect is part of the

process of claiming God's resurrection power in the life of the congregation.

Building new ministries was also often a challenge requiring the pastor to convey resurrection hope to the congregation. In one case, a small, rural congregation developed a spiritual direction center for an entire Presbytery. Because of the nature of the Presbytery and the size of the church plenty of reason existed to think that the project was impossible. The pastor described the way the leadership team tried to instill confidence in the congregation that the project could, in fact, be completed:

It was on its face impossible from the beginning. And yet ... I kept saying to the Session, we can do this. We can do this. We kept saying we will find the money. We kept talking positive about the project until it came to pass, and we did find the money through a miracle of God. We did keep praying about it for several years until it could become a reality. And we kept the congregation feeling, "Hey, we can do this," even when they really couldn't do it. And I must say it was not what we did personally. Living Waters House is a great example of where only God, only God, could create a ministry that doesn't exist in any other Presbytery in the denomination in one of the smallest and poorest churches in one of the smallest and poorest Presbyteries in that denomination. Only God could have done that.

This same pastor spoke of the fact that, during the initial phase of the renewal of the congregation, he believed his duty was to project confidence and to see that the congregation did not fail until they had overcome a feeling of inferiority:

I used to have a theory that, during my first two years, the congregation couldn't fail. Whatever it took for me to make them look good, I needed to make that sacrifice. The problem I saw was that dying congregations have a low self-image. They are failures because they think they are failures, and one of the things you have got to do is to make them think like winners.

I will give you one example: The first year I was there we decided to have a Christmas float in the Christmas parade, and they decided late to do it. And I had to go out every night and work in a cold, unheated barn in winter on this doggone float. But we won third place. It was a big turning point in the life of the church because they had done something in the community and were successful at it.

Perhaps as much as any incident, this simple story illustrated the need for pastors to project hope and victory before either hope or victory exists in the process of turning around congregations.

### **Results Regarding Research Question 2**

The second research question was, “Did significant persons who were part of the leadership team (usually the Session) of the congregation perceive the presence or absence of the same shepherd/servant leadership model leadership traits?”

**Practices of preparation.** Confirming interviewees generally knew little about the preparation of their pastors, Yet, instances occurred where the preparation of the pastors’ life was recognized to be important by the persons interviewed. Typical of the comments is one by the members of a congregation that recruited a pastor who began many new programs in the life of a congregation in an incorporated area adjacent to Memphis:

But, you know, [he] has had many life experiences. He has worked in the professional world. He has been there and done almost everything. And he can minister to people because of that. I truly believe that has helped him as a minister. I really do.

One confirming interviewee went on to tell how this secular experience helped this pastor in his ministry to the men in the congregation:

To me it is one of his strengths. I believe his ministry; he strengthens the men of the church so much more because of that. And in some ways it gets, you know, he has that business aspect of working in the mines, being a purchasing agent, dealing with, you know, the aspects of, you know, business. And so men kind of relate to that. You know, they understand that. And you can see him, you can see the changes in him. You can see, you know, the stories that he tells about his past and how forgiveness, and you can understand, you know, you can actually see the fruit of the spirits in him. And so it has been very beneficial to the men of the church to, that



he is able to minister to us.

Relevant life experience was mentioned over and over again in the confirming interviews as a positive aspect of those who possessed it.

Laypeople recognized that those pastors with secular work experience brought to ministry gifts from their prior work experience. They also appreciated the way that experience could be used in the preaching and teaching of the pastors concerned. One of the confirming interviewees commented on this aspect of the pastors' teaching ministry:

I think the ingredients are that he had been in the real world, and he is not afraid to tell stories about himself that were real life true stories that, a lot of which, really weren't the kind of things that you would maybe think you would hear a preacher in the pulpit. He is not in the pulpit, but he is down front. He can tell a story that goes for five minutes about a baseball game and what happened at a baseball game. And you are just sitting there. And sometimes even wondering what is this going to have to do with the sermon. But he can do this. He just talks to you. Talks with you. And then, boom he is straight to Scripture and you say, oh, yeah. And then it's straight to Jesus Christ. And the fact that he can do that just in a setting of talking and you can say, boy, this is current. This is how it happens today.

Sometimes, the prior work experience was recognized because the experience impacted the church, such as management skills. One layperson looked back on the ministry of a renewing pastor who had been an attorney:

See, [he] brought so much to the table in those meetings because of [his] background, but [he] conducted, of course, it was a spiritual meeting, but it's also a well organized and timely meeting. I mean, he moderated our meetings so well from all aspects, I thought. And then, of course, any time we needed the legal aspect or if we needed, not a proclamation, that is not the right word, but when we recognized somebody in the minutes.

Q: Resolution?

A: Yeah, resolution. We needed to draft any documents, anything like that, [he was] there to advise us through. But I think couldn't have been, the session meetings couldn't have been run any more smoothly, and I tell

people that, in other churches. You know, there was never a cross word to my recollection in a session meeting. It was prayerfully begun and prayerfully and spiritually thought about through the process. Of course, you had to do some homework, then some business was talked about, and then we closed prayerfully. And it was just a well run, sometimes too long as they all are, but fun time to do the work for the church.

Whether the life experience was military, legal, or business, the members recognized that it helped the pastor in specific ways in ministering to the congregation.

Occasionally, laypersons recognized significant people in the life of the pastor.

For example, one pastor is a leader in a midweek program called LOGOS. The confirming interviewees, who had been involved in Youth Club for many years, recognized the impact of the founder of LOGOS on the life of the pastor involved:

I know that Dale Milligan was very influential in his decision. Probably he was always basically, I mean, this is just personal thinking now, but a very, you know, he got into the kid trouble and all that, but I think he was basically just good and spiritual person. I mean, he was raised in a good Christian home and everything. But I really think that Dale Milligan had a lot to, when he went to Dale's church and got involved in the youth club program there and everything, I think that Dale was pretty instrumental in kind of convincing him to go that direction.

In this and other cases, laypersons knew that a particular pastor had influenced the life and ministry of the renewing leader.

Interviewees recognized that their pastors were prayerful and that they brought that prayerfulness to the congregation. In one case, a layperson told one of the pastors that "the first thing I noticed about him was his prayerfulness." This person had seen the pastor praying with someone on the way to or from a worship service. One layperson described his pastor as having brought a new level of prayerfulness to the congregation.

We became a lot more prayerful. [He] really taught the church to pray, and we have had 24 hour vigils, you know, prayer vigils where we had people here all day praying. We have had renewal speakers on prayer and talked

about prayer. Prayer has been very important to him, and it's something he has brought into the church, and we use a lot better than we did in the past.

Three churches studied had experienced a growth in prayer ministries, including prayer vigils, prayers in worship services, prayer chains, and prayer groups as a specific result of the interest and diligence of their pastor in this area.

Members recognized that their pastors were prepared by a studious interest in Scripture for their role in preaching. At least three of the pastors studied were considered outstanding students before they came to the congregation they served. Members appreciated the level of biblical understanding that they brought to ministry. One layperson explained it this way:

[He] brings a lot of, he is very intelligent. He has got a lot of knowledge about history, about the Bible, about things that are not just the Scripture, but what is going, what was going on at that time. He brings that, it has been very interesting.

In almost every case, members considered that their pastors were uniquely prepared for ministry by their commitment to Bible study and to a deeper understanding of the Christian faith.

**Practices of visioning.** Church members confirmed that visioning was an important part of the leadership abilities of leaders. Time and time again, parishioners brought up the subject of vision, and they invariably gave more credit to the pastor than the pastor involved gave to visioning. One of the most direct statements of this aspect of shepherd/servant leadership came from a parishioner who had been involved from the very beginning in the process of renewal and redevelopment:

[T]his church never had a vision. a mission statement. You ... can't succeed if you don't have a plan. You are going to fail. We planned five years down the road. We read those plans the other night. We have

accomplished most of what was written in 1996. [The church] never even had a mission statement and didn't consider it until ----- came. And, by the time ----- left, I felt like the church had realized we are beyond the walls we are in here today. We are bigger even than our community. We are called to be disciples throughout the area.

