

ABSTRACT

AN IN-MINISTRY TRAINING PROGRAM FOR PROBATIONARY PASTORS OF THE FLORIDA CONFERENCE, UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

by

Donna Bartleson Manwaring

The purpose of this study was to create, implement, and evaluate a three-year, practical, in-ministry training program for new pastors to help establish a support system and develop basic relational and management skills that would promote good leadership. The program includes four dimensions: retreat, mentor, small group, and supervision. The content addressed issues of administration/management, leadership, and relationship.

The participants were the 2000 class of probationary members of the Florida Conference United Methodist Church. The results indicate the need for training in administrative and relationship skills. The program helped to establish supportive peer relationships among the new clergy.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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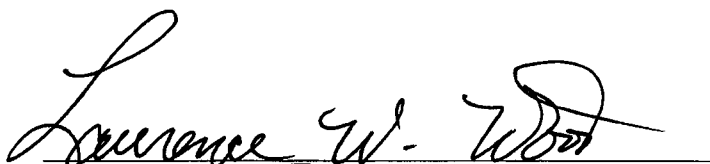
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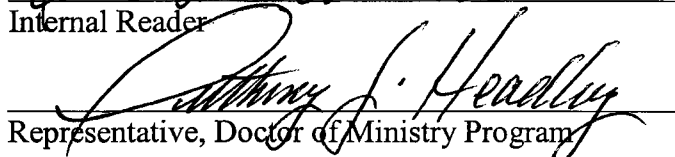
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Dissertation

**Presented to the Faculty of
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**In Partial Fulfillment
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by

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In loving memory of Esther Frances Bartleson, my mother. She and my father trained us well and instilled in us a love of learning and hard work. I wish she were here for this.

CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

Chip (names have been changed) is fresh out of seminary and appointed as an associate pastor in a midsize church of about one thousand members. He does well at the tasks appointed to him in the area of his expertise, but in the area of conflict management and people skills, he is lacking. He also lacks in the area of creating and implementing new ministries. He stays two years at this appointment and moves to his own church where his difficulties remain the same. He asks for help from the district superintendent but is told to try harder and to keep up the good work. He is discouraged but is staying at his present church because the district superintendent has told him to stick it out for at least four years. If he does not, he is told, his next appointment will be adversely affected. He has been given a “not (ordained) at this time” by the board of ordained ministry and decided to delay another interview with the board until he has more confidence. Meanwhile, Chip kept looking for models to use in his ministry that would help him with his problems. He learned of some leadership models in his readings and tried out several of them in his church. “Such pastors condemn churches to live without a ‘why.’ When a pastor constantly changes plans, churches vibrate but never move” (Miller 107).

The Lone Ranger rides again. Keith is in his twenty-sixth year as a pastor. He is assigned as the senior pastor of a large church with multiple staff. The staff is creative and energetic. Until Keith arrives, they work well together and enjoy their respective ministries and each other. With Keith’s arrival, the decline begins. The staff is now well controlled and can do nothing without the knowledge and the consent of the senior pastor. In fact, when a program is approved and the staff member excels, the senior pastor

feels threatened by the success and finds ways to criticize the staff member, usually in front of an audience. Needless to say, morale and ministry plummet.

In spite of losing the staff support, Keith decides to change an existing traditional service to a contemporary service without consulting either the staff or the leadership of the church. By this time, some of the staff is resigning and the people are unhappy. The district superintendent sees a fair number of people in his office to complain about Keith, but Keith stays another two years. Meanwhile, Keith has no one in whom he can confide. He did not make many friends during his years in ministry, and no one is calling to provide him with support. At Annual Conference he is rarely seen talking with any of his peers. He sits with his wife but is otherwise alone. The end of the story is even sadder. After the appointment of a new district superintendent, Keith is appointed half-time to a small church where he is the only paid staff member. He is close to a mental breakdown and is in counseling.

While serving churches both as a staff member and as pastor in charge, I observed two things. First, some pastors minister under the “Lone Ranger” theory of church leadership. In other words, they lead as though no one else could do the job and they feel threatened when others try:

When you look at today’s Church, it is easy to see the prevalence of individualism among ministers and priests. Not too many of us have a vast repertoire of skills to be proud of, but most of us still feel that, if we have anything at all to show, it is something we have to do solo. (Nouwen 38)

Watching another person do a job well is a threat for the Lone Rangers who believe they could not have done the job as well but still believe it was theirs to do. Also, many of these same pastors do not build a support base of peers that could help them in times of need and/or crisis. Then when trials come, they have no solution and no one to ask for

advice or help. Both the church and the pastor end up being hurt:

Our American cultural mythology is full of stories about strong and wise individuals who ride in to rescue the day in the style of John Wayne, the Lone Ranger, Lee Iacocca, or Jack Welsh. Our love affair with American individualism supports our telling stories about lone rescuers, and we sometimes believe that is what true leaders do—despite the evidence. (Rendle 16-17)

Second, many pastors come out of seminary with a good academic education, but with little education in the real practice of ministry. In this case, arriving at the first appointment is like being put in the middle of the woods and told to find the way out. If the first attempt succeeds, then a good pattern is set for the rest of the ministry. If not, pastors are transferred to another church without any feedback or evaluation on what really happened. So another attempt is made. Pastors may use the same technique or may try a different one. If the new technique works, then another good pattern is set. If the new technique also fails, then a pattern of failure is set. Each of these observations can be hurtful, but when the two converge the hurt is magnified both for the local churches and the pastors and their families. The cost of a move is high:

Changing churches means giving up the relationships you have worked hard to build with key people in your current ministry. You will have to start from scratch. It means adjusting to a whole new set of expectations which, even with the best candidating process, can only be guessed at. Making so major a change also creates an instability in the pastoral family that simply cannot be ignored. Moreover, moving often entails significant financial sacrifice.... Perhaps the greatest cost of all is the price of stunted professional growth. By starting over, a pastor robs himself of the experience that comes with a longer tenure. He simply repeats his current experience in another place. (McIntosh and Edmondson 168-69)

In both of these cases, the issue of call played an important role in the outcomes.

For Keith, his call was never strong from the beginning. In fact, one could say that his call was from his earthly father, not his heavenly Father. Keith's father was a pastor, and

Keith was the only boy of five children. His destiny from birth was to follow in his father's footsteps and become a pastor. He started in one seminary that challenged his call and then switched to another to finish his schooling. As long as he was in a small church with no staff to compete with him, he was fine. As soon as he moved up to churches with staff, he began to encounter problems. His low self-esteem was challenged. He did not relate well to other staff members. He was unsure of himself and unsure of his call. After twenty-six years in the ministry, when asked about his call, he could not answer. Soon he was forced out of the large church and back into a small church. He lasted there less than two years and retired early. "The point is that many clergy ... have serious questions about their authority to lead and have difficulty knowing how to do so" (Carroll 18).

The first case had a different ending. Although beginning his ministry with a difficult start, Chip moved to his second appointment and worked hard on meeting the requirements for his board of ordained ministry. He was strengthened and encouraged along the way by his call. He knew his call was authentic, and he had received some confirmation of that. He was looking for more confirmation, however. He received confirmation of his call from some of his church members and three years later from his board of ordained ministry. Chip received his ordination as elder. Although his call has kept him in the ministry, Chip still struggles with the practical aspects of ministry. "Addressing the problems that tempt pastors to quit is supremely important for the sake of pastors as well as the churches they serve. It is not enough to merely identify the problems. Churches and pastors need solutions" (McIntosh and Edmondson 9).

In January 1993, Multi-Staff Ministries published a report entitled Standing on the

Banks of Tomorrow! The report states, “Approximately 50% of seminary graduates are not in ministry five years after graduation” (Weese 11). The high dropout rate for pastors is a concern. One of the reasons given is the lack of practical skills:

Inadequate training is a significant problem for many of today’s pastors. They enter ministry only to discover that their seminary education didn’t equip them as well as they had hoped. They find themselves “behind the curve,” struggling both to discard what no longer works and to learn what does. (McIntosh and Edmondson 41-42)

While a seminary curriculum is content rich, it is not designed to be practically oriented. That is the task and the purpose of the probationary period in the United Methodist system. Seminary is crucial to the theological education of the pastor. Basic practical skill development is crucial to the education of a leader. The new paradigm is a focus on leadership with management being the old paradigm:

Leadership without strong management results in theoretical, idea-heavy, pastor-driven churches. Management without visionary leadership leads to ministry that is mechanical, passionless, predictable and limited. An effective ministry is one that combines true leadership and efficient management and produces life-changing experiences with God and his people. (Barna 35)

Another reason for the high dropout rate is the change in leadership styles. In the spring of 1992, the Association of United Methodist Theological Schools initiated a study project called AGENDA 21: United Methodist Ministry for a New Century. This study reveals that seminaries prepare pastors to be “the boss” of the congregation (10). Today’s culture requires the pastor to be more of a team player who is willing to delegate both tasks and authority. Pastors with low self-esteem and/or power issues have problems with the new paradigm of ministry. “Those who cannot or will not delegate wind up aloof and out of touch with their community. Their entire lives are mired in ego” (Miller 162).

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, which is the “rule

book” of the denomination, requires that training take place during the probationary period (Olson par. 317). In spite of this requirement, very few conferences provide a training program:

One of the continuing complaints about theological education is that it is not related to the “real world” of clergy practice. The theology and theories taught in the seminary seem remote from the concrete situations of clergy practice. Recent graduates often complain that they find it difficult to relate what they learned in the classroom to the concrete issues of ministry with which the parish confronts them. (Carroll 122)

The national Board of Higher Education and Ministry (BHEM) is now attempting to take seriously the instruction of the Discipline. November 1998 representatives of the BHEM met in Nashville with representatives of the Board of Ordained Ministry of all the conferences. I was in attendance at the meeting. This project is in line with what the BHEM is asking the conferences to provide for the probationary period. I attended a sequel to this meeting in October 1999.

Biblical/Theological Reflections

From the time humans first sinned, God has been calling people to participate in his purpose of reconciling the world to him. Abraham was chosen to be the father of a nation that was chosen to be a light to all the other nations. Although Abraham received few details of his call, he responded immediately. Abraham is now a model of faith in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Moses was called to lead the chosen nation out of slavery into the freedom of the Promised Land. His call, from the burning bush, was dramatic. Moses was not as quick to accept God’s call; instead, he offered several excuses. As God met each one with a solution, Moses finally relented and accepted. Samuel was only a boy when he was called. His call came quietly in the middle of the night. Samuel needed Eli to interpret God’s call for him. Isaiah was in the midst of a national crisis when, in a

vision, he received God's call. His feelings of unworthiness were conquered by God's cleansing. Jesus called his disciples to dwell with him and learn about God's love revealed through forgiveness and grace and the death of God's own son. Paul was called from a life committed to persecution of Christians to proclaim God's message to the Gentiles. All are called to be children of God. Those who accept are recipients and vessels of grace and forgiveness. "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet. 2:9, NIV).

The call of God can be divided into two categories. The first, a general call to all persons, relates to *who* each person is in relation to God. The effectiveness of a person's witness and ministry is in direct proportion to the relationship with Jesus. Dr. J. Robert Clinton, in his book, The Making of a Leader, describes the stages of leadership development in relation to ministry leaders. The second phase of his model is inner life growth. He includes seminary as part of this phase. He also includes in-ministry training:

The leader-to-be learns by doing in the context of a local church or Christian organization.... Superficially, it may appear that ministry training is the focus of this development phase. But closer analysis shows that the major thrust of God's development is inward. The real training program is in the heart of the person, where God is doing some growth testing. (31)

The primary task of one called by God is to be in relationship with God. Ministry requires so many duties that time with God is difficult to set aside unless it is made a priority. Here, as in all of life, Jesus is the role model. If in fact pastors are called to participate in reconciling people to God and growing God's kingdom, then Jesus models the strategy necessary to carry out the call. Robert D. Dale calls Jesus the master strategist. "Each strategy represents an advantage Jesus felt he possessed and could apply

to his calling” (23). Jesus defined himself and his ministry. In the wilderness, he took the time to sort out the short cuts and the temptations to quick, but not lasting, success. “It takes maturity and ‘mileage’ to prepare us for significant ministry and strategic leadership” (24). Clinton agrees: “His [God’s] goal is a Spirit-filled leader through whom the living Christ ministers, utilizing the leader’s spiritual gifts. The fruit of the Spirit is the mark of the mature Christian” (33). Another strategy of Jesus, according to Dale, is to focus on training apprentices: “Jesus didn’t ask his followers to be Christians; he simply invited them to become ‘disciples,’ or learners. They ... were receiving on-the-job training for kingdom building” (24). Again, Clinton agrees:

One ministers out of what one is. God is concerned with what we are. We want to learn a thousand things because there is so much to learn and do. But He will teach us one thing, perhaps in a thousand ways: ‘I am forming Christ in you.’ It is this that will give power to your ministry. (32)

The second, a particular call upon all believers, relates to *what* people do using the gifts and talents God gives to them (Ogden 192). Both are needed in ministry. The general call is usually an inward call that comes from God to the individual. The second call is a visible call, one that can be observed by others. The Church observes the outward call and uses it to confirm the inward call. “The purpose of the outward or external call to ministry is to examine and confirm the preliminary intuition of an inward call by deliberately testing and assessing the candidate’s potential for service to the body of Christ” (Oden, Pastoral Theology 20). To assist with the assessment of call, the United Methodist Church has set up a system known as the Board of Ordained Ministry. The assessment of the Church is necessary to prevent inept leadership and false teaching.

The call of the disciples is an example of the particular call. They followed Jesus and learned from him. They were sent out, on probation one might say, two by two to

take the word of God to the people and to bring people into the kingdom of God. Then they returned to Jesus for their report and his comments. They were putting into practice what they were learning at the feet of Jesus. Finally, after the resurrection, Jesus gifts them with the Holy Spirit, and they are ready and strengthened to do the ministry to which they were called.

The call of Paul is another example. Paul was a Pharisee who had studied under the prestigious Gamaliel. His salvation was based on following the Law. To him, the message of Jesus was a threat to the very foundation of his faith. Paul received an inward call on the road to Damascus. There, he met God, was convicted of his sinfulness, and heard God call him into service. He answered the call, but he needed the training and the confirmation of the church before he was able to minister in the name of Christ. He spent three years studying and preparing for his ministry. “Why so long? The Lord had work to do in the Pharisee. Saul needed to hammer out the implications of his experience for all of life. His theology needed to be refined and spelled out for all dimensions of thought” (Ogilvie 174). One does not know the content of these years, but “it is reasonable to conjecture that however clearly the call of God had come, Paul felt a need for reflection and preparation to enter into his apostleship” (Dunnam 29). He met before Peter and James in Jerusalem and had to convince them of his inward call and his ability to carry it out with the help of the Holy Spirit. With the blessing and confirmation of the Church, he began his ministry.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to create and evaluate a practical in-ministry training program for new pastors. I anticipated that this program would help establish a

small group support system and a leadership and management style that would carry over to succeeding appointments. I also anticipated that the support and practical training would help lower the high dropout rate of local church pastors.

Research Question 1

What leadership and management skills were the probationary pastors lacking upon entering the program?

Research Question 2

What changes occurred in probationers' management and leadership skills subsequent to the training program?

Research Question 3

What methods were most effective in improving the management and leadership skills of probationary pastors?

Research Question 4

What methods were most effective in establishing an ongoing support system for probationary pastors?

Definitions

Practical in-ministry training describes the training needed by the new pastors to fill in the gaps left after seminary education:

Denominational executives and laity sometimes voice similar complaints about clergy, often about recent seminary graduates. "They have a lot of knowledge *about* [original emphasis] ministry, but not much knowledge of *how* [original emphasis] to minister. They're great at theorizing about the church and its mission but deficient in knowing how to get things done." (Carroll 123)

Practical in-ministry training focuses on how to get things done.

Support system describes those people to whom pastors can turn in times of crisis

or need. The support system helps to monitor the progress of pastors and holds them accountable in the areas of spirituality, professional goals, and personal lifestyle. One of the major problems of new pastors stems from the lack of relational skills:

The authority problem concerns how a leader gets along with people: his leaders, his peers, his subordinates. Influence depends on relationships with people.... The ability to establish relationships and see God use them to accomplish His purposes is an art and a skill. (Clinton 105)

Having people available to guide, push, cajole, and generally keep one in line is a necessity for those in high stress situations and careers such as the ministry.

Successful leadership style, according to Clinton, incorporates three main emphases. First, successful leaders seek to develop to their full potential. Development is a lifetime pursuit. Second, “a major function of all leadership is that of selection of rising leadership. Leaders must continually be aware of God’s processing of younger leaders and work with that process” (196). Third, “leaders must develop a ministry philosophy that simultaneously honors biblical leadership values, embraces the challenges of the times in which they live, and fits their unique gifts and personal development if they expect to be productive over a whole lifetime” (196). Calvin Miller writes about the successful leader:

I have watched a great many ministers across the years. The ones that seemed to succeed (and in some ways I hate using this word as the corporate world would; to succeed in Christ is to be faithful to our calling) were the ones who never backtracked and rarely changed churches. These pastors, it seemed to me, generally maintained a forward motion in ministry. (103)

Leadership establishes the vision of the church, seeing what can be and seeing ways to accomplish the vision:

Leadership [original emphasis] is a set of processes that creates organizations in the first place or adapts them to significantly changing

circumstances. Leadership defines what the future should look like, aligns people with that vision, and inspires them to make it happen despite the obstacles. (Kotter 25)

In other words, “leadership is a dynamic process in which a man or woman with God-given capacity influences a specific group of God’s people toward His purposes for the group” (Clinton 14). Leadership envisions and creates the change needed for the church to be effective in the future.

“*Management* [original emphasis] is a set of processes that can keep a complicated system of people and technology running smoothly. The most important aspects of management include planning, budgeting, organizing, staffing, controlling, and problem solving” (Kotter 25). Management is keeping one’s eye on the big picture and making sure the goals and the deadlines are met on schedule. Management has to do with “organizing and mobilizing an organization” to go in the direction set by the leadership (Miller 158).

The Project

My observations led me to believe that the trend in pastor turnover could be helped if proper intervention and training could be applied. In September 1997, I approached Bishop Cornelius L. Henderson with the idea of a training program for new pastors during the probationary period. He encouraged the project and approached the registrar and the chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry. With that encouragement, this project was born.

By September 1998, I found out that the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry was hosting a Consultation on Probation in Nashville, Tennessee. I attended that consultation and the following one in October 1999. The purpose of the consultation was

to encourage all annual conferences to take seriously the mandate in the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church to provide training during the probationary period. Florida Conference was eager to begin (Olson).

I met with the executive committee of the Florida Conference Board of Ordained Ministry. There, I explained the process I had in mind and requested their help and support. At the same meeting, a design team was organized. Four members of the executive committee immediately volunteered to serve. Two others from the Board of Ministry were selected to serve. Several decisions were made at this meeting. The program would include all of the probation period. It would consist of four dimensions: mentor, small group, retreat, and supervision. The retreats would begin in the late summer or early fall of 2000 with the upcoming class of probationary members. I would write the program and present it to the design team for possible revision and approval. We would handpick the mentors and small group facilitators. Finally, the cabinet needed to be included in the process, and we would make a presentation to the cabinet after the program was designed.

By June 2000 the program was written with the revisions, and we were ready to begin (see Appendix A). On 15 August 2000, the committee met again to work out the details of the mentors, the small groups, and the first retreat. Several basic decisions were made about the process itself.

1. The process was mandatory for all the class of 2000 and for those in the class of 1999 who fall under the 1996 Book of Discipline. It was strongly recommended for those in the class of 1999 who were under the 1992 Book of Discipline.

2. Mentors were asked to serve for three years.

3. Mentors were asked to mentor no more than two probationers.
4. A mentor may also convene a small group, if needed and able.
5. We recruited and trained at least one mentor per district to prepare a pool of mentors.
6. Mentors and small group leaders may or may not be on the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.

The design team made a list of mentors to be recruited for the program. We also identified possible small group conveners in each district. We tried not to use the same people, but in some districts we needed to double up. A letter was sent to each of the prospective mentors asking for their help and giving the dates of the retreat for training. As they responded positively, they were assigned to a probationer in their district.

The probationers were assigned small groups according to location. Some districts did not have enough probationary members for a small group in the district. In that case, some districts were merged with others to make the small groups. From fourteen districts, we made six small groups. We were careful not to have anyone traveling more than one hour to meet with a small group. This was one of the more difficult pieces of the program. After the groups were formed and a convener identified, they were sent a letter with this information. The convener called the group together, and each group decided its own schedule with once a month meetings being a minimum.

Letters were sent to all the probationers from the classes of 1999 and 2000. The letter included information on the upcoming retreat dates (9-10 November 2000 and 21-22 February 2001). The letters also made clear who was required to attend and who was encouraged to participate.

We also made the schedule for the first retreat and identified who would be the main leader. Since the first retreat emphasis was on relationships, we chose one of our approved counselors to lead. We scheduled another meeting on 12 September 2000 to check on the progress of the mentor assignments, the small groups, and the leaders for the first retreat. We also took care of any last minute details, such as who would arrange the rooms, the altar for the retreat, and music.

We quickly realized the need to use conference calling as an alternative to meeting in person because of the frequency of meetings and the distances we had to travel. In-person meetings took place either before or after the retreats. The rest of the meetings were conference calls. Our first conference call took place on 14 December 2000. The topic of the spring retreat was ministry of administration. We decided on the leader and the retreat schedule. We also discussed the next fall retreat and how we would manage two classes at the same time. We were realizing the scope of this project by this time and the need for advanced coordination. We reserved the retreat center and how we would best address the topic of worship/proclamation. We decided to include different types of worship and how to add a new type of worship to the existing church schedule without alienating those in the present worship. We wanted to include a theology of relevant worship. We decided to invite several leaders who led different types of worship.

We scheduled another conference call for 10 January 2001 to make sure all was on track for the spring retreat and to do more work on the fall retreat. The spring retreat leader wanted to include a spiritual gifts inventory so we mailed them out. We also made sure all the details for the spring retreat were covered. We set the dates for fall to be 17-18 September 2000 and identified possible leaders to be called.

We met again at the spring retreat to continue planning for the fall retreats. Now we were dealing with two tracks of probationers. We had important decisions to make. First, we decided to keep meals and schedule the same for both groups. We decided not to combine the groups for any of the other activities. Relationship building was important to the process so we needed to keep both tracks separate so they could create the type of bonds we hoped they would form. This decision applied to the third year, also. The third retreat for the first class was on worship/proclamation. We decided the major emphasis should be on the necessity of quality relevant worship, no matter the form, and how to make a transition from one style of worship to another or one kind of church to another. Various types of worship were included, either live or by videotape. Finally, we divided our team so that leadership responsibilities for the two tracks would be covered. We scheduled a conference call for 8 May 2001 to discuss the incoming class of probationers and assign mentors and small group leaders. We also decided that another conference call was needed sooner to deal with some problems with current mentors and small groups.

April 2001 found us on the phone again for another conference. We shortened the spring retreat a little bit but decided to add back the time as a result of the feedback from the probationers. They liked the time to fellowship with each other. They were growing close as a class. We decided that the worship retreat should also include ways to respond to the gospel or altar calls done well. We also included an optional session on how to use the hymnal, specifically the indices in the back. We identified and recruited the leaders for the worship topic. We built in time for reflection and recreation.

By May 2001 we were ready to begin the process of assigning mentors and small groups with the new class of probationers. The Board of Ordained Ministry gave each of

them a contingency to participate in the training program. We sent letters to them with the dates of their first retreat. We decided to keep the leadership the same for this relationship retreat since the last one was so well received.

Our next conference call, October 2001, developed the plans for the spring retreats. We decided to standardize the dates to make planning easier for everyone. The fall retreat would fall on the second Monday and Tuesday of September and the spring retreat would fall on the fourth Monday and Tuesday of February. These two dates did not interfere with anything on the conference calendar and would allow the probationers to plan schedules in advance. We planned the leaders for each of the two tracks, administration and discipleship. Since the discipleship track was the new one, we also looked at the content. We wanted to bring out the theme of building discipleship ministries and chose Christian educators as the leaders. We made a resource table available with the latest in discipleship curriculum. We wanted them to learn how to decide the needs of the church and how to meet those needs. We built in time for small group interaction so they would have an opportunity to learn how to resource with each other and share ideas.

After the spring retreats, several of the team members wanted to change the focus of the program from practical training to leadership training, which also changed the foundation of this study. Therefore, the study is based on the first two years of the program.

Four Dimensions

In order to accomplish all the goals of the program, I included four dimensions. The first three provide different contexts for learning and establishing relationships. The

fourth provides an opportunity for the Board of Ministry to receive feedback on the skills of the probationer.

Retreat

The retreats were centered on the skills that we thought were needed in the local church (see Appendix A). The theme for the first retreat was based on relationship skills. The priority of relationships was deemed to be important at the front end of training because relationship building in the local church begins immediately upon moving to the church. The intent was to focus on conflict management, confrontational skills, and peer and family relationships. The second retreat's theme was administration/management. The focus was intended to cover budgets, taxes, boundaries of fiscal management, stewardship and capital campaigns, and effective meetings. The subject of the third retreat was worship/proclamation. Areas covered were to include weddings, funerals, other special services, different worship styles, and how to develop a new service. The fourth retreat concentrated on making disciples through creating, conducting, and evaluating a discipleship program in the church. The fifth retreat was leadership, which concentrated on subjects such as church systems and dynamics, keys to winning and keeping trust, and how to go from vision planning to leading change in the congregation. The last retreat was evaluation of the process and celebration. By the time of the last retreat, we assumed most would be ready for ordination and a time of celebration.

Mentor

The type of mentoring used in the program is collegial. The mentor and the probationer were co-travelers on the path of ministry. This relationship encourages intense reflection about ministry and God's presence in it. Using a ministry event from

the church, the probationer was encouraged to focus on three areas: vocational identity, spiritual life and disciplines, and authority (see Appendix A). Goals were set for a year at a time. The mentor sent a non-evaluative report to the board that evaluated the fulfillment of the goals for the year and the commitment of the probationer to the process.

Small Group

The monthly small group was formed using geographical boundaries. A clergy member of the conference was the convener of the group. The group structure allowed for mutual support and theological reflection on ministry events in the local church (see Appendix A). The small group was also the place to begin the paperwork for the board of ministry.

Supervision

To help the board of ministry in knowing the probationers better and to help provide information on the ability of the probationer in ministry settings, the district superintendent and the SPRC/PPRC sent in one report each year. The district superintendent was asked to make two site visits per year as part of the evaluation.

Methodology

This research was an evaluative study using a quasi-experimental design. The probationary pastors were surveyed upon entering the program, after each retreat, and upon its conclusion. I also used the reports from the district superintendents and the staff-parish committees of the probationers as an evaluative tool. The class of 2000 was compared to five previous classes in the Florida conference to ascertain the benefit to the probationers.

Subjects

The subjects of this study were chosen by the Board of Ordained Ministry through the regular process of approving those ready for commissioning as probationary members of the conference. All sixteen members of the probationary class of 2000 were required by the Board of Ministry to participate in the program. The class consisted of five women and eleven men. The ages ranged from 25 to 46. Four were in their twenties. Eight were in their thirties. Four were in their forties. Most were second career. They represented eleven of fourteen districts. All were serving local churches. Half were serving as associate pastors and half were sole pastors.

Five of eight members of the class of 1999 also participated in the program. Their participation was voluntary. Four were commissioned and under the 1996 Book of Discipline. One was ordained deacon under the 1992 Book of Discipline. These are mentioned in the study because their presence in the program affects the comparison years' statistics mentioned later in this study.

Variables

The independent variable of this research project was the in-ministry training program. The program was designed to lessen the dropout rate of new pastors and to increase their practical skills for leadership (see Appendix A).

The dependent variables of this project were the cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes in the three areas of management, leadership, and support.

An intervening variable was the selection of mentors, small group leaders, and retreat leaders. Their quality and willingness to serve were important ingredients for this project. A second intervening variable was the design team itself. Differing goals among

the design team led to some compromise in the program structure.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

At the first retreat, and each succeeding retreat, probationers were asked to fill out an evaluation that included questions on skills they thought they needed as well as the skills they acquired as a result of the program. They were also interviewed after the program (see Appendix B).

A researcher-designed questionnaire was distributed to staff-parish relations committees, district superintendents, and mentors of the participants to help the Board of Ordained Ministry in its assessment of the candidates.

I compared the previous five classes in the Florida Conference for the amount of time needed for ordination and the drop out rates from the local church.

Importance of the Study

The training program was motivated by my observations. The Bishop confirmed the need for new pastor training. He was president of a seminary and is aware of the academic bent of seminary education. The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry also knows the need for training new pastors. In fact, they held two consultations on post-seminary training in November 1998 and October 1999. I attended both consultations. While in attendance at the first consultation, several conferences expressed a desire for a copy of this study. The training program is transferable to any conference that wishes to use it and is also transferable beyond the denomination. The issues addressed are common to all new pastors regardless of their denominational affiliation.

Overview

Chapter 2 of this work establishes the biblical and theological reasons for the proposed study. Chapter 3 describes the research methods and program design. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. Chapter 5 evaluates the findings and recommends continuation of the training program.

CHAPTER 2

THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Those who are called by God into the ordained ministry have an awesome task. Sometimes the task is not too difficult and all runs smoothly. Other times, the task seems impossible. Lack of time and skill add to the difficulty. In the difficult times, certain skills are required to help keep the pastor on task.

Biblical/Theological View

From the beginning of creation God called his people to him. God walked in the garden with Adam and Eve. To Abraham, God promised a new land. From a burning bush, God called Moses to lead a group of slaves to freedom to begin a new nation. The prophets became God's voice to a wayward people. Finally, God sent Jesus to reveal his love for humanity and to extend the call the whole world. Call is "an invitation from God to an individual to become a part of His eternal plan for man's salvation" (Achteimeier 87). God calls all people to faith in God. Faith leads to action and God's people follow the plan laid out for them by God himself:

The call of God incumbent on all Christians has several levels. Basically, call can be divided into two overall categories with subdivisions under each. First, there is a general call, which relates to *who* [original emphasis] we are (our personhood). Second, a particular call upon all believers relates to *what* [original emphasis] we do. (Ogden 192)

Aside from the general call to all people, the call of God is also specific. "When we move from the general call to all to be Christian to the particular call also placed on all, we are moving from being to doing" (Ogden 195). To each one God gives gifts and talents. The specific call uses those gifts and talents in its fulfillment. When the divine call comes, one is never satisfied until the call is answered. "Call is an 'I must do.' It is a

compelling, inner force that drives us with an energy of its own” (209). The call cannot be set aside without unpleasant consequences that range from mere unhappiness to madness. Sometimes the call is to success, as in the case of Jonah. Other times the call is to persevere even in the midst of what seems to be failure, as in the case of Jeremiah. Sometimes the call is subtle and grows in intensity. Other times the call is sudden and spectacular in its appearance. The Bible is full of stories that tell of the calls of the prophets and the disciples. I draw attention to four: Isaiah, Jeremiah, the twelve, and Paul.

The Call of Isaiah

The call of Isaiah is spectacular. Isaiah may have been a priest for while he was in the Temple he had a wonderful vision. He was lifted to the Holy of Holies where he saw the very throne of the Lord. He saw the cherubim and the seraphim worshipping God. While standing there before the throne, he became painfully aware of his own sinfulness. “Woe is me!” he cried, “For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!” (Isa. 6:5, RSV). The angel halted the worship and took a hot coal from the altar and touched it to the lips of Isaiah. Now he was cleansed, forgiven, made new. Then he heard the voice of God. “Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?” Without hesitation, Isaiah heard himself saying, “Here am I. Send me!” (Isa. 6:8, RSV). Then Isaiah was commissioned, so to speak, with the words he needed to proclaim:

This chapter stands apart in literature as a unique record of how the call of God reached a man and a prophet was born. It is a piece of pure autobiography, the record of an experience so indelibly impressed on Isaiah’s mind that to the end of his days every detail was vividly before him. (Buttrick 204)

Eugene Peterson, in Subversive Spirituality, identifies four parts to the call of Isaiah:

1. First, one senses an overwhelming sense of inadequacy of sin, of unworthiness,
2. Then, one receives mercy and forgiveness,
3. God's word speaks the call, and,
4. God's word is answered. There is a response (73-75).