Other members of that same congregation confirmed the way vision worked:

Yes, I was aware of that vision. I liked the picture ... that was emerging of disciple building and going out into rather than a church that was just trying to survive. And I certainly was a part of the vision for Living Waters House.

Both of these laypersons understood a vision existed. Interestingly, neither could quote it directly, but the pastor had painted a "picture" of disciples going out into the world making other disciples, which was close to the vision statement of the congregation. This vision was so vivid in the life of the pastor, that it was internalized by others.

In another interview, a confirming interviewee put the visionary role of the pastor in even more personal terms:

But the vision that this church has had was rooted in his heart, in [the pastor's] heart. It was planted there by God. It was a seed. And now I think the goal is to find out from God where are we to go now.... Now, I think in my heart where we are headed is that we are at the jumping off point of becoming the most exciting traditional worship Reformed congregation in this city. I think we are at a jumping off point, and I think probably within five years you will see a thousand members in this church.

Interestingly, the vision that was understood by the confirming interviewee was consistent with the articulated vision of the pastor interviewed, although the pastor did not think of himself as a visionary. Although no formal long-range plan exists, the pastor's plan involves growth, and parishioners instinctively understand that fact. Thus, when asked, one parishioner answered, "It is to grow others in Christ, to grow spiritually

yourself, I kind of, you know, the gist of it. Grow yourself. Grow others in Christ through the love of the Lord.”

This ability to communicate a vision in such a way as the congregation could understand and accomplish the vision was an important characteristic of almost every leader interviewed. Another parishioner spoke of the pastor’s use of retreats to create a common vision:

I think he is very well organized. There are no hidden agendas. I think he, and I agree with being a visionary. And I think he shares his vision and especially in our retreats. I think we all get on the same page, as to what we believe that we need to do.

Communication and implementation of the vision were important to laypersons.

In one interview, a long-time lay leader remarked about the way in which things began to change immediately after their current pastor arrived:

We had been through several different ministers.... It seems like we were floating. We weren’t really as focused. I didn’t feel like we had a real track on what we were trying to do. And I don’t think anybody realized we didn’t have a track. I mean, we did a lot of things socially. It was a fun group, but I didn’t feel that we were as focused as we are after he came. And it started immediately the day he came. I mean, you could see the church changing.

The ability to create focus and direction is one of the primary indicators of visionary leadership among those interviewed. In a confirming interview for the same pastor, one of those interviewed described this sense of the pastor as a visionary leader.

Q: How would you describe his leadership style?

A: Visionary. He does. He is always thinking ahead, big picture, what can we do. How can we do this? It’s very visionary.

Q. Do you sense that you know the vision?

A: Pretty much. You know, just to minister, you know, to the families here and to -- but yeah. I mean I think I do. And I don't know if it's more just from being on staff or just being in the congregation. But you know, the vision is to take what we have and share and, you know, bring people in and it's, but he always looks, what can we do next. He is not ever, he is never satisfied with what we have now. And I don't mean that negative because sometimes understand, you know, it's good to just enjoy what you have. But he is always challenging us to go out and to do more.

The pastor in question was perceived by parishioners, staff, and others as visionary in the way he created direction and shepherded the congregation.

**Practices of a gatherer of the flock.** Laypeople recognized the importance of the pastors' personal involvement in the evangelism process. One of the confirming interviewees made this comment about her pastor who took great pains to meet people in the community:

I do think that [his] walking around the community and getting to know people in the community outside of our church on a friendly level, just community level, walking around town meeting, knowing who people were, to begin to make those connections of where people live and what d they do and what this town is all about was a way to do evangelism that was more natural than just trying to go and knock on doors or do a crusade or something.

Pastors who renewed local congregations definitely relied upon laypeople to invite friends to church. They did so in the context of their own personal practice of involvement in the lives of people within and without the congregation.

Most of the pastors interviewed were not natural evangelists. Evangelism was a skill that they had acquired. The wife of one of the pastors interviewed used to suggest that, since she and their children liked to eat, he needed to go out and find members. One of those members, who is now an employee, described her personal encounter with her new pastor:

Most people in our area are transplants. I mean, it was people who moved to Memphis because of job changes or whatever. And the whole area out here was brand new, and people would move into this area. Well, we moved here just to avoid city taxes and everything, you know. It was new houses and a new area, kind of like Arlington is now, or something. But so, it was a brand new area.

One of my neighbors said, “Well, there is a young preacher that has started a church up here and that is where we are going. Why don’t you go with us?” And so, I went, and I thought, “Well, I’ll be darned. That is the same little guy who came to my front door.” And so, I started to go there, and I never went anywhere else. So, I guess it was his persistence at doors and then word of mouth.

Shortly after this portion of the interview, another person in the group confirmed that he was persistent but not pushy. “I can still remember, and it has been twenty-five years, but I can remember him at my door and that laugh.” This is the same pastor who made 1,500 house calls in a year in his early days in ministry.

**Practices of a teacher of the flock.** Time and time again laypersons confirmed the importance of the teaching ministry of the pastor in leading a church into vital growth. This teaching gift is felt by many groups in the church and by many different adults. One confirming interview described a pastor as follows:

And I think, I mean, he is a good teacher, but I think he excels in teaching the youth because I have heard lots of comments from parents saying, “Well, you know, little Johnny always enjoyed Youth Club but when he got in [his] sixth grade class, you know, wow. They just, he won’t miss a time or he really enjoys what he is learning or, you know, it has made such a difference.” And so I think he has a real gift for relating to and interacting with the youth and kids, kind of like a Pied Piper because the kids really seem to enjoy his teaching.

Another of the confirming interviews described a “through the Bible” program created by one of the pastors:

[H]e started a class. It’s the second largest class in the church. It’s a basic

Bible study, uses the [standard lesson plan] and, on Wednesday nights, he teaches an adult Bible. study. ... [O]n Wednesday mornings at 9:30, [he] teaches, what does he call it? It's just a basic, well, let's see. It's right here. He calls it, it's a basic Bible study.... Well, he just calls it Bible study, okay.... It is a walk through the Bible kind of thing. Of course, he quotes a lot of references in it, but basically it's his design. And it's so user friendly that you can come, and he just repeats it over and over every year. So that you can come into it as a new member, you know, this next Wednesday morning you could come into that and you are going to be in Second Samuel. You will just stay in it until you are through with the Bible or you may stay another year. I mean, it is so powerful.... And you know ... he has a grasp, knowledge ever Scripture that particularly the connectedness of Scripture, how each Old Testament text can relate to the New Testament. I have learned so much from him in two and a half years. Man, it's like having a professor.

Another confirming interview described how the pastor created studies that showed his grasp of the biblical text and his ability to organize and plan teaching experiences for the congregation:

I know him to be very well read, and I think in his teaching he draws, you know, if he is going, teaching Scripture that he draws from a lot of different things. I think he is a good teacher. And when he is teaching, he is very organized. If he is teaching like a series or something, he does convey and things like that.

The importance of stories and practical application was underscored by the confirming interviews. The parishioners of the pastors who worked hard to bring a narrative focus to their teaching and preaching were recognized to be good storytellers by their congregations. The ability to combine biblical insight and practical experience was especially valued. A narrative approach and practical application in the ministries of the pastors interviewed was important. Parishioners similarly appreciated other pastors who had extensive life experience and who could bring that experience to bear in their teaching.

**Practices of community maintenance.** Members were aware of ways in which



their pastors were involved in forming and maintaining a sense of community. Of course, all of the members understood that pastors make hospital visits, care for people, and counsel those in need of help. The nature of the work of these pastors often went beyond these basic kinds of tasks. If the congregation was hospitable, the members recognized that the pastor had an impact on that characteristic of the congregation. For example, in the case of the pastor who had newcomers over to his home, virtually everyone from the congregation understands that aspect of this young pastor's work.

The relational skills of some of the pastors were part of the community-building aspect of the congregation. One young mother spoke of the way her friendship with her new pastor had bonded her to the church.

Oh, I just love him even more. I love his whole family. We have gotten to know all of them really well. His daughters babysit my children, and his wife, I work with her. I have always felt so comfortable in church.

This particular pastor's relational skills have spilled over to the entire congregation—a fact well recognized by the lay leaders interviewed.

First Layperson: I think right off the bat every time we have, like you get people coming in to visit the church, it's not too long after that that they are over at [their home] having dinner. He draws you right in. You are over at the pastor's house having dinner within, you know, a month of coming to a church. I think that is very important.

Q. He invites people to dinner?

First Layperson: Yes, at his house. It's nothing for show here at the church, but they have people over for dinner at their house. And they do that frequently. And I think that is very attractive because you get to know them and, yeah.

Q: So would you say he has the spiritual gift of hospitality?

First Layperson: Yes.

Q: As well as cooking?

First Layperson: Cooking, yes. Probably just so he can cook, but, yes. I think that is very important. Because a lot of people have grown up with the church with just, you go on Sunday and you act nice and you leave. And it's not the personal kind of thing. And you can go over to John's and just be comfortable.

Second Layperson: We are doing, I guess if you stop and think about it, we are doing several things now that are sort of like special events. Picnic over here, or at church on Sunday or, you know, whatever those things are. And it just draws the whole, draws the whole thing together. It's not just a little group that is putting on the show. A lot of people are involved. Younger people, older people.

The strong relational dynamic of the pastor's work in the congregation has spilled over into the lives of the new and older members. The kind of hospitality-driven community building that this pastor was doing was transformational for his congregation.

In the case of another pastor, laypersons recognized that he would often find ways to create community among persons with common interests in situations where he would not necessarily be a part of the friendship over the long-term.

In addition to the programs, which I think were real important at getting people exposed to each other in events that were both spiritually uplifting and fun, the -- because he was relational you know, some of it was "X," you need to get to know "Y" and "Z," you know. You need to -- let's get you together; let's have dinner. We will have dinner at our house and we are having these other two couples over because I think that you all would like each other. And there was, you know, some personal trying to build friendships that you did based on knowledge of each other.

This particular pastor excelled in not putting himself in the center of the community but in being sensitive to where he could use his pastoral knowledge to build relationships among church members that would exist long after he was gone.

Laypersons recognized that families often were involved in the community-building activities of the pastors and that building a family atmosphere was an important

aspect of what these pastors did. Each of the congregations studied had a midweek program of one kind or another. Five of them had a program deliberately designed to build community among families in the congregation. In every case, laypersons recognized that these programs were an essential part of building community in the congregation. In several cases, the pastor was an integral part of beginning the program.

**Practices of a manager of the flock.** As anyone who has ever interviewed for a position knows, laypersons often think that their former pastors lacked administrative ability. This belief may be because many of them have enough administrative experience and ability to judge pastors in this area. The desire of laypersons for pastors with managerial ability and their recognition of it where present was evident from the interviews. One confirming interviewee remarked on the difference between their current pastor, who had led their renewal, and their former pastor, who lacked management skills:

Well, one of the reasons that our pastor was as high on our list as he was is we were coming off of a different type pastor. And had some problems and one of his real weaknesses was lack of management skills. And so we were looking for someone who could be, who could run the church and be a good manager. So we were probably leaning a little bit over looking for someone with management-type skills.

Pastors often think of management and administrative skills as peripheral to the practice of ministry. Laypersons often disagreed.

Interestingly, all the confirming interviews contained references that indicated that the group of pastors studied both had and demonstrated managerial and administrative ability. One church leader who had experienced firsthand the skills of one of the pastors studied commented on the managerial abilities of the pastor. He described the pastor as having “great organizational skills,” which enabled the pastor to manage the

session without conflict, to create and staff committees in the church, to let others work without interference, and to build leaders among his lay volunteers.

Another of the confirming interviews recognized the unusual management abilities of a pastor:

A: Well, you know, he has got the military background so, but he is really good at directing people. Making them think it was their idea of starting, you know, to start off with. And he knows what he wants and how he wants things done, but he is not, he is a good manager. He is not a dictator, you know, type thing. He is good at keeping a group, you know, together and going towards what they need to be. And he is just a really good judge of people.

Q: You see that he, you said that he could get a group of people together and keep them going in a direction?

A: Right, right.

Q: Could you say a little more about that?

A: Well, just, you know, like in session meetings, staff meetings, he can always keep it on track of where we need to go. And he is really good at picking people for jobs that they are best suited for, you know, like the elders or the deacons.

This pastor was described as casual in his leadership style with committees and staff, with the ability to promote friendship among the staff and lay leaders.

The most successful of the pastors studied did not unnecessarily immerse themselves in details. Those who worked with them saw them as empowering others and as allowing others on the staff or in the local congregation to use their skills without interference unless necessary. This non-interference does not mean that they could not be directive when necessary. Descriptions of the pastors interviewed varied from “mother hen” to “control freak” to a good “coordinator” of the activities of the church and staff. Once again, the pastors viewed as the most involved as managers were also pastors of the

largest churches.

**Practices of lay empowerment.** As a rule, members of local congregations considered their pastors considerably better at empowerment than did the pastors themselves. Empowerment was an area in which most of those interviewed thought themselves to be lacking. Members often believed that the pastor was a “workaholic” or “did too many things themselves. Yet, in almost every case, the confirming interviews indicated that the pastor had the ability to recruit volunteers and nurture leaders.

On a fundamental level, churches are volunteer organizations. They cannot function without volunteers. Thus, one characteristic shared by most of the pastors, and recognized by laypersons, was the ability to recruit volunteers and allow them to function. One confirming interviewee remarked that the pastor had the ability to recruit people and then get out of their way. Thus, one confirming interview contained the following observation about the former head pastor:

[H]e had a wonderful ability to ask the right people to undertake a task, he had a gift. It is hard to describe how he does it because it's masterful to me. He knew how to ask people how to do things and then just get out of their way.

This ability to “recruit and then get out of the way” was indicative of an ability to empower others, although in his interview, this particular pastor thought that he was not good at empowering others for ministry.

Another quality that confirming interviews disclosed was the ability to allow others to grow and to innovate:

And I know with me, my job has changed so much from when I first started. He has given me a lot of freedom to do things. And he has done that with other people. And sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't.

This interviewee confirmed something that showed up repeatedly. Although as a group renewing pastors were viewed as controlling, they were also empowering and allowed those under them to innovate freely once trust was established. This characteristic seemed to be a key aspect of the personality of at least some of the pastors interviewed: They were controlling until they sensed that the person involved, lay or staff, could work without their intervention. Then, they tended to be less controlling than most people.

Occasionally, a pastor was even recognized as having the ability to empower others to the point where they became leaders. This empowerment was confirmed in one interview where a pastor had grown a lot of leaders in his former congregation:

And I think he exhibited that too, that, you know, you have got to quit doing to enable others to grow. And I think he did that. He would create, committees and positions, and then get out of the way enough to let other people fill those spots. And I have told other people that too, that, you know, because if you do it all, nobody else is going to get that opportunity. So do what he did so well was get out of the way and try to help others develop and I have to think about that at times to stop doing. So he could help others, create other people in the church as leaders.

Another confirming interviewee looked back from the vantage point of almost five years and remarked as follows:

[We] did know was that during those five years we had been readied to do what Jesus was talking about, and that is lead. ... [W]hen the leader left, all the others were already there ready to step in and continue the involvement and the love and the programs and the situations we had. We weren't ready, we didn't know we were ready, but, and we could have lasted another five years as it was, but those five years without us realizing it had created those situations that we could now step up and carry on. And I have told people that. No matter who is here, we have got people that can fill the pulpit. They can do the children's sermon. They can lead the choir. They can play the instruments. They can lead Logos. They can teach Sunday school. It has changed dramatically in the last nine years. So, yeah, I think during those five years it did create us to be in that position.

This level of empowerment was not always apparent, but where it was, laypersons acknowledged and confirmed it. The key aspect in both of the pastors was the impression in the minds of laypersons that the renewing person was there to lead but also there to get out of the way when necessary to empower laypeople.