These four elements are basic to God's call. First, when one encounters the living God one becomes painfully aware of the pervasion of sin. A person realizes his/her own inadequacy to earn the right to stand before the holy Creator. One feels only shame and disgrace, a sense of ugliness in the midst of unspeakable beauty. Self-dependence disappears as one realizes the need for God's hand in the act of salvation. The icy heart of selfishness melts in the heat of God's love. Suddenly one feels powerless before an all-powerful God. God is in control. A person is left with only one alternative: to plead for mercy and forgiveness.

Graciously, God gives both. The one who once stood before God dirty and sinful now stands before God clean and whole. The coal of cleansing touches the lips and makes one clean. God's love, disclosed in that act of cleansing, is an act of eternal consequence. Until the encounter with God, a person does not recognize the need for salvation. Time to become better is all that is needed. Then while standing in God's awesome presence, the realization dawns that only God can cleanse a soul. God does not have to forgive. No one deserves forgiveness and mercy. Until one stands in the presence of God, his love is not fully realized; love so great that he was willing to die for all and

take the sins of the world upon himself that one might come to this moment of encounter and feel the weight of guilt lifted: love so great that one is undeservedly made worthy: love so great that one who is broken is made whole.

Then God speaks. God calls with a task to be done. Grace and forgiveness are not to be hoarded; they are gifts worthy of sharing with others. Those who are called enter into the world of darkness and shine with the light of God. "Holiness is not an experience of sublimity that abstracts us from the world of work; it is an invitation to enter into what God is doing and intending to get done in the world" (Peterson, 74).

For Isaiah the call was to prophesy; sometimes the call of God is to preach. Always the call is to serve using the gifts God has given. When the call comes, it is compelling and difficult to resist. Some resist it for a while but finally answer. The answer, however, must always be a willing one. "The true minister is in his pulpit not because he has chosen that profession as an easy means of livelihood, but because he could not help it, because he has obeyed an imperious summons that will not be denied" (Marshall 31).

Finally, God's word is answered. God's call is formed in a question, "Whom shall I send?" The answer is willing submission, "Here I am, send me." In the process, the called discover wonderful gifts to accomplish the task at hand. God does not leave people helpless and alone. Along with grace and forgiveness, God gives freely his Spirit, and from the Spirit, one is aware of new abilities. The discovery of the gifts is a joyous adventure because the call of God is a continuous discovery of new gifts and new tasks. More can always be done in the name of Jesus.

The adventure leads also toward holiness. God's people are being transformed from what they were to what God intends them to become, which is to be like Jesus. "From the mills, the factory, and the farm they come. From the ranks of mediocrity, or the gutters of sin he calls them, changes them, and makes them his messengers" (Marshall 31). The body of Christ is made up of different parts all aimed at the same goal: to worship and glorify God.

For Isaiah, the call to be a prophet was the major turning point in his life. Even toward the end of his years, he could recall with clarity the experience of finding himself in the presence of God. Most likely the memory of it sustained him through the last painful years of his ministry when he was beaten, imprisoned, and exiled.

The Call of Jeremiah

Jeremiah's experience differed from Isaiah's. His call came as a young man, even before he was formed in the womb. In the beginning he did not willingly accept his call. He thought of many excuses to escape the call, but in the end he relented. At that point he followed the call and the resulting assignment with all of his being:

It is proper to note, therefore, with Gillies, the three things which Jeremiah specifies within the call: the foreknowledge—I **knew you** [original emphasis]; the sanctification—I **consecrated you** [original emphasis]; and the scope of his commission—I **appointed you a prophet to the nations** [original emphasis]. (Buttrick 800)

Jeremiah was chosen early for his task, predestined to be a prophet. Like Isaiah, Jeremiah experienced consecration from God. "Then the Lord put forth his hand and touched my mouth" (Jer. 1:9a, RSV). Jeremiah understood that he was to be a spokesman for God. The task was large for Jeremiah was appointed to be a prophet not just to Judah but also to the other nations. The immensity of the task, though, was not intimidating as long as

Jeremiah kept in mind the remembrance of the hand of God touching his lips and consecrating him to the task. Through his entire ministry Jeremiah sensed the presence of God strengthening him.

That is not to say the difficult times did not come. Jeremiah is known as the prophet who cried out to God with all of his emotions, including anger and despair. In the midst of turmoil Jeremiah was a man of prayer even though the prayers may have been out of despair and hopelessness. In the end, though, Jeremiah received assurance from God that he was being faithful and that God was still in control.

Unlike the call of Isaiah, Jeremiah's call was to a ministry that would not be successful. To say that Jeremiah became discouraged at times is an understatement. To say that Jeremiah remained faithful, even in the midst of "failure," is a tribute to his tenacity and his faith in the God who called him. Although he may have doubted his effectiveness, with good reason, he never doubted the existence of God. He could vent his frustrations even to the God who sent him to do this impossible task.

Some clergy today better fit the pattern of Jeremiah than Isaiah. They did not answer the call as quickly and as willingly as Isaiah did. They tried to find excuses not to follow the call. One by one, the excuses are exposed for what they are. Finally the person stands stripped bare of excuses and relents. One must be sure, though, that the decision to answer the call comes not with reluctance. Once the decision is made, it must be with the full intention of complete and willing obedience.

Like Jeremiah, those who find themselves in difficult ministries can learn from the difficulties. First and foremost, God never deserts those whom he calls. Frustration and despair may overwhelm at times, but when the chips are down God is still in control.

For some, tough situations prove to be times of spiritual growth for during the difficult times, one realizes the need for God.

Second, not all ministries will succeed, which causes the anxiety level to increase dramatically. Thoughts of a new career begin to enter the mind. Blame gets thrown toward anything or anyone that seems to be an obstacle. Self-esteem flounders. Pastors find themselves in a vicious cycle that spirals downward. “Anxiety increases when the sense of being a safe, secure, emotionally competent self is threatened; and when this happens, one way of dealing with the anxiety is to look for others to make it better for us” (Richardson 49). Again, the answer to stem the downward trend is to call out to God as Jeremiah did. God gifted humanity with self-worth. The God who calls also gives the necessary strength to do his work.

The Call of the Twelve

In the New Testament the call of God is understood first and foremost as a call to faith. The call Jesus extended to the disciples was a general call to follow him and to learn from him. The disciples received no specific task to perform until Jesus sent them out two by two to see how much they had learned. Not until after the crucifixion and the resurrection, on the day of Pentecost, did the disciples realize that they had a specific task, to tell the story of God’s love and grace. “With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all” (Acts 4:33, NIV). All the disciples, even beyond the twelve, could do this task. The growth of the church created a need for organization. The people began to recognize the different gifts and talents of the body. “We have different gifts, according to the grace given us” (Rom. 12:6a, NIV). Whatever the gift, the person was encouraged to use it to the glory of

God. The teaching, prophesying, and administering gifts were associated later with the professional clergy. Now when the Board of Ordained Ministry speaks of call, they are really asking candidates if those gifts are present in their lives.

Interestingly, the Bible tells of the calls of Peter, Andrew, James, and John in Matthew 4. Philip brings Nathaniel to Jesus who invites Nathaniel to join them. Matthew was called from the tax table. The specific calls of the other disciples are a mystery. Thomas has a good heart for he shows great enthusiasm for the cause when he suggests that all the disciples should go to Bethany to be with Jesus, even if it meant death for them. After the resurrection, Thomas makes a passionate statement of faith.

Not much is known about James, the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, or Simon the Zealot. The call of Judas is not known from the New Testament either. His greed and his desire that Jesus should be the expected political messiah are well known. He wanted to force Jesus to overthrow the Roman government and to establish a rule of the Jews. Because no one knows how he joined the group, his motives are unclear. Perhaps he thought he was joining political movement. Perhaps he thought he would receive a high appointment in a new regime. Neither of these reasons would be considered a call from God. Neither would keep him faithful.

When candidates come before the Board of Ordained Ministry, the board must discern if they are called to a life of service or seeking a career that will fill their own needs? “I do not blame, no, in any degree, a Minister’s taking a yearly salary; but I blame his seeking it. The thing blamable is the having it in his view, and the motive, or any part of the motive, for entering into this sacred office. If preferment, or honour, or profit was in his eye, his eye was not single” (Wesley 8: 494–95). Perhaps Judas betrayed

Jesus because his motives were wrong from the very beginning. Perhaps so many people are disillusioned in ministry because they, too, have the wrong motives. Perhaps they are looking for a career to advance their self-esteem or to take them out of a bad situation:

It may be intuitively important to the candidate to assess where doors are opening or closing in the pursuit of ministry, how a peak experience, a bereavement, university admissions, a serious accident, or a broken love affair may have seemed to signal something personally significant so as to impinge upon the interpretation of the possible call to ministry. (Oden, Pastoral Theology 24)

This assessment could be one of the most important a candidate could make. It could avoid heartache and trouble later in ministry if an assessment were made early and, maybe, lead to a decision to seek another career. “A call might be such that it requires all one’s life energies and a life commitment, or it might be, at a different level, a temporary call to service in a particular situation that lies as a burden on one’s heart” (Prevallet 9).

The Call of Paul

Examples of specific calls to a specific task are not abundant in the New Testament. Arguably, the one best known is the call of Saul on the road to Damascus. It resembles the calls of Isaiah and Jeremiah in that it contains the same elements. First is the supernatural vision. In the case of Saul (for he is not yet called Paul), he did not see an actual vision of heaven but a bright light and the voice from heaven. Then, face to face with God, came the sense of sinfulness and inadequacy. Third is the change in character wrought by God. Finally the response to the call came. In Paul’s case the answer did not come as quickly as Isaiah’s. He needed the guidance of Ananias before he could commit. He needed to understand the commitment he was making. More importantly, Paul needed the blessing of the current leadership of the Church. Peter, James, and others had to accept Paul as one of them before he could go out to the mission field. They had to

confirm him as an ambassador of the cause. They also had to train him in the new faith before he could be an acceptable representative. In other words, Paul needed the church's confirmation of his call and his gifts. Paul's inward and outward calls converged to create a great ministry. Many times Paul was sustained through trials and tribulations by relying on his call and the presence of God. After listing all the bad things that happened to him, Paul still remained faithful and gained strength from God:

To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. (2 Cor. 12:7-9, NIV)

The Confirmation of the Call

The continuation of the apostolic witness requires accuracy of the message. Jesus spent so much time with his disciples so they would be able to proclaim with truth what they had heard and seen. They, in turn, spent time with those who would carry on after them. As the community grew, the Church had to find new ways to keep the message. One method was to write it down. A second method was to organize the body.

The Church is the body of people who have been called together for the purpose of being the body of Christ in the world. God calls his people from the world to assemble together to hear his word and then sends them back into the world to proclaim his message of love and salvation. The Church, then, is an assembly of people united together by the Spirit whose tasks are "proclamation of the word, celebration of the sacraments, and disciplining of the faithful for eternal accountability" (Oden, Life in the Spirit 266-67). The Holy Spirit gives gifts to each member of the body. The gifts are to

be used to build up the body. Some members are called to the special task of ordering the body and keeping its message accurate. When one receives that specific call, it is confirmed by the rest of the body.

With the required blessing of the leaders of the body, the subject of the outward call is now addressed. “The purpose of the outward or external call to ministry is to examine and confirm the preliminary intuition of an inward call by deliberately testing and assessing the candidate’s potential for service to the body of Christ” (Oden, Pastoral Theology 20). Without outward assessment, the system of call lies open to many abuses, including self-righteousness, individualistic tendencies, and misinterpretation of gifts (20). Often a person is the last one to be able to assess his/her own gifts and abilities objectively. To assist with the outward call, The United Methodist Church has set up the Board of Ordained Ministry. This board is charged by the church with the task of discerning both the inward call of the candidate and the gifts of the candidate. Thomas C. Oden lists some of the criteria traditionally applied to candidates for ordination:

- By tradition the candidate should have reached canonical age, which for presbyters was fixed by the Council of Neocaesarea in 314 as 30 years,... later reduced in the Roman tradition to twenty-five, and in some traditions to twenty-one.
 - Having wrestled with their own inward sense of calling, candidates should be presently convinced that the ordained ministry is the best way to fulfill their response to God.
 - The candidate should have personal gifts for ministry. These include a realistic self-awareness, the ability to work patiently with others, love, compassion, and respect for other people.
 - The candidate should be in good health. The candidate should be reasonably free of disabling effects that would disproportionately encumber ministry.
 - The candidate’s good character should be affirmed by those who know the candidate best.
 - The candidate should have a capacity to preach and teach Christian doctrine in good conscience, accountable to Scripture and tradition.
- (21-22)

Assessment by the church is necessary to prevent inept leadership and false teaching. The church must protect itself from those whose judgment may not be sound or who may want the position of leadership for the power that it promises to deliver. If either the inward or the outward call dominates, the church suffers. A consensus between the two must be reached:

Genuine leaders operate out of a sense of calling, not a sense of drivenness.... The strongest leaders are those who have received a strong affirmation of their personhood, in a way which frees them not only to lead a cause but also to serve others. A sense of identity, a security that comes from knowing who one is, lies at the very heart of leadership. (Ford 37)

Perhaps the Boards of Ordained Ministry are not doing an adequate job of assessing the gifts of the candidates. Maybe too much time is spent on making sure polity and theology are correct and not enough time on discerning the practical gifts for ministry. In defense of the Board of Ordained Ministry, they are at a disadvantage according to the current system. They do not really get to know the candidates until they is ready to be commissioned. Before that time the candidates report to the district board of ministry. In all cases, the church where the candidate serves is not consulted on the demonstration or lack thereof, of the gifts for ministry. The church, therefore, needs to take seriously its mandate to assess the both the inward call and the outward abilities of the candidate. When both are confirmed, the candidate is granted ordination.

After ordination, the new pastor feels free of the restraints and contingencies of the Board of Ordained Ministry. With the new freedom comes the temptation to be totally self-reliant, a crucial point for the new pastor. One of the most difficult tasks for the new pastor is to keep the call central to life and work. In the midst of the busy-ness of the local church, the pastor is tempted to shorten the time spent with God and with the people

of the parish. “I can do it myself,” becomes the mantra of the pastor. Soon the pastor is left with no support and no leaders in the church on whom to rely. “In the culture of the United States (this is not universal), other options are always dancing around the fringes of our minds. Plurality affects all aspects of our lives: our principles, our choices, our very *capacity* [original emphasis] to commit ourselves” (Prevallet 11).

The temptations of the world are strong indeed. One can hardly face them alone. The sustaining power of the Holy Spirit and the support of caring friends and colleagues are essential to keeping down the stress that comes with the pastoral life:

We need them to keep us accountable and honest and steady in a culture geared toward constant change. The pull of individualism is so strong that we cannot afford to go it alone. We have to find or create communities...if we are to be faithful to God’s call. (Prevallet 13)

To be helpful, the habit of finding guidance and support must be established early. Mentoring relationships and support groups are essential elements in the life of the pastor. Both mentors and support groups offer havens in times of stress. They can also offer advice to release the potential within each new pastor. Another benefit comes from helping the new pastor avoid the temptations that come along the way. A good support group spends time on accountability and spirituality. By focusing on the spiritual life, the mentor and support group emphasize the importance of keeping the call alive. As the nature of the call deepens, the new pastor gains security and self-confidence in the new position.