Another layperson described how the pastor's leadership style had resulted in the empowerment of leaders:

[He] often spoke about how Jesus worked by hanging out with people and discipling those people that he was hanging out with as he spent time with them and had relationship. It was a real relational model and getting to know what people's gifts are and then challenging them spiritually so that it was a, it was developing other leaders. It was not pastor-centered leadership. There was a desire to have other people become under-shepherds in this church instead of one shepherd.

This kind of empowering leadership resulted in one of the most active and effective churches in the Presbytery.

**Practices of a sacrificial servant and protector.** As previously noted, pastors were often reluctant to talk about themselves as sacrificial servants and cross bearers for the congregation. Parishioners were, however, very willing and able to talk about this area of pastoral life. They were also aware of the same areas of sacrifice as the pastors, and they were willing to point out areas of sacrifice that the pastors were unwilling to mention. One common kind of sacrifice that pastors had to make was in changing with the times and doing new things in new ways. Sometimes this required pastors to make personal sacrifices as they were led to do things that they might personally not wanted to do. One parishioner described this kind of sacrificial leadership:

I think he made sacrifices because I think he heard the people, and I think he was an effective and good moderator. and I think he had the ability to allow God's work to be done even though it may not have been something that tugged at his heart. So I think his sacrifice would have been to follow

God into areas that he wouldn't have necessarily chosen for himself.

Another area not found in the pastor interviews was the perceived sacrifice of love that some of the pastors made. Parishioners perceived that pastors cared for them and that that level of care took an emotional toll on them:

I also just think that he loved sacrificially. There was a real beating of his heart. I think because of the way that he ministered and got to know everybody in the congregation, that there was a, there were pieces of his heart that were knocked out while he was here because when you love people the way that he loved people and are concerned about their lives, the sacrifice of peace of mind and of personal well-being goes to the wayside because you take on things that are wounds from other people and about the things in their lives. So that to me is a part of the sacrifice.

This ability to internalize the hurts of others takes a toll on the life of a pastor, and congregational members recognized this sacrifice.

More than once, confirming interviewees were aware that pastors had to make difficult decisions, decisions that were unpopular with some and provoked anger among parishioners. Typical of these responses is one involving a pastor who made a difficult decision to relocate his congregation:

Well, he had a cross to bear when he relocated this church because though it wasn't a significant number of people, there were, I think, eighteen or nineteen people who refused to relocate. And let's see. Every one of them, I mean, they were couples, but every one of them, either the male or the female, was an officer in the church. It was hard. And so because he knew it was the right thing to do, he lost fellowship with some of those people. They wrote him off... Another hard part of it is that some of those people who went elsewhere, their families said, "Daddy, Mama, I am going to follow the pastor." And so I think, I know that, for some of those people deep down in their soul is a hidden anger for James because they don't have as good relationship with mama or grandma or granddaddy. It's not his fault, but there is always that, there is always that tension. They are not in church with their family. They are over at Woodland or they are at a Methodist church, for God's sake, something like that. You know, that has been a cross for him, and he still bears it. He will carry it to his grave.



The exact nature of the sacrifice differed. The common theme was the loss of fellowship and friendships in the congregation that can occur when difficult decisions have to be made by a pastor.

Parishioners were very aware of the sacrifice of time with family members made by pastors who turned around churches or renewed them. One parishioner made the following observation:

I know one sacrifice I can remember either talking to his wife or him about days off. I don't think you ever took a day off. I remember her saying well, I think so and so is supposed to be his day off but he hasn't taken it since he has come to this church.... So probably his family time and down time, or whatever you want to call it, was sacrificed personally on his part.

Another parishioner spoke of the pastor as "in the office and at work when every other pastor in America had gone home." Although each of the pastors interviewed with two exceptions had characteristics compatible with a form of "workaholism," none of them would own that this was their motivating impulse. Instead, they seemed to think that the work was important and that long hours were needed in order for the task to be done properly.

Almost every confirming interview was filled with recognition of the family sacrifices that pastors make in renewing churches. Not only were parishioners aware of the sacrifice, they recognized it as such and as part of their incarnational leadership. The pastor's sacrifice of time with family and presence during the critical growing years was a common theme in all the interviews. The following is typical:

He sacrifices a lot of his family things for things here. He sacrifices private time for doing something for somebody else. You know, I think, yeah, that is a big part of what he is. I mean, sometimes I would be tired or something and I would say, well, why do I have to do that or something. You know, and he would say, well, what do you think Jesus would do.

Okay.

The sacrifice of family time was a refrain that was mentioned over and over again in interviews.

Not only pastors, but also parishioners recognized the financial sacrifices that pastors made in renewing their congregations. Typical of these kinds of comments is the following:

Q: I would like to talk about the area of sacrifices for just a moment. Obviously, you know, turning around a church isn't all that easy. You have been here most of the time, all the time he has been here. Can you think of some sacrifices he has had to make along the way? Have you seen him make sacrifices?

A: For the church or just ....

Q. For the church, yeah.

A: Well, I know he and his wife sold their home and moved into a smaller home as a personal sacrifice just so that, I mean, I assume he could have gone to a larger church that would pay more money, but, you know, that was not what they wanted to do. And so, he has made financial sacrifices.

Pastors are not necessarily well paid, and churches who need to be renewed cannot always afford the kind of pastor who can effectively move them into a time of renewed life and ministry. The result is financial sacrifice.

**Practices of a symbol of hope.** Laypersons recognized that their pastors had to project hope to the congregation in very difficult situations. One of the areas frequently mentioned was financial. More than one of the congregation had been under financial pressures many times, and their leaders had been required to project hope. Typical of these responses was the following:

Yeah, financially, we have had some tight times because we had a big mortgage and a lot of expense to pay in addition to the building and the

debt and salaries and all the different things that we have had to pay for. We have had a, we have had budgets that we didn't have funded. We weren't even close, but he could project the confidence that this was going to work out, and God was going to take care of it, and He has.

This pastor was able to project confidence and hope despite the fact that the church was in a serious financial situation.

In another case, a pastor had to project a victory when racial tensions were high in the congregation. A parishioner explained it this way in describing the situation:

I was going to say racial issues because I think he put a strong face on about, this is the way our church is going to approach racial issues in this community. We are going to take a strong stance. He would say, "I am going to take on the brunt of some of that myself," and then behind the scenes recognize this could really blow up. He would say, "This could really blow up and it's a risk, but we are going to put on this face because it is what we are called to be and that is what we have got to do. We have got to look strong about it if we are not going to crumble."

This kind of hopeful leadership in the midst of a tense situation, combined with the ability to take responsibility for the decisions being made, is characteristic of transformational leaders. Parishioners may not always have recognized it at the time, but they appreciated the confidence of their leaders when difficult times were past.

### **Summary of Significant Findings**

1. Each of the pastors studied exhibited one or more of the characteristics embodied in the shepherd/servant model of leadership. In almost every case, the pastor made reference to "Christlikeness" and gave specific information in response to questions that indicated the existence of the qualities implied by the shepherd/servant model.

2. Lay interviewees generally confirmed the existence of qualities consistent with the shepherd/servant model for renewing leadership with respect to all areas of the model.

3. The importance of the narratively derived shepherd/servant model was indicated by references in both pastor and confirming interviews. References to “Jesus,” “Christ-centered,” and other aspects of the biblical narrative indicated that the pastors had internalized (indwelt) the biblical narrative in significant ways.

4. No one pastor exhibited all the characteristics implicit in the shepherd/servant model of leadership. All confessed to weaknesses. The most common weakness cited by participants was in the area of lay empowerment.

5. Each of the pastors studied exhibited different strengths relevant to the shepherd/servant model of leadership. Some pastors relied heavily on pastoral skills. At least one relied heavily on preaching skills. Another pastor relied heavily on teaching and discipling skills. Still another pastor exhibited exemplary management ability. A common theme was that they led from a focus on their strengths.

6. The interviews not only reflected character traits consistent with the shepherd/servant model but also indicated the existence of significant shared practices among the pastors studied.

7. All the pastors interviewed had an interest in growth and church vitality. Although significant differences existed among the pastors in what they considered important and in the techniques they employed, all the pastors were interested in developing a vital church.

8. Parishioners recognized elements of the Servant Shepard model in their pastors and were motivated to follow the pastors because of their perceived Christlike character.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This project employed a biblically derived model for leadership to understand better the character of pastors who are able to revitalize an existing congregation. The premise of this study was that the nature of the leadership required is narrative and incarnational in its character. The pastor must incarnate the character of Christ as he or she allows the power of the Holy Spirit to renew the faith and life of a local congregation.

The project originated from a deep concern for declining congregations that are members of mainline denominations and from the conviction that leadership is the essential element that determines the success or failure of an attempt at revitalization. My experience, as well as that of the subjects of the study, reinforce the belief that the person of the pastor, not a particular program or set of techniques, is central in determining whether a congregation will be renewed. Leadership—the ability to discover a vision, gather others who will buy into that vision, build community, disciple and empower members in the name of Jesus Christ under the power of the Holy Spirit—is far more important than any particular program or series of activities the pastor may choose to employ in the process. Although some programmatic similarities existed among some of the congregations studied, no one program or group of programs was common to all the congregations studied. What was common among the subjects was the narrative they had internalized (the gospel of Christ), the kind of character that they embodied (attempted Christlikeness), and specific practices that they held more or less in common.

#### **Evaluation and Interpretation of Research**

The study was grounded in an interdisciplinary conversation between a biblical and theological look at the phenomena of leadership and modern theories of

transformational leadership. From a biblical perspective, the chief biblical and theological tool of the study was the notion of the biblical leader as “shepherd” and “servant.” From the biblical and theological materials, and in conversation with contemporary leadership theory, a “shepherd/servant model of Christian leadership was developed. Interpretation of the data involved bringing my personal experience to bear upon the information gathered during the study.

### **Confirmation of Shepherd/Servant Model**

The biblical narrative of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as it is set in the context of the history of Israel, is the story by which Christians live and try to make sense of life. Within the context of the biblical story, Christians form their character and conduct their lives. Under the power of the Holy Spirit, this narrative comes into creative tension with the culture in which they live and its norms and its standards.

The underlying thesis of this study was that effective Christian transformational leaders embody the biblical narrative in their life and ministry in transformational ways, then apply this narrative to the life and ministry of the local congregation in a creative and culturally relevant way. This thesis was born out both by the interviews with pastors and the confirming interviews conducted with others. Though none of the pastors interviewed perfectly embodied the character of Christ, each was considered Christ-like in one way or another by members of the congregation, and an interpretation of the interview data gave substance to that understanding.

In all cases, both “shepherd” and “servant” aspects to the leader’s character and practices of leadership were observed. In more than one instance, tension between these two aspects of leadership was sensed as pastors tried to serve both the needs of the

congregation and lead them into a new period of growth and vitality. The tension was verbalized in more than one instance. For example, pastors had to serve the need of the congregation to grow and at the same time provide strong leadership in order to overcome the pressures to remain the same. This tension was felt where a need existed to change locations, build facilities, or begin new ministries. In each case, perceived tension developed between the pastors' needs to serve the expressed and unexpressed desires of the congregation and to shepherd the congregations into a new period of renewed mission and ministry. By uniquely indwelling the biblical narrative and allowing the Spirit of Christ to direct their ministries, these pastors were able to lead their congregations into a period of renewal and revitalization.

### **Preparation and Character of the Shepherd/Servant Leader**

The study confirmed the need for specific preparation and character formation in the life of a transformational shepherd/servant leader. The existence of a mentor who had significant formative influence on the character and style of the pastor was a common theme. The existence of prior secular experience was mentioned as useful by both pastors and by congregational members. Secular experience seems to increase the capacity of pastors to relate to laypersons, understand their needs, and motivate them to achieve renewal. For more than half of the leaders, growing up in a pastor's home or in the home of parents who moved during the course of their developmental years, was seen as increasing their willingness and ability to adjust to new situations.

Each of the leaders was prepared in other ways for the experience of renewing a congregation or leading it into a period of increased vitality. Naturally, those who had prior pastoral experience relied on that experience. Those with experience in business or as laypersons relied on that experience. In each case, however, the experience of the

pastor and the need of the congregation “fit” in such a way as to effect a transformation.

Finally, all the pastors studied had a well-developed, practical spirituality founded in Scripture and prayer upon which they relied for the spiritual strength to renew their congregation. Biblical and spiritual preparation allowed each pastor studied to internalize the character of Christ in a unique way. The character thus formed acted as a subconscious and conscious guide to ministry.

### **Visionary Leadership**

Not all pastors studied could be characterized as visionary leaders. All had a kind of vision for their congregations and were able to communicate that vision to the congregations. Interestingly, the publication of the vision was not as important as the fact that the pastors had a vision and embodied it in the life of the congregation. The more clearly the pastors embodied the vision, the more dramatic and obvious was the renewal of the congregations. Internalization of the vision seemed to be more important than overt communication in terms of the congregations’ capacity to respond. Whether or not the vision was reduced to writing, the pastors communicated the vision by word and deed to the congregations.

Finally, for the vision to be accomplished, the pastors had to have the willingness and ability to accomplish the vision by recruiting others to believe in the vision and by training, empowering and releasing others into service to Christ so that the vision could be accomplished. Once again, the more adept the pastor at the practices needed to accomplish the vision, the more likely the vision would be accomplished.

### **Gatherer of the People of God**

Perhaps the most consistently present characteristic of the pastors was the desire to build up their congregation. Time and time again, the pastors interviewed reflected and



intense desire for their congregations to grow and to prosper. Even the pastors who were not natural evangelists, were consistent in desiring to see their respective congregations grow. The pastors demonstrated this desire for growth in what they read and studied, the kinds of programs they sponsored and in the way they viewed their facilities and future needs. Often, worship was a center of their evangelistic focus. It is no accident that all the contemporary services in the Presbytery occur in these churches, although not all of the pastors had such services.

Warm and inviting worship and programs to bring people into relationship seemed to be the two most common community-building practices employed by the pastors interviewed. Several thought that the community built during worship was central. Five of the seven congregations studied had a midweek, family-oriented program that involved recreation, dinner, worship, and Bible study in their congregations. The other two had midweek programs that involved a common meal.

### **Builder of Community**

In general, the pastors were deeply involved in the creation of authentic Christian community within their congregations. All those interviewed recognized that community building is hard in American culture, but each was committed to create such community in the local congregation. The more adept the pastors were at community building, the more successful they were in renewing and revitalizing a local congregation.

Four of the seven congregations had members who had participated in the “Great Banquet Community,” a Cursillo-like program offered in the Memphis area. Finally, four of the pastors interviewed alluded to the importance of prayer in the creation of authentic Christian community. Three of the congregations studied had regular prayer vigils and participated in prayer ministries. Several pastors sponsored prayer groups and prayer

ministries of some kind. In all these cases, the ministries were not directly designed to create community, but the pastors were aware that they did so.

### **Equipping Pastors**

The one common characteristic of each of the pastors studied was that in some area they were recognized by parishioners to be outstanding teachers and equippers of disciples. The precise area (youth, adults, young people, etc.) was different among the persons interviewed, but all were capable teachers of the Word. Another common characteristic of the pastors studied was that they were competent to teach in a variety of formats. Several taught midweek Bible studies, Bible survey classes, new member classes, confirmation classes, and a variety of other kinds of studies. Even those whose personal teaching was constrained by the size of the congregation enjoyed the reputation of being good teachers within the church. All were considered to be Bible-centered teachers and preachers, even when teaching in other areas, such as evangelism, prayer, or spiritual gifts.