Causes of Burnout and Dropout

The lack of practical management skills is a major cause of pastors burning out and leaving the ministry. “Sixty percent of the pastors and ex-pastors we surveyed indicated that their training was inadequate. Of those, 17% cited inadequate training as a

factor in their decision to resign” (McIntosh and Edmondson 48). One can imagine a doctor who studied only the academics in medical school and then left to establish a practice. Ten years later, the doctor may have learned the skills, but the advancements in medicine would outpace the ability to keep up. Ministry also requires practice:

And as to acquired endowments, can he take one step aright, without first a competent share of knowledge? A knowledge, First, of his own office; of the high trust in which he stands, the important work to which he is called? Is there any hope that a man should discharge his office well, if he knows not what it is? That he should acquit himself faithfully of a trust, the very nature whereof he does not understand? Nay, if he knows not the work God has given him to do, he cannot finish it. (Wesley 10: 482)

Without the in-service training during the probationary period, ministers would be trying to catch up rather than keep ahead.

Another cause of burnout is the **lack of defined expectations**. Each church member is a critic of the job, and each has a different set of expectations. Trying to meet them all is impossible. A measure of success and accomplishment under these circumstances is also impossible. Something is sure not to get done. Someone is sure to be offended at a minute detail:

If I wanted to drive a manager up the wall, I would make him responsible for the success of an organization and give him no authority. I would provide him with unclear goals, not commonly agreed upon by the organization. I would ask him to provide a service of an ill-defined nature, apply a body of knowledge having few absolutes, and staff his organization with only volunteers. I would expect him to work ten to twelve hours per day and have his work evaluated by a committee of 300 to 500 amateurs. I would call him a minister and make him accountable to God. (qtd. in London and Wiseman 54)

Lack of leadership skills is another cause. With the sociological shift from manufacturing to technology comes the shift from hierarchy to teamwork. The laity are demanding, rightfully so, a larger share of the ministry pie. “This loss of role clarity lies

behind much of the stress and burnout among clergy.... The role they sought out and trained themselves for no longer fits what they have to do. Many are unsure how to give leadership in the new time” (Mead 34). The loss of role clarity leads to a lower self-esteem and then to insecurity. Low self-esteem and insecurity together add up to a difficult, if not destructive, ministry. Another cause of burnout is the **need for power**. “One of the greatest ironies of the history of Christianity is that its leaders constantly gave in to the temptation of power.... It seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control people than to love people, easier to own life than to love life” (Nouwen 58-59). The stress on relational skills in the residence in ministry program addresses the issue of power and offers new guidelines for dealing with people as a servant leader instead of a dictatorial leader.

Need for Further Training

In January 1993, Multi-Staff Ministries published a report entitled Standing on the Banks of Tomorrow (Weese). The report makes a shocking statement. Apparently, the education level of students entering seminary is drastically lower than it was twenty years ago. As a result of the lower beginning quality of the students, the quality of graduates is also lower. A high dropout rate of pastors in the first five years of ministry is a result of a lower skill level. Those pastors who are inadequately prepared are put out on the limb of local church ministry and the limb is breaking. They have no safety net to catch them as it breaks:

The average pastor in America today has more education than the pastors of any other generation in American history. Over half of the pastors participating in our survey hold master’s degrees, yet 60% indicated that they feel inadequately trained.... Many needed pastoral skills are not taught in curriculum. (McIntosh and Edmondson 42)

Cerebral training is needed, to be sure, but an in-ministry training time is also needed. “Perhaps here we see the essential problem. School is school, and church is church. It is difficult for a seminary to prepare an individual for all that he will face in church. Only church can do that. The seminary can only provide a foundation on which to build” (47). Many professions, such as the medical and teaching professions, require a period of on-the-job training before granting a full license to practice. Some things cannot be taught in the classroom. In the case of the ministry, the pastor is better able to learn leadership and management skills while ministering in the local church. These are the very skills not taught in the seminary, according to the survey in Standing on the Banks of Tomorrow. Listed as needed but not taught are marketing leadership, spiritual formation, evangelism, understanding culture, training leadership, teaching management, teaching relational skills, and interpersonal relationships (Weese 31-32). Basically, the practical skills of ministry are those not taught in the seminary. Continuing education is not an option for today’s clergy. Unless ministers continue to update how they minister in today’s ever-changing environment, they will be ministering in a world that no longer exists. The language spoken will be outdated, and the listener will not be able to hear the gospel message. “The answer to this problem lies in a new model for theological education, one that stresses changeless theology as a foundation and changing methodology as a way of building on that foundation. The latter must take place over a lifetime” (McIntosh and Edmondson 51).

New Leadership Paradigm

In the spring of 1992, the Association of United Methodist Theological Schools

initiated a study project called AGENDA 21: United Methodist Ministry for a New Century. This study reveals that seminaries prepare pastors to be “the boss” of the congregation (10). In reality, ministers have only the authority given to them by the members of the congregation. “A pastor must lead, but he is not the boss. He is responsible for what happens, but he has no authority beyond his ability to persuade. A tricky balance.... He cannot simply say, ‘Here is the plan, let’s do it’” (McIntosh and Edmondson 32). Today’s culture requires pastors to be team players. New leadership and management paradigms are vital to successful ministry in the local congregation. Those pastors with problems of self-esteem and power cannot buy into the new paradigm. John C. Maxwell, a major proponent of team leadership, writes, “Often, leaders wrongly believe that they must compete with the people close to them instead of working with them” (Developing the Leaders around You 6). Miller also recognizes the importance of delegation to the team. “Those who cannot or will not delegate wind up aloof and out of touch with their community. Their entire lives are mired in ego” (162).

AGENDA 21 also includes the various leadership skills required of today’s pastors. Among the top skills listed were preaching, spiritual formation, relational skills, administration, teaching, and lay partnership. Each of these, according to the report, is a skill that needs further development after seminary. Interestingly, the United Methodist Church requires in The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church that training take place during the probationary period (Olson). This period is 50 percent of the time set aside by the Discipline to the preparation of the local pastor. “Although it has been a disciplinary mandate for some years, annual conferences, in the main, ignore making this two year period [now a three year period] a meaningful educational experience for those

still on probation” (Association 16). The report continues, “A more focused and rigorous use of the probationary period following the master of divinity degree is essential to effective ministerial education” (31).

The authors of The Bases of Competence: Skills for Lifelong Learning and Employability offer a concentrated look at skills needed for success in the workplace (Evers, Rush, and Berdrow). In the twenty-first century, the workplace has become global and fast paced. Employees need more comprehensive skills in four areas: managing self, communicating, managing people and tasks, and mobilizing innovation and change. One can be an expert in knowledge but not be able to apply it in the workplace. “Knowledge changes quickly. Skills can enable individuals, and in turn, organizations, to learn, critique, and use new knowledge” (4). Each of the four base competencies is further divided. For example, managing self includes learning, personal organization and time management, personal strengths, and problem solving and analysis. Communicating includes the areas of interpersonal relationships, listening, oral communication, and written communication. Managing people and tasks includes coordinating, decision making, leadership and influence, managing conflict, and planning and organizing. Mobilizing innovation and change includes (1) ability to conceptualize, (2) creativity, innovation and change, (3) risk taking, and (4) visioning (40-41). All of these skills in addition to the seminary course work are essential to running a church. “Ironically, while we are often not rewarded for proficiency in generic skills and therefore do not place much effort in their development, weaknesses in generic skills can lead to negative performance outcomes for which we are penalized” (59). This study was designed to address these skills. Although leadership is a huge byword now in church circles, one

should also remember that leadership needs a firm foundation of basic skills. Without the two basic skills of managing self and communicating, the other two skills, managing people and tasks and mobilizing innovation and change, are weakened at the least and impossible to develop at the worst. For this reason, the first year of the residency concentrates on the first two competencies.

The need for skill training and development after seminary is not a new concept, but developing a training program that meets the need of the new pastor is still not a priority for annual conferences. The epilogue of the AGENDA 21 report reads in part, “An initial step in developing a substantial ‘residency probation’ could be some pilot projects cooperatively planned and implemented by seminary leadership and contiguous annual conference boards of ordained ministry and cabinets” (Association 33). The national Board of Higher Education and Ministry is now attempting to take seriously the instruction of the Discipline. In November 1998 and again in September 1999, representatives of the board met in Nashville with representatives of the BOM of all the conferences. I attended both meetings. This project lines up with what they asked the conferences to complete. How many annual conferences will make the extra effort to train pastors during the probationary period remains to be seen.

Management

“Management is a set of processes that can keep a complicated system of people and technology running smoothly. The most important aspects of management include planning, budgeting, organizing, staffing, controlling, and problem solving” (Kotter 25). In today’s culture, management is considered old fashioned. Management seems to reinforce the old concept of hierarchical leadership as opposed to the team leadership that

is blossoming. Nevertheless, the skills essential to good management are also the skills one uses to build good leadership skills:

Skills are not possessed in isolation; they are associated with knowledge and values and each other, and they reinforce one another. Being able to plan a meeting supports one's ability to coordinate the meeting. Finally, skills develop sequentially; basic skills must be learned before more advanced skills. (Evers, Rush, and Berdrow 25)

Training in leadership without first training in the essential management skills is putting the cart before the horse. Chip, for example, was well schooled in leadership information. He was not well schooled in communication, relationship, and conflict management. The lack of these basic skills led to great heartache in his ministry. He did not know how to apply the leadership material he learned:

Knowledge and skills within a discipline and values are important aspects of the portfolio that a college graduate brings to the workplace, but generic skills provide the platform for learning, thinking and creating. Much of the disciplinary-based knowledge that students are learning today will be obsolete tomorrow. Generic skills, on the other hand, do not become obsolete; they evolve and expand, especially when they are learned in an open learning climate and enriched in a learning organization. (Evers, Rush, and Berdrow 27)

In the effort to train leaders and grow churches, the need for basic competence in management skills is often overlooked. While overlooking a main cause of ineffectiveness, the solution is to try to fix the problem with the more advanced skills. In effect, the result is like Jesus' parable of building the house upon the sand. When the rain comes, the house will not stand.

Relational Skill

One of the biggest pitfalls for new pastors is relational skill. For pastors, relationship is critical in three areas: to God, to self, and to others. When God calls a person into the ordained ministry, God does not want to be left out. Sometimes in the

midst of the demands and unrealistic expectations congregations thrust on pastors, time for devotion is squeezed to a minimum or worse. “Without personal faith shining through all expressions of his ministry, a pastor is an empty echo of what God intends him to be. Everything in ministry depends on the pastor’s personal faith” (London and Wiseman 210). Without personal prayer, public prayer becomes shallow. Without the devotional study of God’s Word, sermons become pieces of oratory. Without God’s presence within, visits become social events. Pastors must guard against the temptation to depend only on the devotional work necessary for completing the work of ministry. God must be allowed room in the personal lives of pastors. God must be allowed to lead. “Our survey indicated that personal spiritual defeat was prevalent in one out of four decisions to resign. Spiritual weakness can place a person in a dangerous position” (McIntosh and Edmondson 133). The evidence of this lack of closeness to God is found in those who must leave the ministry for immoral reasons. Their dependence was not on the God who called them. They did not heed the message sent to Zerubbabel, “‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the Lord” (Zech. 4:6b, NIV).

When God rules in pastors’ lives, they are able to care for themselves as God would care for them. They are no longer slaves to the wants and wishes the world sets before them. They are set free to serve others. They take care of their health, their weight, and their spirituality. They care for their family and their finances:

Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers. (1 Tim. 4:14-16, NIV)

Finally, in pastors' relationships with others, a loving spirit and good communication are vital. Discussions with district superintendents reveal that most of the unwanted moves among the parishes occur because of conflict. Many times the conflict could have been avoided if the pastor knew how to relate to people. "In order to influence and motivate people, a leader must learn how to relate to people effectively. He or she must also learn how to work within existing organizational structures and create new structures to enhance ministry" (Clinton 101). Much of the confusion in a new parish could be avoided if pastors would learn to understand the culture and the worldview of the people. More importantly, much conflict would be avoided if pastors simply learned to love the people and treat them as they would want to be treated. Maxwell points out the importance of relationships in ministry:

Leadership has less to do with position than it does with disposition. The disposition of a leader is important because it will influence the way the followers think and feel. Great leaders understand that the right attitude will set the right atmosphere, which enables the right responses from others. (Developing the Leader within You 98)

Learning how to handle conflict and why conflict occurs is another important task of the pastor. A common mistake is to hope the conflict will go away by itself. It usually does not. Left unattended, the conflict grows to be unmanageable:

Our attitude toward the content and the receiver are as important as, if not more so than, the information being conveyed. Sometimes the information we need to communicate is unpleasant and will not be well received. If the sender interacts well with the receiver and works with the person in dealing with the information, the message may still be conveyed successfully without damaging the relationship. (Evers, Rush, and Berdrow 82)

Helping pastors acquire the skill to find the source of the problem and then to confront it will help lengthen their tenures at church.

Communicating—Worship, Preaching, and Teaching

The current debate on the form of worship for the contemporary congregation is one source of conflict for the probationary pastor. Unfortunately, the debate is fueled by the common assumption that contemporary worship is the cure-all for church growth. The judicatory answer to a pastor in crisis is to start a new contemporary service. Usually, the advice is ill-timed and unwarranted. “When worship formats and styles are bent toward producing a specific result such as recruiting new members, or gaining a hearing for some institutional or social agenda, worship becomes a tool rather than the honoring of God” (Benedict and Miller 42). Starting a new service is difficult on its own merit without the added distraction of conflict within the church. As in the case of Keith, starting a contemporary service as a last resort was deadly. Too many pastors return from a workshop at one of the leading churches and immediately want to clone that church. They do not understand the background planning that had to go into the development of that kind of success. They do not bother to survey their own neighborhood to understand the type of people the church will reach. They are not willing to invest the necessary time and energy to take what they learned and adapt it to their own situation. Then when the service does not produce immediate results, they find they have lost some of their credibility with the congregation, and the situation quickly moves from bad to worse. For this reason a section on worship options and how to implement and evaluate them is an important part of the training program.

Teaching skills were another part of the training:

The soundest basis for church growth is not merely to proclaim, but to teach. Teaching the full implication of the proclamation helps to develop a church that has integrity. By the time the Pastorals were written, it was

expected that those who chose to be pastors would be able teachers.
(Galloway, Small Group Book 29)

Too many pastors do not know how to make a lesson plan or use one to teach a lesson. In these churches, pastor-led Bible studies are non-existent. Jesus is often referred to as the “master teacher,” yet those who are to be Christ’s representatives to the world have not taken the time to learn to be like Christ in this crucial area. “The fundamental work of the minister in the congregation of believers is to share the Christian faith, interpret its significance for all of life, and develop a Christian consciousness, which is sadly missing in many of the churches that are growing” (36). The pastor should also be able to evaluate the curriculum being used in the church. Some curricula are better than others, and the wise pastor chooses one that is both challenging and interesting. The church can be better directed toward its vision if curriculum and teaching opportunities are used to optimum advantage.

Time and Tasks

The task of time management is often learned in college and seminary merely through experience of deadlines. The myriad demands of ministry, however, are often unexpected. New pastors soon find that each parishioner demands a piece of their time pie, and the pie is not big enough to go around. Learning how to prioritize the demands was important to the process of the residency program. Also important was learning how to decipher and accomplish the day-to-day operations of the church. “Courses in church finance, time management, group dynamics, counseling, and numerous other practical subjects would help equip pastors for their work” (Evers, Rush, and Berdrow 42). Many graduating from seminary are great with words but not as strong with numbers. They find sitting in finance meetings and understanding the financial aspects of the church difficult.

Others may do well with numbers but have difficulty with the planning aspect of new programming. The ministry of administration was included in the retreat portion of the residency program.

Leadership

The experts are making predictions about the types of leaders needed to enable pastors to face the challenges that come with the rapid changes they are experiencing. One word overheard often is relevance. For pastors of the twenty-first century to speak to the new generations, they must be relevant. Henri J. M. Nouwen, in his book, In the Name of Jesus, challenges the need for relevance: “The Christian leader of the future is called to be completely irrelevant and to stand in this world with nothing to offer but his or her own vulnerable self” (17). He continues, “The great message that we have to carry, as ministers of God’s word and followers of Jesus, is that God loves us not because of what we do or accomplish, but because God had created and redeemed us in love and had chosen us to proclaim that love as the true source of all human life” (17).