Several other characteristics seemed to be commonly exhibited by the pastors studied. The teaching style of most of those studied was very personal and practically oriented. Only one (and the second oldest) had the reputation of being theoretical and theological in his style. The rest were known to be storytellers and relied heavily upon a kind of narrative style when teaching. Most asserted that they preferred to teach and to preach narrative portions of Scripture. Laypersons evidenced a preference for those who could relate a Bible story to a real life story in such a way as to make the connection between the biblical story and the way in which they live their daily lives clear. The most successful seemed to be able to teach in such a way that laypersons were equipped for day-to-day living. “Real life experience” (meaning secular experience) was a factor that

congregants appreciated among those who possessed it. Even more important than real life experience was the ability to make it practical and applicable to their lives.

### **Empowerer of Disciples**

Another characteristic that pastoral interviewees often disclaimed was that of empowering lay leaders for ministry. Once again, laity had a more positive analysis of their pastors in this area than the pastors themselves. Nevertheless, in this case, the interviews, taken as a whole, seemed to indicate that these pastors were not so much good empowerers of lay ministry as they were good solicitors of volunteers. This conclusion was not true of all those interviewed. At least one of the pastors interviewed placed a very high emphasis on empowering lay ministry, and the members of the congregation validated that gift. Interestingly, during a portion of the years studied, this minister's congregation was the fastest-growing among those studied.

To the extent the data permits a conclusion, each of the pastors had some degree of capacity to empower others. In many cases, this capacity for empowerment was not the primary spiritual gift of the person involved. Yet, each had the ability to create sufficient leadership for the size congregation they were responsible for leading. Whether these congregations would have grown faster if the pastor were even more empowering is impossible to determine. In many cases, the gift was unconsciously exercised.

Interviewees often thought that the pastor was empowering in one way or another whether he thought so or not. Even a pastor who was described as a "control freak" was recognized to have empowered many lay volunteers and recruited many lay leaders in the congregation. Another, who was described as a "mother hen" was also described as the most self-consciously empowering of the pastors in confirming interviews.

## **Transactional Leadership**

One of the most difficult areas to evaluate based upon the pastoral interviews is the way in which pastors embodied the virtues of a manager of the flock of God. Nevertheless, both from their interviews and from the confirming interviews, a picture emerged of these pastors consistent with the view that they thought that management was somehow “unspiritual.” Therefore, they should not express it as a pastoral virtue in which they excelled. Confirming interviews, however, indicated that almost without exception, laypeople thought that these pastors were, in fact, good managers. In unguarded moments, even those who said they did not consider themselves to be excellent managers seemed to understand that they could manage the churches of which they were pastors, and they took quiet pride in that fact. The larger the congregation, the more likely the pastor was to enjoy management and to look forward to its challenges. At least four of the pastors interviewed fell into this category.

Two pastors interviewed are recognized as excellent managers within the life of the Presbytery. Interestingly, one is viewed as a fairly “intense manager” a “mother hen” while the other was specifically viewed as “laid back.” One of those who had a congregational reputation as a “laid back, people person,” was considered to be a “control freak” by some of his staff. The common theme that emerges is an ability to focus on ministry goals and to mobilize people to accomplish these goals. As a subsidiary goal, the ability to hold persons accountable for excellence seems to be present.

At least one of the pastors interviewed specifically stated that he enjoyed and looked forward to the challenges of managing a larger church with a larger staff. This pastor was, in my subjective judgment, the most likely of the pastors studied to pastor a very large church. His youth (early 40s) and vitality, combined with his good

interpersonal skills, marked him as a very good manager. Interestingly, this pastor was also the pastor of the congregation currently enjoying the most obvious renewal and growth.

### **Sacrificial Servant**

Few of the pastors interviewed, with one or two exceptions, were especially forthcoming in their interviews about sacrifices. Yet, once they began, all were able to relate areas in which they had sacrificed for the good of the congregation. Almost without exception, all the pastors studied were known to work very long hours, at least sixty and sometimes eighty to ninety hours a week. One was described as “never having taken a day off” during the early years of the renewal of his congregation. The most mentioned sacrifices by pastors were time, family, and finances. Congregants also confirmed these sacrifices.

More interesting than the sacrifices of time and talents were stories of sacrifices in reaction to moral issues in the congregation or community. At least one pastor led a congregation to having their first black members since the Civil War. The pastor involved did not relate this incident, but one of his former elders did. Another layperson remembered a time that conflict existed over women elders in the congregation, and the pastor involved actually threatened to leave the congregation unless women were admitted into leadership.

Other sacrifices were noted in the interviews. One pastor was known to have sacrificed greatly in moving his congregation from a declining area to a growing area. Many older congregants opposed this move, and the pastor had to put up with bad feelings. Two of the pastors interviewed recollected incidents where laypersons were abusing leadership positions and had to be removed from leadership. Each pastor was

personally attacked as a result.

The data gathered indicated that cross-bearing sacrifice is a part of renewing ministry. Perhaps the most touching memory was of how a pastor sacrificed by carrying the pain and hurts of many people in the congregation, sometimes while being helpless to act as a healing agent. For these pastors, cross bearing was not simply a matter of workaholicism and its results. Each made other sacrifices clearly related to the work of ministry and the building of the congregation. Once again, pastors were often unaware of the sacrifices they made, or they were less willing than congregants to verbalize them.

### **Symbol of Transformation**

All the pastors, when pressed, recalled instances when they had consciously created hope in the mind of the congregation. Generally, these recollections involved situations in which a need existed to project confidence during a time of tension. In the course of the renewal of a congregation, occasionally the pastor needed to instill hope in the congregation and a confidence that the project was going to succeed. This instilling of hope can involve the creation of a new ministry or program of the congregation or some other major event in the congregation's life, such as a decision to move and build another building. Times of conflict or uncertainty were times during which the pastors thought it necessary to project a sense of confidence in the future.

### **Implications of Findings**

The study confirmed the basic validity of the shepherd/servant model of leadership as a way of understanding the kind of transformational leadership qualities that are present in pastors who are able to renew and revitalize a local congregation. Further study, especially further study in a variety of localities among various mainline congregations, would be necessary to confirm this basic finding.

### **Possible Contributions to Research Methodology**

The study was designed to bring understanding of transformational congregational leadership into a conversation with the best understanding of transformational leadership as developed by secular authors. The objective was to develop a deeper understanding of the nature of Christian leadership as it relates to revitalizing local congregations as a result of this interdisciplinary conversation. The intentionally dialectical approach was designed in such a way as to maintain the primacy of the biblical and theological pole of the study while at the same time remaining open to, and inclusive of, secular leadership theory. This approach has the potential to prevent the often criticized tendency of religious leaders to collapse into secular approaches while at the same time utilizing the insights of secular theory. The study explores an approach to the study of Christian leadership that is both methodologically sound and religiously faithful. The approach proved useful and illuminating within the parameters of this study, and it may be useful in other contexts.

### **Relationship to Previous Studies**

The study was one of a particular, narratively derived model of leadership. Thus, the study reinforced and expanded the previously noted importance of narrative and story in the work of transformational leaders. Although the narrative is different between the work of a pastor in a rural congregation in the late twenty-first century and the work of the president of a troubled multinational corporation, both leaders must understand the narrative world of the entity they lead and construct a contra-narrative that results in new life and vitality. Both must embody virtues and practices appropriate to the entity being transformed. This study was an extension of previous work related to transformational leadership in both a secular and religious context.

## **Limitations of Study**

This study was exploratory in nature and subject to many of the limitations of such a study. The shepherd/servant model was developed in order to account for the unique phenomenon of biblical leadership within the church and its relationship to the biblical metaphors of “shepherd” and “servant,” as they are given their final form in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. As an exploratory study, the attempt was to make a preliminary appraisal of the utility of the model in the context of mainline congregations and specifically with respect to their renewal and revitalization.

### **Denominational Limitations**

All of the churches studied were part of the PCUSA, a denomination of no more than approximately 2.5 million members. The PCUSA is one of the mainline denominations but by no means the largest or completely representative of the problems of other mainline churches. Future might show that transformational leadership characteristics vary among denominations. For example, a more liturgical denomination, such as the Episcopal Church, may require different leadership qualities than the American Baptists.

### **Geographic Limitations**

The study was limited to seven churches within the Presbytery of Memphis, one of the smaller presbyteries of the PCUSA. Memphis is located in the southern part of the United States of America in an area commonly known as the “Mid-South.” The Mid-South, in turn, is in part of the United States known as the “Bible Belt” because of the continuing power of the Protestant churches in the area. As such, this study is limited by the small geographic area studied and the specific religious characteristics of the region.



## **Congregational Limitations**

The study focused on seven churches, only one of which is nominally larger than one thousand members. As such, the data is largely from mid-sized congregations. In the case of the one thousand-member congregation studied, its leadership is in many ways more typical of a smaller church than a larger congregation. The reliability of the study and its conclusions may be more applicable to smaller and mid-sized congregations than to larger churches.

## **Unexpected Conclusions**

The study generated several conclusions that I did not expect. For the most part, the unexpected conclusion supported the premise of the study.

## **Descriptive Depth**

In some ways, the data exceeded my expectations. Not only were the shepherd/servant model characteristics present in general ways, but evaluation of the interviews and other data disclosed a rich amount of detail that fleshed out the model in unexpected ways. In virtually every area, the interviews and other data provided depth for understanding the model and the ways in which it is lived out in ministry in one presbytery in one denomination. As Chapter 4 illustrated, analyzing the data not only illustrated a general confirmation of the model, but also explained how various aspects of each characteristic was “fleshed out” in the lives of the pastors studied.

## **Personality Differences**

The most unexpected result of the study was a clearer understanding that the use of a narrative model, such as the shepherd/servant model, does not imply that all pastors who successfully revitalize a local congregation were similar or identical. Each pastor studied had differing strengths and incarnated different aspects of the shepherd/servant

model to differing degrees. Common threads were evident but no single personality type emerged. Each pastor was a unique embodiment of Christ.

### **Preaching and Pastoral Care**

The role of preaching was accentuated time after time in the study. Although preaching was important across the board, pastoral care was actually at least as important to most of those interviewed. An appreciation of the way in which the pastor incarnated the love of Christ was a common theme in many of the laypersons who were interviewed as a part of the project. The process of incarnation leaves in place the fundamental character of each pastor in such a way that renewal can occur using the unique way in which each pastor incarnated Christ and, by implication, the shepherd/servant model.

### **Practical Applications**

Various practical applications exist for use of the information gathered from this study.

#### **Pastoral Character**

Often, pastors feel pressured to exhibit “spirituality” without understanding the variety of ways that spirituality can be exhibited. At least one interviewee felt pressured to exhibit a kind of spirituality that was foreign to his general personality type. The shepherd/servant model has the virtue of providing a metaphor for ministry that involves a discipline of spiritual formation that avoids either an excessive quietism (as is often the case in some spiritual formation programs) or an excessive emphasis on programs and technique (which is the danger of others). Instead, the shepherd/servant model emphasizes an active ministry deeply rooted in the biblical text of the Old and New Testaments and in the character of Jesus Messiah.

Secondly, the model indicates that professionalization of ministers is less

important than character formation. Higher judicatories and seminaries might consider whether some of the time and energy spent on continuing education might be better spent on issues of character formation and especially helping pastors to find ways to incarnate the scriptural witness of Christ in a transforming way.

### **Theological Education**

Based on the results of this study, I believe that seminaries and other groups that train pastors for leadership should consider developing curricula that focus on some version of the shepherd/servant model for ministry. The model has the virtue of providing a narrative base for ministry that focuses on the biblical text while not ignoring secular literature on the subject of leadership.

Seminary education focuses on a relatively small number of skills, primarily related to preaching, teaching, and pastoral care. The model indicates a need for seminaries to focus significant attention on other areas, such as evangelism, lay ministry, and leadership formation.

### **Pastoral Practice**

Pastors often think that what they need are better skills in ministry or more money for programming. Although skills and programming are important, they are less important than pastoral character. In particular, they cannot replace the need for hard work and personal sacrifice in the renewal of a local congregation

### **Implications for Further Study**

Although far from conclusive, the study demonstrated that a narrative approach to Christian leadership has the potential to assist mainline churches in forming leaders who can reverse the decline in at least some of their congregations. This potential is especially evident where demographic factors are positive toward growth. Nevertheless, at least

three areas need further study due to the limitations of this project.

1. Are the specific characteristics identified in this study the central characteristics, or might others be usefully studied? In other words, is the construction of the biblical narrative used in this study the proper construction, or might other narrative-driven models have equally valid results?

2. Given the limited nature of the study, does this model hold true in other contexts, both geographical and social? For example, would the results of the study be similar for presbyteries in others areas of North America? Does the social context of the pastor (inner city or other community not studied) cause a change in the results of the study?

3. This study focused on positive characteristics. It did not ask the question, “Do pastors who fail to renew and revitalize congregations lack one or more characteristics of a shepherd/servant leader?” Such a study would be illuminating.

### **Conclusion**

This project consisted of an exploratory, multi-case, qualitative study of the phenomenon of transformational leadership as it manifested itself in seven churches and pastors in the Presbytery of Memphis. The study flowed from a conviction that pastoral character is an essential element in the growth and vitality of local congregations and that only a character formed after that of Christ can effectively minister under the conditions of post-modern America. The world has indeed “lost its story” (Jenson 19). Only pastors who can incarnate the story by which the church lives can effectively renew and revitalize congregations, many of which have lost their story or, like Israel, await a consummation that replays a prior chapter in God’s continuing story with his people. They need a leader who can reframe the biblical story in such a way as to lead them to

adapt to cultural changes and lead them into a period of growth I ministry.

The leaders studied, each in their own unique way, some to a greater degree than others, were able to help a congregation find and maintain its story and enter a period of increased effectiveness in its community. The pastors studied were not perfect, but they were faithful shepherds of the flocks God entrusted to their care. For them, and for every pastor who was not a part of this study, some ministering in difficult situations, congregations should be grateful.

## APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW GUIDE: PASTORS

#### A. General Questions

1. What is your name?
2. What is your age?
3. When did you come to the congregation as its pastor?
4. How did you come to the congregation you now serve?
5. What had you done before you came? Did you have any experience in another occupation before entering the ministry?
6. How much time a week do you think you spend in the following activities?
  - a. Preaching and Worship \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Teaching and Discipling \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. Visioning and Planning \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Evangelism and Church Growth \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. Lay Ministry and Lay Leadership Development \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. Social Service and Community Activities \_\_\_\_\_
  - g. Personal Spiritual Formation \_\_\_\_\_

#### B. Practices of Preparation and Silence

1. What would you consider the most important source of your preparation for ministry?
2. Who were your most important mentors or role models in ministry?
3. When you arrived, did you immediately understand the need for renewal or was the need gradually revealed to you?
4. What times of prayer, worship, or retreat and the like do you practice?

5. How would you describe your spirituality (biblical, mystical, pietistic, liturgical, etc.)?
6. If you could suggest one way in which you could grow spiritually, what would it be?
7. Do you have a regular time of retreat and silence? How often?
8. Do you regularly study Scriptures outside of the need you have to study them for lesson/sermon preparation?
9. Do you have a written “Rule of Life” by which you try to live or a Spiritual Director or Spiritual Friend who helps you in discernment?
10. If you had to categorize the spiritual source of your ministry, how would you describe it?
11. Are you in a clergy accountability group?

### **C. Practices of Vision Development**

1. Has your church a vision or mission statement and/or a long-range plan?
2. What role did you play in developing this statement or plan?
3. Who developed the plan? You? A Committee and/or Task Force? The Session?
4. What role did prayer, Bible study, retreat, or other discernment practices play in developing the statement or plan?
5. Did this statement exist when you came to the congregation?
6. Does this statement, in fact, guide ministry?
7. Does the congregation understand this philosophy of ministry?

### **D. Practices of a Gatherer of the Flock**

#### **(Preaching and Evangelism)**

1. Does your church have an evangelism program?

2. If so, what is it?
3. How many different evangelism programs have you tried in your church?
4. Do you personally call on visitors or engage in evangelism practices?
5. Who else is involved in evangelism in your congregation?