The call of the Christian is to become like Jesus. When Christians study the life of Jesus, they come to understand that Jesus did not set out to be great, powerful, or indispensable. Jesus came to bring God’s love. Jesus’ ministry was radical because the love he brought was for everyone, not just for the Jews and not just for the religious elite.

Elaine M. Prevallet agrees:

Jesus summons me to share that love with every comer, having, as he had, a predilection for the poor, the marginal, the difficult-to-love, those I am culturally or personally predisposed to keep at a distance. Such love is no easy task. It stands opposed to nearly everything society teaches about what it means to be someone, to go somewhere, to succeed; what it means to be powerful, to be rich, to be happy. (14)

The call of society is to power and wealth. Children learn while young to make something of themselves. As they grow up, they learn to wrap up their identities with their careers. Pastors are no exception:

In this climate of secularization, Christian leaders feel less and less relevant and more and more marginal. Many begin to wonder why they should stay in the ministry. Often they leave, develop a new competency, and join their contemporaries in their attempts to make relevant contributions to a better world. (Nouwen 20)

If the careers are lost, so are they. When Jesus calls, though, pastors receive a new identity as a child of worth. “Do you love me?” We have to hear that question as being central to all of our Christian ministry because it is the question that can allow us to be, at the same time, irrelevant and truly self-confident” (Nouwen 23). What pastors do is not as important as *being* who God created them to be: people who love others unconditionally as God first loved them. The Christian leader of the future breaks through the cold isolation of the technological world with the love of Christ:

In the end, we have no assurance, ever, that we have done it ‘right’; no assurance, that is, except the peace that comes when our lives have integrity, and the love that seems to open out once the obstacles are cleared. (Prevallet 14)

When pastors fulfill the call to love, they will go a long way toward becoming God’s ambassador to a hurting, lonely world. God calls all of his children to this simple, yet difficult, task

Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation was another component of the training. Laity in the churches believe that their pastors do not spend enough time developing their spirituality. The laity surveyed also thought that they were not learning how to develop their own spirituality. “Their concern is expressed with disappointment that pastors don’t inquire about the

spiritual life of individuals” (Association 11). United Methodist heritage is rooted in the experience of the spiritual life. The question, “How is it with your soul?” was asked weekly in Wesley’s class meeting. If the soul was not well, then the other class members were there to give support and guidance. The people in the pews are waiting to be asked the condition of their souls, and they want to know that the soul of the pastor is well. Pastors who do not spend time with God will become shallow and so will all that they do. Burnout is a certain result. On the other hand, pastors who spend regular time with God are authentic in the pulpit and in the relationships of the church. Spirituality is one of the areas discussed with the mentors. Equally important is training on how to teach others, specifically the laypeople of the church, to develop spiritual disciplines. Finally, in the area of spirituality, pastors must learn to develop places where accountability is established. The peer mentoring relationship, or small group, was an accountability group.

John Wesley was a master at organizing the church for effectiveness and growth. He knew the importance of accountability and support. “Strengthen you one another. Talk together as often as you can. And pray earnestly with and for one another, that you may ‘endure to the end, and be saved’” (8: 249). He knew that one’s spiritual growth is stunted without guidance from others who are traveling the same spiritual path so he created the concept of the small group. He called them classes, and the class meeting was even more important than the large gathering. The class leader was responsible for collecting of the offering as well as the pastoral care of the class members. Wesley used his most talented laypeople to lead the classes. The Methodist movement was essentially a lay movement which caused some to object to using untrained leaders:

“The thing is well enough in itself. But the Leaders are insufficient for the work: They have neither the gifts nor the graces for such an employment.” I answer, Yet such Leaders as they are, it is plain God has blessed their labour.... It may be hoped they will all be better than they are, both by experience and by observation, and by the advices given them by the minister every Tuesday night, and the prayers (then in particular) offered up for them. (8: 255)

Many good books have been written on how to organize small groups in the church. Dale Galloway’s book 20/20 Vision is an excellent source. Revitalizing the priesthood of all believers revitalizes the church, but helping pastors and laity to understand the need for lay, as well as clergy, leadership creates a challenge. The ministry of all Christians is not the typical paradigm of today’s church. It should be and is coming to be, but most churches are not there, yet.

Mentoring

Another component is presently lacking in the pastorate. Few pastors with experience reach out to the newcomers. Some mentoring may take place with those who show promise of success, but those who need help are left to flounder for themselves. Those who need the most help are those who are less likely to seek it. “Many fear the transparency in a mentor or peer relationship and feel that their vulnerability could be used against them or is a sign of weakness” (Stanley and Clinton 20).

In Keith’s case, mentoring might have helped him to assess his strong need for control and his lack of self-esteem. He could have learned some leadership skills that would have served him well. Chip, on the other hand, sought help and is persevering and learning how to lead. Clinton stresses the importance of a mentor:

A mentor is helpful in bringing along a young leader to maturity.... If he [a case from the book] perseveres through the next two or three years, learns from a mentor, and becomes increasingly aware of God’s

processing toward the four ministry tasks, then he will make it past the dropout stage and will be used fruitfully by God. (20)

The entire fault does not lie with the new pastors. Many of those moving up the ladder are too busy to spend the time in a mentoring relationship. They are looking for mentors of their own so their churches will grow. The concept of larger churches is not bad, but the price of not reaching out to the less experienced is high.

Leadership for the twenty first century will require more of a team approach. Pastors can no longer do everything. New pastors must learn to delegate tasks and authority with the tasks. For many pastors delegation threatens their security. They fear not being needed or wanted. Perhaps the other leaders will be better liked or do a better job. What is difficult to accept is that sharing leadership is good. Pastors must be trained to look for leaders who are strong in the area of their own weakness, thereby strengthening and multiplying the ministry. A wider net is cast over the community when pastors and people work together.

A previous discussion concerned the wrong use of power. In fact, not all power is bad, and a good leader learns how to use power effectively. "Power is the basic energy needed to initiate and sustain action, or, to put it another way, the capacity to translate intention into reality and sustain it. Leadership is the wise use of this power" (Anderson 49). Galloway and Maxwell would substitute the word influence for power when used in this way. The wise pastor gains influence with a wise use of power:

A leader who wishes to have long-term influence will need to learn how to implement change. A very important skill involves learning how to relate to superiors, colleagues, and subordinates in organizational structures. Conflict management skills are especially needed in middle and later ministry development. (Clinton 89)

The wise use of power implies a trust relationship. When leaders gain trust, change can be implemented without too much disruption to the church. The wise use of power also implies a caring relationship. When people know that leaders care about them, they are more willing to follow. Jesus modeled the ideal use of power. Today, a wise use of power is called servant leadership, and its foundation is love:

The century about to dawn requires servant leadership. The church everywhere has come under a microscope because of the hypocrisy and corruption. She has really been under the scope of media scrutiny because many of her pastors and evangelists have lacked leadership and integrity. Thus the number one quality that must mark tomorrow's leaders is servanthood. (Miller 17)

Support Covenant Group

After entering the first pastoral position in the church, wise new pastors seek to surround themselves with others who become a support, covenant group:

That match between call and the external form is critical. We need others who have the same or a similar call, and who shape their lives with us around that call; or, at least, we need others committed to listening and interpreting the call within us, helping us shape our lives around it. That communal reality is the hardest to discover, or to create, in our age of breaking or broken containers. (Prevallet 9)

One of the most difficult tasks of new pastors is to keep the call central to life and work. In the midst of the busy-ness of the local church, pastors are tempted to shorten their time spent with God and with the people of the parish. "I can do it myself" becomes the mantra of pastors. Soon, they are left with no support and no leaders in the church on whom they can rely. "In the culture of the United States (this is not universal), other options are always dancing around the fringes of our minds. Plurality affects all aspects of our lives: our principles, our choices, our very *capacity* [original emphasis] to commit ourselves" (11).

The temptations of the world are strong indeed. One can hardly face them alone. The sustaining power of the Holy Spirit and the support of caring friends and colleagues are essential to keeping down the stress that comes with the pastoral life. “We need them to keep us accountable and honest and steady in a culture geared toward constant change. The pull of individualism is so strong that we cannot afford to go it alone. We have to find or create communities ... if we are to be faithful to God’s call” (Prevallet 13). To be helpful, the habit of finding guidance and support must be established early. Mentoring relationships and support groups are essential elements in the life of pastors. Both mentors and support groups can offer a haven in times of stress. They can also offer advice to release the potential within each new pastor. Another benefit comes from helping new pastors avoid the temptations that come along the way. Good support groups will spend time on accountability and spirituality. By focusing on the spiritual life, mentors and support groups emphasize the importance of keeping the call alive. As the nature of the call deepens, new pastors gain security and self-confidence in the new position.

A training program for probationary pastors has been needed for some time. The long-term results remain to be seen. My prayer is that as a result of added training, new pastors are more effective at providing leadership to the church teaching the laity to bring others to Christ and nurturing them to become full disciples of the One who called them from sin and death into eternal life.

Summary

One who is called to serve God in the ordained ministry needs a variety of skills to accomplish that ministry. Basic relational and management skills are essential to the

task. The pastor must know how to confront with love and how to settle conflict with a minimum of hurt. The pastor must also have the tools to administer the church. A church in chaos has difficulty reaching out to others with the message of Christ. Too much time is spent on management. The design of this study addresses these two main issues.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The Problem and Purpose

After serving ten years in ministry and observing many pastors, I noticed two main problems. First, many pastors lack the practical skills necessary to be effective in ministry. Included in the observations were the lack of such skills as teaching, communicating effectively and with correct grammar, administrating, and managing people. Not the least of the problems observed is lack of leadership for the new millennium. Many pastors still operate with the old dictatorial style of leadership, which does not work in the present culture of North America. The new style demands more of a servant team leadership. Servant leadership encompasses several principles:

1. People in the highest positions of authority have the greatest obligation to serve.
2. Servant leadership is rooted in relationship, not coercion.
3. Servant leadership naturally seeks support, not control.
4. Servant leaders shine the spotlight of recognition on those with whom they share leadership.
5. Servant leaders are embarrassed by titles and the trappings of status.
6. Servant leaders' authority is recognized on the basis of their character in Christ, not on the position or office that is held. (Ogden 176-77)

Servant leadership demands healthy self-esteem, which is one of the gifts given by God. Lack of self-esteem destroys any hope of servant leadership. The issue of self-esteem is an important one in the pastors who are struggling.

A second problem observed is a relational one. Those pastors who neglected to establish a support group or a mentor relationship and tried to minister without a support system were some who eventually succumbed to burnout or unresolved conflict. They left the church discouraged and defeated, or they were asked to leave the church, again

discouraged and defeated. They did not grasp the biblical concept of community. Pastors need others who will guide them and hold them accountable. The accountability and guidance helps to prevent situations like Keith's where everyone is hurt. Worse, people are turned away from the very place where they should be accepted and loved.

The purpose of this project was to create a practical in-ministry training program for probationary pastors that would include four dimensions: the mentoring dimension, the retreat dimension, the small group dimension, and the supervision dimension. The training program is mandatory for all probationary members of the Florida conference.

Research Question 1

What leadership and management skills were the probationary pastors lacking upon entering the program? In order to assess progress, the new probationers were surveyed at the beginning of the training program. Specifically, I looked for relational skills, basic management skills, and leadership skills. Along the way, the program was adjusted to account for the specific needs of the probationers as they voiced their needs through written and oral evaluations, usually at the end of the retreats. At the end of the program, we distributed a survey to each participant. The survey gave a list of skills and then asked each participant to check the skills they needed to improve after seminary and upon entering the program (see Appendix B). Each participant was also interviewed by phone to discern the amount of change they experienced as a result of the program. In the future, the first part of this survey should be given to each class at the start of the first retreat.

The retreats were designed to address the lack of practical skills. Each retreat was given a theme, and workshops were planned accordingly. The leaders were recruited

from the current clergy in the Florida Conference. The design team identified and recruited the retreat leaders. The leaders were given the topic and the objectives for the weekend. The lesson plans and learning activities were left to the leaders. The design team planned the schedule to include at least six hours of workshop time. Each retreat also included worship and recreation.

The small group was also designed to address skill improvement. While the retreats were designed for the participants by the design team, the small group topics were immediately relevant to and chosen by the participants. Each month, one member of the small group was asked to prepare a ministry event to be addressed. They were given questions to guide the conversation (see Appendix A). At the end of the session, each participant was asked to consider personal and professional learning needs identified as a result of the day's discussion.

The mentor dimension was designed to focus mainly on relationship skills and spiritual discipline. The issue of call and vocational identity was also a topic in this area. The probationer was encouraged to set goals a year at a time to address the skills most needed.

The program was set up so that every dimension dealt with both skill development and development of an ongoing support system.

Research Question 2

What changes occurred in probationers' management and leadership skills subsequent to the training program? The probationers were given an evaluation to fill out at the end of each retreat (see Appendix C). They were also interviewed at the retreats to allow for more input into the program. The design team used their input and suggestions

in the planning of the next retreat. The participants were interviewed upon completion of the program and asked to evaluate the change they experienced as a result of the program (see Appendix B).

Research Question 3

What methods were most effective in improving the management and leadership skills of probationary pastors? Three of the four dimensions were designed to contribute to developing management and leadership skills. The assumption at the beginning was that the retreats would provide most of the practical training in management and leadership. The themes of each retreat were set to address the main areas of skill development. The mentor and the small group provided what we thought would be backup and reinforcement to the retreats. These two dimensions were designed to be more personalized. The mentor was provided to help with individual needs as well as spiritual needs. The small group was provided to help with real life situations and different ways to handle them. The group was designed to provide a variety of possibilities and ways to discern the best choice.

Research Question 4

What methods were most effective in establishing and ongoing support system for probationary pastors? Again, three of the four dimensions were designed to help create and establish an on-going support system for the probationers. The intention was for the small group and the mentor to share the lead in this area. The retreat was only a short step away. By spending as much time as the probationers spent with each other and with the mentor, a support system was almost guaranteed. We did not know which dimension would be the most effective. We did know that all three would contribute to establishing

support.

Design of the Study

The lack of skills and lack of support kept surfacing over and over. I began to think about what needed to be done. Finally, two things became clear. First, new pastors needed to be trained in the practical aspects of ministry and taught to lead under the new paradigm of leadership. Second, new pastors needed to be exposed to a setting where support relationships could be established and carried through the entire ministry. The two problems could be solved with one solution—a training program during the probationary period for new seminary graduates that taught the needed skills and provided an early opportunity to establish support. The training program was made mandatory for all probationary members of the Florida Conference.

Mentoring Dimension

The mentoring section of the program was designed to help the probationer explore vocational identity, authority, and spirituality. The mentors for the new class of 2000 were selected and assigned in July. The mentors and the probationers were invited to a retreat in November. The mentors received training at this retreat, and the probationers were introduced to the residency program. At the retreat, the mentor and probationer had time to work out the areas of need for the probationer.

Selection of mentors was an important part of the process. We wanted to recruit mentors whom we knew had something to offer to the new pastor. We also knew that we did not know every possible mentor in the conference; therefore, we included a recruitment process in the program. We asked the district superintendents and the chairpersons of the district committees on ministry (DCOM) to each select three

nominees from their districts. From this list, the Probationary Process Committee compiled a list of approved clergy mentors. Some qualifications suggested by the Probationary Process Committee were

- Exhibits deep faith in Christ,
- Listens actively-is able to guide rather than counsel,
- Nurtures others with sensitivity and empathy,
- Communicates understanding and compassion,
- Exhibits security and is able to relate well to other peers,
- Is able to set and keep appropriate boundaries,
- Has a sense of humor and a spirit of joy,
- Is able to maintain confidentiality,
- Is able to commit to a mentoring relationship and the time commitments

related to it,

- Is able to give thoughtful and honest feedback, and
- A full member of the annual conference but not a district superintendent and

preferably not a member of the board of ordained ministry.

Once selected and recruited, the mentor responsibilities included providing support, accountability, and guidance for the probationer. The mentor was expected to meet once a month with the probationer for approximately two hours. The mentor agreed to prepare as necessary for the meetings. We emphasized a collegial relationship, not a hierarchical one. Mentors were supported as necessary by the Probationary Process Committee. The probationer was responsible for contacting the mentor and arranging the visits. The probationer was also responsible for preparing for the visits. The Probationary Process

Committee suggested the following focus areas to be addressed:

Vocational Identity—Prepare a ministry event from your church, and then ask

- How are you living out your call in this event?
- Give evidences of your call in daily life
- How do you perceive that others see, hear, experience, your call affecting their lives?
- What do you identify as your values? Responsibility? Authority?
- Relationships? Skills?
- Where do you struggle in living out your call?

Spiritual and life disciplines

- What are you doing to nourish your vocation and mission?
- What are the public and private dimensions of what you do in nourishment of vocation?
- What is your understanding of spiritual formation?
- What are you reading for your spiritual development?
- With whom do you share your faith development and your sense of call?
- What are barriers to sharing your faith development? What are the bridges?
- With whom do you share your questions, doubts, joys, and concerns?
- How are you meeting your needs as a whole person?
- What would you list as your spiritual disciplines? What disciplines, if any, would you add?

- What disciplines bring you the most comfort/peace/joy?
- Which disciplines frighten you? How might those disciplines change you?

Authority

- What is your authority in your current appointment?
- What is the source of your authority?
- With whom do you exercise authority?
- What are the limitations of your authority?
- As you carry a particular clergy office, what are the discomforts with the authority of that office?
- What are your concerns about your potential to abuse the authority of your office?
- How is your exercise of authority consistent with your call?
- How do your spiritual disciplines aid in your exercise of authority?
- If you are not taking care of yourself, how might you struggle with a boundary in the following areas: sexuality, finances, popularity, power as control?

As mentioned before, the mentor and the probationer were given time at the retreat to set their agenda and goals for the year. They were encouraged to write and sign a covenant to outline those goals and at the end of the year to write a nonevaluative report to the Probationary Process Committee. The report only evaluated the fulfillment of the covenant. A new covenant was made each year.

The mentoring dimension proved to be one of the most difficult aspects of the

program to maintain. Sometimes the mentor would not be able to fulfill the commitment. Sometimes the relationship was not good. Sometimes the probationer did not take the initiative. Appointment season brought other needed changes. Keeping the list of mentors and probationers current was a full-time job. One person had to take it on and keep up with it. Because it was so time consuming, that person was not expected to take on much, if anything, else.

Retreat Dimension

Retreats were an integral part of the program. They were designed to address topics identified as needs for the probationary pastors. They were the continuing education part of the program. We decided on two retreats per year, one in the early fall and one in the spring. Aside from training the mentors and introducing the probationers to the program, the first retreat was designed around the topic of relationships, specifically, relationship to God, to self and family, and to the church. We did not include the important areas of conflict and confrontation, thinking they would be addressed later in either the leadership retreat or the administration retreat. With the intensive time together, the retreats also began the process of developing peer relationships that would be used in the future as support. Included in the first retreat were sessions on boundaries and difficult relationships. The second retreat concentrated on the ministry of administration. The subjects included budgets, taxes, and the boundaries of fiscal management. Included also were time management, effective and productive meetings, and stewardship and capital campaigns. The third retreat focused on worship/proclamation. Topics addressed were weddings, funerals, baptisms, and communion. Also, a discussion of worship styles available and how to discern the best

one for the church was added. A final important topic in this retreat was how to discern when change is needed and how to bring change about without alienating a major portion of the congregation. The fourth retreat focused on making disciples in the parish. Specifically addressed was how to create, conduct, and evaluate a discipleship program in the church. The fifth retreat was on leadership. Topics were conflict management, church systems and dynamics, keys to winning and keeping trust, and how to go from a vision to planning, to leading change in the congregation. The final retreat was one of celebration and looking forward to ordination and many years of ministry. Each retreat included break-the-ice type games, worship, recreation, and reflection time.

The retreat dimension was the least difficult and most fun part of the program. Scheduling leaders, setting dates, and making out retreat schedules took time but was also rewarding. We were able to see the impact the program was making at the retreats. We watched the relationships form. We saw and heard the appreciation for the care and concern we had for them.

We learned early on, actually at the first retreat, that we needed to assign specific tasks to the committee. Some tasks were obvious, like recruiting the leaders. Other tasks were less obvious, like arranging the room and creating a worship space in the meeting room. We came up with a chart to outline all the tasks that needed to be done, the date they needed to be done, and who would be responsible to make sure they were done. We used the chart for each retreat to be sure all the tasks were covered before we arrived at the retreat site (see Appendix D).

Small Group Dimension

The purpose of the small group was to reflect theologically on the practice of

ministry as the probationers' encountered day-to-day duties. The small group was designed to be a place of encouragement and support. Small group time was divided between ministry events to be discussed and preparation of questions for the paperwork for the Board of Ordained Ministry. The ministry event allowed the group the opportunity to reflect on how theology informs and influences the day-to-day occurrences in ministry. The ministry event also allowed for viewing a situation in different ways and choosing the best option. Each small group was convened by a full member of annual conference. The group scheduled one of the probationers to be the presenter for each month. The presenter sent out the topic or the event the week before the meeting so all could be prepared. Ahead of time, the participants read the event to be discussed and considered these questions: What is the theme of the event? What are the issues presented in this event? At the meeting the following questions were suggested to guide the conversation:

- What is your understanding of God's involvement in this event? How is God speaking in this event?
- Where is Christ in this event?
- How do you speak and think theologically about this event?
- How do your actions as clergy convey your theology?
- Are there biblical stories or passages that are pertinent in this event?
- How might this event shape your spiritual growth? The growth of your congregation?

At the end of the session, each participant was asked to consider personal and professional learning needs identified as a result of the day's discussion.

The difficulty here was distance. Some probationers were asked to travel about an

hour to each session. The original intent was to have a small group in each district. The reality was that we did not have enough probationers in each district. We had to arrange the groups the best we could geographically. Not surprisingly, the groups that worked the best were the ones that were the closest in geography. Again, finding leadership for the groups was also difficult. Some would agree to lead a group and then not be able to afford the time necessary. New leaders had to be found. Other groups found meeting difficult because of the distance. We assumed this dimension would almost run itself, but we found out in the retreat evaluations that this was not the case. Constant monitoring and reassigning was necessary. Each appointment season brought changes, too. The same person that arranged the mentors also arranged the small group leaders.

Supervision Dimension

Supervision and feedback were important to the probationary process for the Board of Ordained Ministry. Under the previous system, the Board of Ordained Ministry did not see the candidate often enough to evaluate fitness for ministry fairly. With the supervision dimension, others who were more familiar with the probationer's ministry abilities were able to provide feedback and evaluation. This phase of the program involved the district superintendent and the staff parish of the local church served by the probationer. The district superintendent was asked to complete two site visits per year for each probationer in the district. The foci of the visits were

- Year one: pastoral care and teaching,
- Year two: worship/proclamation of the word and leadership, and
- Year three: worship and any of the above that may have needed

improvement.

The district superintendents wrote yearly evaluations to the Board of Ordained Ministry. The SPRC/PPRC was asked to send evaluations also (see Appendix A). The schedule for these evaluations was December-January of the first year, January-February of the second year, and August-September of the third year.

Subjects

The subjects of this study were sixteen people commissioned to be probationary members of the conference in the year 2000. Included in the first class, but not part of the study were the commissioned members of the class of 1999. Voluntarily, one other person from the class of 1999 joined the first class for a year. All were serving local churches.

Instrumentation

At the end of each retreat, the participants were asked to fill out an evaluation (see Appendix C). Each evaluation included what was learned to that point and what still needed to be learned. We also gave time during each retreat for an oral evaluation. The participants were more likely to be more specific in the oral times. They took more time to expound on what they wrote.

At the end of the program, the participants were interviewed about the change they perceived in themselves (see Appendix B). They were asked to rate the change they experienced on a scale of one to ten with one being little change and ten being great change. The categories and subcategories on the survey were compiled from the literature as needed skills.

To discover if a correlation existed between skill development and length of stay in an appointment, I compared the four previous classes of probationers. Specifically, I

looked for the years served in the first pastorate, if the pastor is still in ministry in the local church, and finally, why those who left are no longer in the ministry. I also looked for the length of time that passed before the probationers became full members of conference.

Variables

The independent variable was the training program. The program itself was flexible enough to address the issues of each new class in the program. Most of the elements were standard for every class, although the leadership and some of the focus changed according to the needs of the class.

The dependent variables of this project were the cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes in the three areas of management, leadership, and support.

A fourth dependent variable is the motivation and receptivity of the probationary pastor. The goal is that the mentors and the small groups address low motivation and raise it to instill in the new pastors a sense of accomplishment and self-achievement. Participation in the training program is mandatory for all commissioned pastors. I tried to assure intrinsic motivation by using encouragement of the mentors. Another source of motivation came from the high dropout rate statistic. Finally, I attempted to make the information covered up-to-date, interesting, and motivating in itself.

An intervening variable is the age and experience of the probationary pastor. More and more, the percentage of second career pastors is rising. Depending on the first career, the curriculum of the program may be repetitive. In this case, those with more experience are able to be peer mentors of those with less experience.

Another intervening variable was the selection of mentors, small group leaders,

and retreat leaders. Quality leaders helped the probationers learn. A small number of leaders did not do their tasks well, affecting the outcome of the study.

Data Collection

At the end of each retreat, the probationers were each given an evaluation form (see Appendix C). Each form asked participants to evaluate the particular retreat but also included information on the program as a whole. After the written evaluations were collected, the probationers were given time to respond orally to the same questions if they so chose. We were able to interpret the written remarks through the oral comments. Their responses were written on a separate composite form. All the evaluations were kept on file until the final survey was taken.

At the end of the program, probationers were sent the ending survey by e-mail.

They were asked to identify

- the skills they needed upon entering the program,
- the changes they experienced as a result of the program,
- the method most effective for acquiring the administrative skills,
- the method most effective for developing an ongoing support system, and
- the topics they wish had been covered in the program.

A follow up phone interview surveyed the participants on the change they experienced as a result of the program.

Data Analysis

All the evaluations were analyzed first. Two identical lists of skills were used to record the data. The first list recorded the skills needed upon entering the program. The second list recorded the changes experienced as a result of the program. I used sixty-four

evaluations—sixteen participants at four retreats. Then, I recorded the surveys on two identical lists of skills. I received fourteen surveys back from the sixteen sent. The results of the surveys supported the results of the evaluations. The follow up phone interviews were compiled to indicate the changes experienced by the participants.

To answer research questions 3 and 4, I relied on the ending survey. The responses were compiled on an identical survey form.

The surveys and the evaluations also produced valuable insights into the program. Some of these were used to help us understand more completely the needs of the probationers. Other comments were used to help in the understanding of why a skill learned was beneficial and why a support gained was valuable. The data provided real examples of the findings in the literature.

This concludes the creation and the implementation portion of the study. The next chapter examines the findings and results.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to create and evaluate a practical in-ministry training program for new pastors. Over a course of three years, the probationary class of 2000 in the Florida Conference has been exposed to an in-ministry training program to help with needed practical and relational skills

Profile of Subjects

The subjects of this study were chosen by the Board of Ordained Ministry through the regular process of approving those ready for commissioning as probationary members of the conference. All sixteen members of the probationary class of 2000 were required by the Board of Ordained Ministry to participate in the program. The class included five women and eleven men. Their ages ranged from 25 to 46. Four were in their twenties. Eight were in their thirties; four were in their forties (see Table 4.1). Most were second career. They represented eleven of fourteen districts. All were serving local churches. Half were serving as associate pastors, and half were senior pastors.

Table 4.1. Profile of Subjects

Women	5
Men	11
Age 20-29	4
Age 30-39	8
Age 40-49	4

Five of eight members of the class of 1999 also participated in the program. Their participation was voluntary. Four were commissioned and under the 1996 Book of

Discipline. One was an ordained deacon under the 1992 Book of Discipline. These are mentioned in the study because their presence in the program affects the comparison years' statistics mentioned in this chapter.

The remainder of this chapter addresses the four research questions of this study.

Survey Results

Table 4.2 represents the results of the survey taken after the program ended. I sent sixteen surveys and received fourteen back.

Table 4.2. Post-Seminary Skills Needed (N=14)

Skills	# of Participants who needed this skill	% of participants who needed this skill
Interpersonal Relationships		
Problem Solving	4	29
Conflict Management	9	64
Confrontational Skills	6	42
Personal self-care and time management	7	50
Personal relationship to God through regular discipline	2	14
Developing relationships with peers	2	14
Developing relationships with parishioners	2	14
Administration Management		
Denominational forms and responsibilities	9	64
Reading financial statements	4	29
Planning a budget	7	50
Choosing and implementing a stewardship drive	6	42
Organizing and conducting meetings that matter	6	42
Effective delegation	7	50
Supervising staff	7	50
Hiring and Firing Staff	4	29
Worship		
Weddings, funerals, special services	3	21
Starting new services	3	21
Types of worship, finding the best for the congregation	3	21
Creative, relative worship	6	42
Worship resources	4	29
Ministry Development/Discipleship		
Resources for ministry	2	14
How to discover what is needed in your church	4	29
How to start new programs and small groups	4	29
Finding and training teachers and small group leaders	11	78

Leadership

Creating and sustaining a vision	6	42
Implementing change	10	71
Developing trust with congregation and leaders	2	14
Lay leader section and development	7	50

The Missing Skills

What leadership and management skills were the probationary pastors lacking upon entering the program? Each of the subjects was given a list of twenty-eight skills needed in the local church. They were asked to identify those skills they believed they still needed to address after seminary and upon entering the local church ministry (see Appendix B). The skills were divided into five areas: interpersonal relationships, administration/management, worship, ministry development/discipleship, and leadership. Some of the needs were discerned from the evaluations distributed at the end of each retreat. The first evaluation asked, "What do you wish you had been told before you began your appointment?" and "Now that you are several months into your appointment, what surprises have you had?" On subsequent retreat evaluations we asked, "What has been left out of this retreat that needed be addressed?" and "Where do we need to improve the process to make it more helpful to you?" (see Appendix C).

The least needed skills were in the area of worship, which is not surprising since worship is well covered in seminary. The subjects needed more information, however, on creative worship, children in worship, and how to do traditional worship in nontraditional ways. This last area was a request from those serving small/rural churches accustomed to traditional worship.

One of the most needed skill areas was interpersonal relationships. The most needed interpersonal skills were those dealing with conflict and confrontation. The

second skill named was personal care and time management. One pastor commented, “I was surprised at the social isolation the pastor is subjected to.” Although not a need perceived going in, the need for supportive relationships was understood at the end. One probationer wrote in an evaluation from one of the retreats, “The process has been helpful with support and encouragement.” Another needed the time with the mentor to “process some personal and church issues that came up.”

Under the area of administration/management, skills dealing with budgets, denominational forms and requirements, and stewardship campaigns received the highest number of responses. One probationer wrote, “I need to know how to be a CEO ... administration was not a focus at my seminary.” Another wrote, “The more practical you can be, the better.” The probationers wanted to learn how to choose and train lay leaders. Those in larger churches were thinking about hiring and supervising staff. Those in smaller churches were more concerned with how to manage the whole picture.

Ministry development/discipleship concerns included starting new programs, especially small groups. One prevalent concern was how to find and train small group leaders. Pastors wanted to know how to discover the needs within the local church. For example, they wanted to know how to tell (1) if they should they focus on basic Christian doctrine, or deepening spirituality, (2) if the church is full of new or mature Christians, or (3) how to design a new member training class.

Implementing change was the greatest need in the final area of leadership. The participants wanted to know (1) how to make changes without alienating the congregation, (2) how to choose and develop the lay leadership in the congregation, (3) how to recognize the gifts of the people and help them to serve in their area of giftedness,

and (4) how to create and sustain a vision. Developing trust with the people was not a priority. They had this skill upon entering the program.

Changes Observed

What changes occurred in probationers' management and leadership skills subsequent to the training program? The greatest change showed in the leadership skills area.