### **E. Practices of Community Maintenance**

#### **(Community Building, Pastoral Care, and Healing)**

1. Are you in any other kind of small group? If so, how often does it meet?
2. How important do you consider this group to be in your personal and pastoral life?
3. What other sources of community do you personally have?
4. What are the most important sources of community in your church?
5. Did you have anything to do with the formation of this event/activity?

### **F. Practices of a Teacher of the Flock**

#### **(Teaching and Preaching)**

1. How important is your preaching and teaching ministry?
2. Do you regularly teach a Bible study or other class in addition to your sermon preparation?
3. Have you taught Krygma, Bethel, Disciple, or other “through the Bible” study?
4. Does your congregation have a discipling program?
5. Does your congregation have a New Member Class?
6. How much time do you spend in working with the Sunday school program of your church?
7. Who teaches the confirmation class at your church?
8. Do you have an officer-training program at your church?



### **G. Practices of an Empowerer**

#### **(Lay Ministry and Lay Leadership Development)**

1. Does your church have a Spiritual Gifts discernment program?
2. What role did you play in beginning this program in your congregation?
3. Do you ever teach all or part of a Spiritual Gifts class?
4. How much time do you spend with people assisting them to discern their gifts and abilities in order to empower them for ministry?
5. Does your congregation have a Lay Ministry program (Stephens Ministry, Care Team, and the like)?
6. Do you have a program to assimilate new members into the life and ministries of the congregation?

### **H. Practices of a Manager of the Flock**

1. Do you and your church staff (if any) have a regular time of worship? If so, describe it.
2. How would you describe your leadership style?
3. How much reading or study have you done specifically in the area of leadership?
4. Do you take regular planning retreats? If not, how do you get and keep vision?
5. How much time do you spend in the administration and management of the church weekly?
6. How do you feel about yourself as a manager?
7. Does the staff have regular staff meetings? What is done during these meetings?
8. What is the agenda for these meetings?
9. Who has the power and authority to lead in your staff and church?
10. How does a person gain power and authority in your congregation?

11. What was the last crisis in your congregation and how was it resolved?
12. Other than yourself, who are the most important leaders in the congregation and what do they do?

### **I. Practices of a Sacrificial Servant and Protector**

#### **(Self-Sacrifice, Self-Denial, and Servanthood)**

1. Leadership carries with it elements of self-sacrifice. What are some of the personal sacrifices you have made in order for the congregation to grow?
2. Can you think of times when you were required to make sacrifices in order for the congregation to succeed?
3. What was the nature of the sacrifices you made in order for the congregation to prosper and grow?
4. Were the sacrifices personal or did they also affect other members of the family?

### **J. Practices of a Symbol of Hope**

#### **(Resurrection)**

1. Were there times when things might not have gone as you hoped, but as a result of your intervention the congregation was able to succeed?
2. Can you think of instances where the congregation might have failed to achieve an objective, but because of your personal work the congregation felt hopeful and did succeed?

### **K. Congregational Information**

1. Describe the church you were involved in renewing before you came.
2. How long did you take to learn about the congregation before you began to exercise direct leadership for change?
3. Which of the following areas would you say were the most important aspects of

the life of the congregation when you came? Worship? Bible study? Evangelism? Service to the community? Prayer? Social activities? Other?

4. Today, which of those areas would be important?

5. If the congregation experienced a change, how do you account for it? Did your leadership have anything to do with the change?

### **L. Culture**

1. What are the most significant stories that people tell about you?

2. What are the significant stories that people tell about the church?

3. What are the most significant events in the church's life?

4. What is the most significant annual event?

5. How does the staff communicate important values to the congregation? Do you use slogans or symbols?

6. If you could think of one event that began the process of renewal, what would it be?

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW GUIDE: CONGREGANTS

#### A. General Questions

1. What is your name and role in the congregation?
2. When did you join the congregation?
3. How did you come to the congregation?
4. What has been your most significant contribution to the congregation?
5. When did you first meet [Renewal Pastor]?
6. What was the first thing that you noticed about [Renewal Pastor]?

#### B. Spirituality

1. What is your general impression about [Renewal Pastor] as regards his spirituality?
2. How would you describe his spirituality (biblical, mystical, pietistic, liturgical, etc.)?
3. If you could suggest one way in which he could grow spiritually, what would it be?
4. Do you perceive that he has regular times of solitude and study?
5. Do you have a regular time of retreat and silence? How often?
6. Do you know if he has a regular spiritual friend or director with whom he is close?

#### C. Leadership

1. How would you describe [Renewal Pastor]'s leadership style?
2. What person do you think most affected his personal leadership style?
3. Would you consider this person a mentor?

### **D. Small Group and Community**

1. Do you know if your pastor is in a clergy accountability group?
2. Are you in any other kind of small group with your pastor?
3. Do you know of any other small groups of which he is a part?
4. How important do you consider this group to be in his personal life?
5. What about the sense of community in your congregation? How is it and how did it develop?

### **E. Power, Politics, and Leadership**

1. Who has the power and authority to lead in your congregation?
2. How does a person gain power and authority in your congregation?
3. What kind of power and authority do you have?
4. What was the last crisis in your congregation and how was it resolved?
5. How is leadership handled in your congregation? Does the pastor or a small group do everything, or are leadership and ministry spread around?

### **F. Congregational Information**

1. How would you describe the church? What about before Pastor [Renewal Pastor] came?
2. When you arrived, did you immediately understand the need for renewal or was the need gradually revealed to you?
3. Which of the following areas would you say are the most important aspects of the life of the congregation? Worship? Bible study and teaching? Evangelism? Service to the community? Prayer? Social activities? Other?
4. What are the significant stories that people tell about this church?
5. What are the most significant events in the church's life?

6. What is the most significant annual event?
7. How does the staff communicate important values to the congregation? Do they use slogans or symbols?

### **G. Philosophy of Ministry**

1. Does your church have a mission, vision, value, or other statement of purpose?
2. Did this statement exist when you came to the congregation?
3. Does this statement, in fact, guide ministry?
4. Does the congregation understand this philosophy of ministry?
5. When you joined the church, was its philosophy explained to you?

**APPENDIX C****INTERVIEWEE QUESTIONNAIRE**

Would you please take just a few moments to complete the following questions? This Interviewee Questionnaire is designed to collect information that may be helpful in the process of preparing the final copy of the dissertation and in collating and analyzing the data.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ (Work)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Home)

Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Years a member: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship with pastor: \_\_\_\_\_

Offices held: \_\_\_\_\_

Ministry area(s) in which you serve: \_\_\_\_\_

Other information that you would like to give:

## APPENDIX D

### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM LETTER

Date

Address

RE: Leadership Study

Dear Participant:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the study “**Practices and Characteristics for Pastors Renewing Mainline Congregations: Case Studies from the Presbytery of Memphis.**” In order for me to use the information that I will be gathering as a result of this study, I need your permission to use and print your insights and responses. Enclosed with this letter is a copy of the areas we will cover in our visit.

As you know, I am working on this project in connection with a dissertation project for a Doctor of Ministry degree from Asbury Theological Seminary. Notes and transcripts from our discussion will be made for use and analysis in the dissertation. In addition, the seminary considers that there may be other publication of portions of a dissertation in journals, online, or even in book form. All of the data I receive from you and the responses to the interviews will be available to me as I write.

Your personal identity and the identity of your congregation in the printed transcripts, the final dissertation, and in any other use I may make of the information will be protected by a pseudonym. Neither you nor your church will be identified by name.

In participating in this project, you will be asked to give me an interview of not less than one nor more than two hours during which we will review your work with a local congregation that has experienced a time of renewal and revitalization. A copy of my notes, when they are typed, will be provided for your review, and you may suggest any changes in the information before it is used.

Thank you so much for agreeing to assist me in this research.

Yours in Christ,

Chris Scruggs



**Consent:**

Having read the above expectations and understandings, I hereby agree to participate in the Study and give my consent for Chris Scruggs to record my written and verbal responses to the interview and to use the information gathered in connection with his dissertation at Asbury Theological Seminary and in any published form of his dissertation or some or all of its contents.

Signature and Date:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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