Table 4.3. Overall Change

Category	Individual Responses										Avg
Interpersonal Relationships	4	3	3	6	4	6	5	7	7	9	5.4
Administration/Management	2	8	1	4	6	8	3	5	7	6	5
Worship	2	5	2	5	7	4	8	4	3	7	4.7
Ministry	6	7	2	7	8	7	8	8	5	7	6.5
Development/Discipleship											
Leadership	6	7	4	9	6	6	10	9	8	8	7.3
Individual average overall	4	6	2.4	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.8	6.6	6	7.4

Leadership was not an area of felt need for the probationers while they were in the program according to the retreat evaluations. The surveys taken after the end of the program, however, indicate otherwise. The importance of an in-ministry program shows here. Those new to a career do not always know ahead of time what they need. The program allows and encourages the new clergy to seek out help and to find answers as new situations arise. The small group and the mentor were of special help here. One probationer commented, "The small group mentoring was important. It gave me more resources and self confidence to handle ministry situations."

The least amount of change, according to the participants, was in the area of worship. Several responded that they were well trained in worship in seminary. In this

area, the training supplemented the seminary education. The participants appreciated being exposed to diverse types of worship. They appreciated hearing from a panel of pastors who reflected the different types of worship in our conference.

Interpersonal Relationships

For the design team, the interpersonal relationships area was the most observable. We enjoyed watching as the participants gathered together to play and to talk. We enjoyed watching them reunite at places outside the program like annual conference. We could readily observe the bonds that were forming. At each retreat, the probationers gathered as if they were at a reunion. The small groups encouraged support through case studies. The mentors offered support in difficult times and encouragement in good times. Each of the probationers experienced the importance and value of supportive relationships.

Table 4.4. Interpersonal Relationships

Skills	Individual Responses										Avg.
Problem solving	4	1	7	6	6	7	8	5	8	8	5.78
Conflict management	5	1	4	6	5	10	8	5	7	7	5.67
Confrontational skills	5	1	5	4	3	5	6	7	7	7	4.78
Personal self-care and time management	8	1	8	5	8	10	6	9	8	8	7.00
Personal relationship to God	8	1	6	6	6	10	7	9	8	8	6.78
Developing relationships with peers	6	6	8	7	7	10	9	9	10	10	8.00
Developing relationships with parishioners	3	3	8	2	3	8	6	4	7	7	4.89
Individual average this category	5.6	2	6.57	5.14	5.43	8.57	7.14	6.86	7.86		

One probationer noted, "I was in a difficult appointment and the program allowed me to have a sounding board and support. I heard other stories and learned about the diversity of situations. The connection with other pastors was an important resource." Even though problem solving and conflict management were not part of the retreat setting, they were a part of the small groups and the mentoring. Even the probationer, who was not changed much through this area, was changed in peer relationships. Since developing supportive relationships was one of the goals of the program, we were successful here.

We were also successful in teaching the probationers the importance of time management and personal self-care. The rate of change in this area was second only to developing peer relationships.

Training in confrontational skills, conflict management, and problem solving was not part of the retreat on relationships. Nevertheless, it was meant to be addressed in the small group and mentor phases of the program. From the responses, we need to be more intentional in these areas. The rate of change varied from one to ten, indicating that some groups and mentors spent more time on conflict issues than others. In future programs, conflict management and confrontational skills need to be a part of the retreat on relationships.

Administration/Management

The results in administration/management were interesting. Table 4.5 shows an average amount of change, a five on a one to ten scale. The individual subheadings tell a different story. Although skills in the administrative tasks of budgeting, assessing church

financial health, and filling out denominational forms were lacking, the respondents clearly indicated that the program did not give much help in this area.

Table 4.5. Administration /Management

Denominational forms and responsibilities	7	1	8	2	7	1	2	1	3	3.56
Reading financial statements	5	1	4	1	2	1	2	1	3	2.50
Planning a budget	6	1	4	1	2	1	3	1	3	2.44
Choosing and implementing a stewardship drive	7	1	4	1	6	1	4	1	3	3.11
Organizing and conducting meetings that matter	7	4	5	1	5	3	5	3	5	4.22
Effective delegation	6	1	7	1	3	2	7	3	5	3.89
Supervising staff	7	1	6	1	5	1	6	3	4	3.78
Hiring and firing staff	4	1	2	1	3	1	3	3	4	2.44
Total individual average	6.13	1.38	5	1.13	4.13	1.38	4	2	3.8	

While doing the survey, I asked the probationers if they would have appreciated this type of training. One responded, “Even with an undergraduate degree in business, church administration is different and these areas would have been very helpful to me.” Another answered, “I felt ill-prepared for denominational paperwork and finance and budget. I can read leadership books, but the technical aspects are lacking and needed.” Still another told how he spends about sixty percent of his time in this area and it was not covered in seminary. He would like to see more administrative training added to the program. One person rated this area as the highest area for change. When asked to tell why, he said that he had the most room to grow here and that the program especially impacted how he does committee work and the conference paperwork. The program was especially important as he plans and sets goals. Goal setting and planning were a part of the retreat.

Worship

Worship showed the least amount of change in the probationers. They reported that they felt adequately prepared in seminary (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6. Worship

Weddings, funerals, special services	8	1	2	3	6	1	2	1	6	3.33
Starting new services	5	1	5	1	7	8	4	3	7	4.56
Types of worship discerning what is best for your congregation	7	4	5	2	6	8	8	5	7	5.78
Creative, relevant worship	8	5	7	2	7	8	8	5	8	6.44
Worship resources	8	2	7	2	5	8	10	7	7	6.22
Individual average this category	7.2	2.6	5.2	2	6.2	6.6	6.4	4.2	7	

Even so, they did appreciate the weekend on worship. They liked the panel of clergy who represented differing types of worship in both small and large congregations. One area of high interest in this class was traditional worship done well, since many were in small, traditional appointments. The program did well on providing the probationers with resources for worship and teaching them about creative, relevant worship.

Ministry Development/Discipleship

The ministry/discipleship retreat provided several types of opportunities for the probationers. Small group discussions, excellent presenters, informal chats, and a resource table all contributed to a high rate of change in resources for ministry (See Table 4.7). One probationer commented, "I was able to learn the more practical aspects of ministry. I was able to learn about real life ministry in the parish." One important area we did not do well on was finding and training teachers and small group leaders. Finding well qualified leaders, especially in small churches, can be a challenge. Learning how to

train leadership is critical for the leader who wants to develop a healthy congregation.

Future retreats should do a better job here.

Table 4.7. Ministry Development/Discipleship

Resources for ministry How to discover what is needed in your church (small groups, spiritual development, basic Christian beliefs, new member classes, etc)	9	5	9	7	7	6	9	6	7	7.22
How to start new programs and small groups	7	4	7	6	4	5	7	5	5	5.56
Finding and training teachers and small group leaders	4	5	8	2	6	4	5	3	5	4.67
Individual average this category	6.5	5	7.8	5.3	5.5	5	7	4.8	5.5	

Leadership

The leadership area and the discipleship area both shared the same weakness. In both cases, selecting and training leaders received the smallest amount of change in the probationers (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8. Leadership

Creating and sustaining a vision	8	2	8	4	7	8	10	5	6	6.44
Implementing change	7	2	8	2	5	8	9	5	6	5.78
Developing trust with the congregation and its leaders	5	4	8	2	7	10	7	5	7	6.11
Lay leader selection and development	4	7	5	1	4	4	7	3	3	4.22
Individual average this category	6	3.8	7.3	2.3	5.8	7.5	8.3	4.5	5.5	

Overall, the leadership area showed the greatest amount of change according to the probationers. Since the emphasis was on leadership, this result makes sense. Another reason for the success in this area was the exposure of the probationers to many different leaders and leadership styles. One probationer expressed the results clearly:

I was able to see a variety of leadership strategies. Being exposed to the different strategies gave me the courage to try new things and not be afraid of failure. I also have more courage to delegate. Finally, I pay more attention to not burning out.

Others found new ways to do committee work. Still others learned to plan strategically and set goals, both personal and professional.

The Best Method for Skill Development

What methods were most effective in improving the management and leadership skills of probationary pastors? Of the three learning dimensions, small group was chosen by half the probationers as the most effective in developing the needed skills. The mentor dimension was second. The retreat dimension was the lowest. These results are surprising since the retreat dimension was set up as the primary method to address skill development. An emphasis of small group was skill development but not to the extent of the retreat.

I also asked the participants if there was any lasting impact on their skill development as a result of the program. Only one was hesitant. For him, a greater emphasis on administration/management would have had a greater lasting impact. The rest were definite. Some other comments follow:

- Yes, there are several administrative techniques I learned that I use both in life and work.
- Yes, to continue on the scale, I would say a seven or an eight. I use this stuff all the time.
- Yes, in the worship area and the leadership area.

- Yes, in different insights, resources, balance in self-care, and various ways to do ministry. Key areas were addressed
- Yes, in personal spiritual development and leadership and guidance. Not much in administration. I needed more of that.

The Best Method for Developing Support Relationships

What methods were most effective in establishing an ongoing support system for probationary pastors? Overwhelmingly, the respondents answered small group. The intent of the small group was to build relationships. The frequency of meetings and the topics were intended to establish a firm foundation for support. Building relationships was a part of every dimension in the program, but the main emphasis was in the small group. Mentors and retreats received an equal response.

Was there any lasting impact in the relationship skills of the probationer? Again, I received an overwhelming yes. Without exception, the responses were positive:

- Yes, with peers and the rest of the class. We still meet at meetings, etc.
- Yes, with peers, especially
- Yes, with congregations. I learned how heal troubled congregations. I learned a lot about healing relationships.
- Yes, the program helped with peer groups, support, and accountability. I came away with the importance of accountability and peer groups.
- Yes, in developing relationships with peers. It was helpful to learn to network.
- Yes, small groups gave time to talk. My favorite part was sharing and hearing what was happening with the others.
- Yes, definitely. As a result of this program, I got started with a covenant group.

Pastoral Tenure and Ordination

One original concern that led to this study was the number of moves a beginning pastor makes. When one is able to stay longer in an appointment, one can be more effective in leadership and change. One contributing factor to frequency of moves is the

lack of administrative and interpersonal skills. If these are improved, then the conclusion could be made that the frequency of moves would be lowered. In the classes of 1996, 1997, and 1998, the percentage of pastors who stayed in the first appointment three years or longer was 50 percent or less. In the class included in the study, the percentage reached 69 (n=11). The class of 1999 was 66 percent, but the number here may be affected by the fact that half of that class accepted an invitation to participate in the program (see Table 4.2).

Table 4.9. Pastoral Tenure and Ordination

Class year	3 yrs or more in first appointment	Ordained within minimum years
2000	69%	37%
1999	66%	50%
1998	47%	25%
1997	40%	0%
1996	50%	23%

An unanticipated bonus was observed in the path to ordination. With the constant support and encouragement of the various elements of the program, the probationers were more focused on finishing the requirements for ordination. In the first three years of the comparison classes, the percentage of those ordained within three years was 25 percent or less. In the class of 2000, the percentage was 37 percent. Again the class of 1999 was affected by the study. A full 50 percent of that class was ordained in less than three years with 50 percent of that class participating in the program.

Major Findings

Over all, the probationers all responded with gratitude for the program. They appreciated the concern of the Board of Ordained Ministry. They appreciated the time

invested in them and in their preparation for ministry. One respondent said, “When I have been asked by other pastors about the program, their response was, ‘I wish that had been in place when I went through.’” The findings of the program were encouraging. They supported the original premise that a practical training program for new pastors was needed.

1. The program helped to establish supportive peer relationships.
2. The program supported the premise that basic relationship skills dealing with difficult relationships, conflict, and confrontation are needed by the probationers.
3. The program supported the premise that basic administrative skills are needed by the probationers.
4. Small groups appear to be the most effective method in both relationship building and skill development.
5. The program helped the board of ministry keep close contact with the probationer, which helped in the ordination process.

Finally, the best comment is saved to the last. While doing the phone survey, I asked one more question. Is there anything else you would like to say? One answered, “I cannot imagine not making this a part of everyone’s ordination experience. The things covered were completely different from seminary, and well needed.”

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The birth of this project came from observing the struggles faced by pastors as they attempted to minister without the proper skills and/or without a solid foundation of call. Watching the destruction of the spirit in the pastor and the hard feelings left in the churches they served saddened me. A better way had to be found. Using the probationary period as an in-ministry training time seemed to be a perfect solution. I still believe it is. One probationer said, “The process prepares us to serve better our current appointment by being better informed, paced, and accountable.” No evaluation opportunity passed without most of the probationers commenting on the positive support created by the small groups, the fellowship at retreats, and the mentors. Another respondent wrote, “I enjoy the retreats in getting away and to focus on continuing education, practical ministry that was not taught in school.” After the fourth retreat, another probationer in responding to how the process had been helpful wrote about “feeling that board [BOM] is for us, not against us.” Throughout the program, the comments were most positive on the sections that offered the most practical types of training. Keeping a program like this going is difficult, especially when those in charge are themselves serving churches full-time. Still, the stakes are high. Most mainline churches are either in maintenance or decline. Pastors need to be especially skilled and creative to lead churches out of this declining trend. This program helps them to lead with skill and support.

Major Findings

The most observable result of this study was the formation of supportive peer relationships. Each time we met for retreat, we watched as the probationers reunited and

gathered to share and play together. We could see them growing close as a group. We could overhear conversations of support, sympathy, and even celebration. The probationers had a safe place to talk out frustrations and issues that arose in the local churches. The advantages of small group interaction became clear to Wesley many years ago:

It can scarce be conceived what advantages have been reaped from this little prudential regulation. Many now happily experienced that Christian fellowship of which they had not so much as an idea before. They began to “bear one another’s burdens,” and naturally to “care for each other.” (8: 254)

The evaluations and evaluative comments made to us by the probationers supported our observations. This part of the program appeared to be the most meaningful for the probationers.

Jesus knew the value of peer relationships. He gathered around him a group of disciples who lived together, learned together, and loved together. When they were well enough prepared, he sent them out on a mission. Then he gathered them together again to process what they had done and learned. The real value of the relationship became apparent at the crucifixion of Jesus. When the chips were down, this group of disciples leaned on one another and drew strength from one another. They gathered in the upper room praying for guidance. The presence of the living Christ was revealed to them, and they received the power of the Holy Spirit to spread the Good News.

The first finding of this study agrees with Prevallet:

We need others who have the same or a similar call, and who shape their lives with us around that call; or at least, we need others committed to listening and interpreting the call within us, helping us to shape our lives around it. The communal reality is the hardest to discover, or to create, in our age of breaking or broken containers. (9)

The stresses and heavy schedule of the pastor often keep the pastor from taking time to seek out a small group. The probationers in this study learned to take the time to meet with their small group. Prevallet continues, “We need them to keep us accountable and honest and steady in a culture geared toward constant change. The pull of individualism is so strong that we cannot afford to go it alone” (13). Anytime denominational leadership can help to foster a support group for pastors, they are helping both the pastors and the churches they serve. The “Lone Ranger” syndrome experienced by Keith may disappear.

The results of the program supported the premise that relationship skills, specifically conflict and confrontation skills, are needed by probationers:

There is yet another branch of knowledge highly necessary for a Clergyman, and that is knowledge of the world; a knowledge of men, of their maxims, tempers, and manners, such as they occur in real life. Without this he will be liable to receive much hurt, and capable of doing little good; as he will not know, either how to deal with men according to the vast variety of their characters, or to preserve himself from those who almost in every place lie in wait to deceive. (Wesley 10: 484)

The design team did not fully understand the need for basic skills; therefore, the retreat on relationships focused more on developing and keeping good relationships. Some of the small groups worked on difficult relationship skills, but others did not. Dealing with conflict and confrontation is part of every local church at one time or another. Having the skills to deal with conflict and confrontation in a loving way is essential for pastors.

All through the Bible, the need for skills in confrontation and conflict is evident. Moses had to confront Pharaoh and then deal with difficult people for forty years in the wilderness. The prophets had to confront the king and/or the people. Jesus had to Confront the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Paul had to deal with conflict and

confrontation in every church he started and even in those he did not start.

Each person in a church has a different set of expectations of the pastor, setting up potential conflict. Add in the tendency of the need for power, and the situation becomes even more difficult. The probationers rightly discerned their need for these skills. Perhaps they had already experienced some conflict. Perhaps they saw some need for confrontation. The literature also confirms a high need in this area. Clinton says, “In order to influence and motivate people, a leader must learn how to relate to people effectively” (101). Maxwell agrees with the need for people skills:

Leadership has less to do with position than it does with disposition. The disposition of a leader is important because it will influence the way the followers think and feel. Great leaders understand that the right attitude will set the right atmosphere, which enables the right responses from others. (Developing the Leader within You 98)

In the future, confrontation and conflict skills need to be an intentional part of the relationship retreat.

The program upheld the premise that basic administrative/management skills are needed by probationers. One retreat was scheduled for this purpose, but the majority of the design team wanted to focus more on leadership, thinking that a retreat on these basic skills was wasted time; however, these are the very skills needed in every local church:

And as to acquired endowments, can he take one step aright, without first a competent share of knowledge? A knowledge, First, of his own office; of the high trust in which he stands, the important work to which he is called? Is there any hope that a man should discharge his office well, if he knows not what it is? That he should acquit himself faithfully of a trust, the very nature whereof he does not understand? Nay, if he knows not the work God has given him to do, he cannot finish it. (Wesley 10: 482)

The evaluations and the surveys from the probationers show that the time would have been well spent.

Sometimes, when arriving at a new appointment, the pastor is overwhelmed at the immensity of the tasks waiting to be done. When the pastor is new to ministry and unfamiliar with denominational forms and responsibilities, then the task looms even larger. Soon, the pastor feels like Jeremiah whose task was so immense that it could only be accomplished by relying on God. Were it not for Jeremiah's sense of call and regular prayer life, he probably would not have remained faithful to the task or to God.

Having the basic administrative/management skills is crucial to successful leadership. "Courses in church finance, time management, group dynamics, counseling, and numerous other practical subjects would help equip pastors for their work" (Evers, Rush, and Berdrow 42). According to Frederick T. Evers, James C. Rush, and Iris Berdrow, these skills form the foundation for leadership:

Skills are not possessed in isolation; they are associated with knowledge and values and each other, and they reinforce one another. Being able to plan a meeting supports one's ability to coordinate the meeting. Finally, skills develop sequentially; basic skills must be learned before more advanced skills. (25)

The administrative/management retreat must include these basic skills and should come at the very beginning of the program.

The original plan for the program included two main goals, relationship building and skill development. The small groups and the mentor were designed to be the primary source for relationship building. The retreats were designed to be the primary source for skill development. From the surveys, the small group was the most effective method for both. The small group was how Jesus trained his disciples. The small group is how Wesley trained his preachers, class leaders, and classes. I do still believe that if the

retreats were redesigned to include conflict and confrontation and basic management, they would become the primary source for skill development.

Prior to this program, the probationers were less monitored. After leaving the district committee on ministry, the probationers were no longer with a mentor and left to their own initiative to keep in contact with the board of ministry and finish the application for ordination. With the regular interaction with the probationers and the regular reports from the district superintendents and the staff-parish committees, the Board of Ordained Ministry was able to know the candidates for ordination better than before. Conversely, the probationers were able to interact with the Board of Ordained Ministry and see them as allies instead of adversaries. As the people said to Wesley, “But we want you to talk with us often, to direct and quicken us in our way, to give us the advices which you well know we need, and to pray with us, as well as for us” (8: 250). The result was a higher percentage of ordinations at the three year mark. Again the probationer was able to experience the benefit of a support system that offered a safe place to grow and to learn.

Monitored experiential learning followed by assessment is not a new idea. Annanias worked with Paul for three years before he was taken to the council and given the blessing of the church to minister. Even after he was sent out, when he was not teaching as they thought he ought, he was summoned to the council to explain his actions. Accountability in ministry is rooted in the United Methodist tradition:

Do I understand my own office? Have I deeply considered before God the character which I bear? What is it to be an Ambassador of Christ, and Envoy from the King of heaven? And do I know and feel what is implied in “watching over the souls” of men “as he that must give account”? (Wesley 10: 491)

The higher rate of ordinations within the probationary period confirms the need for accountability and support:

We need them to keep us accountable and honest and steady in a culture geared toward constant change. The pull of individualism is so strong that we cannot afford to go it alone. We have to find or create communities ... if we are to be faithful to God's call. (Prevallet 13)

The Board of Ordained Ministry is taking the initiative to be more watchful and to know the candidate they are interviewing and assessing for ministry better. They are involving the local church and the district superintendent in the evaluation process. The process is not only more thorough; it is also more caring and compassionate.

Limitations of the Study

Several difficulties arose during the planning and the implementation of the study. First, mentors were difficult to find and assign. With the initial excitement over the program, we had little problem. Then, some were not able to continue because of time; others because of moves. Others were not really ready to be mentors. Just when we thought we had all the assignments made, one of the probationers would need a new assignment. The recruiting and maintenance was time consuming. Perhaps in the future, each probationer should choose his or her own mentor. In order to keep accountability, yearly reports would still be filed with the Board of Ordained Ministry.

The design committee was mostly from the Board of Ordained Ministry. Since the program needed the support of the Board of Ordained Ministry to enforce participation of the probationers, the board's decisions took priority. Two retreats were especially affected by a difference in emphasis. The retreat on administration/management turned into one focusing more on leadership and less on administrative skills, as it was designed. The retreat on relationships did not deal as much as it should have on confrontation and

conflict skills. The observed changes may have been different if these two retreats had a more basic focus. Over and over the probationers told us they needed basic management skills. The committee did not hear them. They thought management skills to be too basic, too old fashioned. The literature reinforces the need for basic skills:

Knowledge and skills within a discipline and values are important aspects of the portfolio that a college graduate brings to the workplace, but generic skills provide the platform for learning, thinking, and creating.... Generic skills ... do not become obsolete; they evolve and expand. (Evers, Rush, and Berdrow 27)

Even though the small group was the most effective method for building relationships and acquiring skills, they, too, were difficult to maintain. The geographical distances some had to travel became tedious and time consuming. Sometimes they had to be reassigned yearly, which affects the building of trust. The probationers did adjust well, but the situation was not ideal. Perhaps probationers could create a small group of pastors within the communities they serve. A possible benefit to creating a small group would be to establish a habit of creating support wherever the pastors are assigned.

Recommendations

For those who have completed the program, I would recommend a lifetime of continued learning. Only the pastors themselves are responsible for skills not mastered. Change is inevitable and comes quickly. Pastors must be prepared to minister in a changing world. They must keep their skills and their methods updated to reach people for Christ.

For the Florida Conference, I would recommend the inclusion of the conflict and confrontation skills in the relationship retreat. I would also recommend keeping the focus on the administration/management skills in the program. They may seem to be too basic

to some, but the results indicate their need. I would also like to see a similar program in place for those pastors who have been forced to move. They need a place to seek answers to why they moved. They also need to deal with the emotions involved in a forced move. Perhaps with such a program, Chip would have been helped sooner in his career and would not still be struggling.

For those who may want to duplicate this study, I would recommend a director who would have a great deal of time to organize all the pieces, especially the mentors and small groups. I would also encourage striving for quality in the leaders for the retreat as well as the mentors and small group leaders. I would finally recommend reorganizing the order of the retreat themes. The first retreat should be the administrative management retreat because in the United Methodist system, the denominational paperwork is due in the fall and at the end of the year. The second retreat should be the relationship retreat, including confrontation and conflict skills. The third should be leadership, including identifying the need for and the process to make changes. The fourth retreat should focus on discipleship, including starting a small group ministry and identifying and recruiting small group leaders. The fifth retreat should focus on worship, including all types of worship, especially doing traditional worship well. The worship retreat should also include team planning and take into consideration small church needs. The final retreat theme should be personal goal setting and celebration.

Postscript

The idea that pastors need basic skill training is not new. Wesley writes to clergy on the need for continuing education:

Are we such as we are sensible we should be, Secondly, with regard to acquired endowments? Here the matter (suppose we have common

understanding) lies more directly within our own power. But under this, as well as the following heads, methinks I would not consider at all, how many or how few are either excellent or defective. I would only desire every person who reads this to apply it to himself. Certainly some one in the nation is defective. Am I not the man? (10: 490)

In this new century, many mainline denominations find their churches in maintenance or decline. Churches need leaders who are educated then trained to offer Christ with relevance and truth. The challenge before the Church is great, indeed. Unless the Church is able to address the issues of burnout and dropout, able leadership will be a problem. Already, many of the talented leaders are leaving the local church ministry. New programs and new methods will be of little use unless the Church is able to help pastors like Keith and Chip who are ministering with a lot of pain and hurt. My prayer is that all pastors and denominational leaders will take seriously the challenge to help and support one another in this great task given to us by Jesus:

All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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. 28:18b-20, NIV)

APPENDIX A

In-Ministry Training Program

**The
Probationary Member
Training Program
Of
The Florida Annual Conference,
The United Methodist Church**

Welcome!

You are beginning a new phase of your journey toward fulfilling God's call upon your life. Academically, you have completed the requirements for ordination. Practically, we are all on a journey of lifelong learning.

This is perhaps the most exciting journey you have been on. However, this is also a perilous journey. Statistics show that five years from now, half of you beginning this phase of the journey will no longer be in local church ministry. Your conference Board of Ordained Ministry and your cabinet do not believe this has to be the case. They would like to see you be effective in your ministry. They have worked together to create this program for you to increase your chances of effectiveness in ministry. We are convinced that your full participation in this program will help make you a better minister, who will benefit the churches you serve and the people you will influence.

This program is based on the conviction that the church of the 21st century needs strong, dynamic servant leaders. To this end, the program focuses on leadership, administrative skills, and personal spirituality. Training in these areas will take place in the arenas of mentoring, supervision, and small covenant groups. By-products of the program include a strong support system for you and an increased awareness of the benefits of a connectional system. We expect these next three years will create habits of study, reflection, and support that will sustain you through a lifetime of service to Christ and the Church.

Let's begin the process!

Your design team,

Donna Bartleson, Chairperson

David Dodge

Bob Bushong

Carmen Johns

Tim Carson

Dave Williamson

Mike Loomis

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DIMENSIONS OF THE PROBATIONARY PERIOD

As a probationer, you will experience four dimensions of the probationary process. Each dimension is designed to help you increase your effectiveness in ministry.

A. The Retreat Dimension

A good leader is a learning leader. Six times in the next three years, you will be participating in a retreat. You will be learning some important lessons in administration and leadership. These retreats are designed to pick up where your seminary training left off. Each retreat will be two days, including travel.

B. The Mentoring Dimension

With a clergy mentor assigned to you by the Board of Ordained Ministry, you will have the opportunity to build a relationship in which you will explore your vocational identity, your authority, and your spiritual life. You and your mentor will outline your sessions together at the first retreat. Following the first retreat, you and your mentor will meet together once a month. The total time involved, including preparation for the sessions will be approximately 30-35 hours per year.

C. The Small Group Dimension

You will meet in a small group in your district with other probationary ministers once a month for the purpose of reflecting theologically on the practice of ministry as you encounter your day-to-day duties. Your group will be a place to receive encouragement for the practice and work of ministry as a servant leader. The total time involved in this section will be approximately 24 hours per year.

D. The Supervision Dimension

Supervision and feedback are important to the probationary process. In this phase of the program, you will be working closely with your district superintendent, your SPRC/PPRC, and the board of ordained ministry. Each year, the board will review your paperwork. In addition, your district superintendent will make two site visits each year to your assigned place of service. He/she will send a yearly evaluative report to the board.

Your full participation in all dimensions of this program is required for continuation as a probationer and ordination and election to full membership. An appointment change in the first two years of the process may result in the probationer beginning the process again. A change in the third year may occur if the change adds to the growth of the probationer.

Through the process, there will be opportunities for you to give us feedback on how well the program is meeting your needs. You need not wait for the formal times, however. At any time, you may give feedback to the process committee.

**The
Retreat
Dimension**

THE RETREAT DIMENSION

A good leader is a lifelong learner. Part of the probationary process, therefore, includes continuing education. This continuing education will be spread out over a total of six retreats. There will be two retreats each year: one in late summer (the last of August or the beginning of September) and one in February. The retreats will include the practical continuing education you will need to help you be effective in your ministry.

The first retreat will center on relationships, with God and with each other. A study conducted by the United Methodist seminaries entitled AGENDA 21 reveals, "Training in relational skills is a high priority for the local church. Among the relational skills pastors must have is the capacity to listen as they lead the congregation to set a vision for the future" (page 12). The report continues, "A district superintendent reports that 99.9 percent of the problems that clergy have with laity are over interpersonal relationships. In his years as district superintendent he has received few complaints about the theological positions of clergy but many about their people skills." Good relationships are crucial to an effective ministry. At the retreat, you will meet with your mentor and together you will work on your covenant for the year. A workshop on relationship boundaries will be held along with a workshop on dealing with difficult relationships. A section of every retreat will focus on spirituality and how we can maintain good devotional habits in the midst of the everyday busy-ness of the minister.

The second retreat will concentrate on finances and administration. You will learn about budgets, taxes, and the boundaries of fiscal management. Other issues addressed will be time management, effective and productive meetings, and stewardship and capital campaigns.

The third retreat will center on worship/proclamation. Included in the weekend will be some how to's on weddings, funerals, baptisms, and communion. Also included will be a discussion of the many worship styles now available and how to discern which one best suits the church to which you are assigned. When a new service or a major change in the church is needed, then how do we bring about change without alienating a major portion of the congregation?

The fourth retreat will concentrate on making disciples in the parish. You will learn how to create, conduct, and evaluate a discipleship program in the church. The church of the 21st century increasingly calls for the recovery of the teaching ministry of clergy. With a good, strong biblical foundation, the laity becomes fully engaged with their ministry responsibilities. If the clergy are not teachers and equippers of the laity, then much of their ministry effort will be in vain.

The fifth retreat will focus on leadership. We will concentrate on topics such as conflict management, church systems and dynamics, keys to winning and keeping trust, and how to go from a vision to planning to leading change in a congregation. The church of the 21st century will accept nothing less than strong, competent leaders. If the minister is

ineffective, the congregation will not be tolerant. They will simply go elsewhere, or worse, they will stay and cause conflict and hurt, or worse yet, they will go nowhere.

The last retreat will be one of evaluation of this probationary process and celebration with your mentor and all your peers who have gone through the process with you. You have made it through the process and we will celebrate your success. Come enjoy time with our bishop as he/she speaks to you about your pending ordination.

**The
Mentoring
Dimension**

THE MENTORING DIMENSION

Mentoring is an old established method of education. The type of mentoring we will be using in this program is collegial. The relationship allows for intense reflection about ministry and God's presence in it. Your mentor will be your partner in reflection. In this portion of the program, you will be spending time reflecting on your new vocation, what it means, "to take authority," and "how it is with your soul."

Mentor selection and qualifications

The district superintendent and the chairman of the district committee on ordained ministry will nominate clergy mentors. Each will nominate three to five names to be considered as possible clergy mentors. The Probationary Process Board will review the nominations and compile a list of approved clergy mentors. From the list, the probationer will be assigned a mentor. Because monthly meetings will be expected, we recommend that distance should be one consideration in the choice of clergy mentor.

Some qualifications to be considered by the district superintendent and the chairman of the district committee on ordained ministry for clergy mentors:

- Exhibits deep faith in Christ
- Listens actively—is able to guide rather than counsel
- Nurtures others with sensitivity and empathy
- Communicates understanding and compassion
- Exhibits security and is able to relate well to other peers
- Is able to set and keep appropriate boundaries
- Has a sense of humor and a spirit of joy
- Is able to maintain confidentiality
- Is able to commit to a mentoring relationship and the time commitments related to it
- Is able to give thoughtful and honest feedback
- A full member of the annual conference, but not a district superintendent and preferably not a member of the board of ordained ministry

Clergy Mentor responsibilities

The clergy mentor will provide support, accountability, and guidance for the probationer. The clergy mentor will work with the probationer toward the goal of personal and professional maturity. The clergy mentor will set a habit of growth toward reaching that maturity. The clergy mentor will focus with the probationer in the areas of vocational identity, authority, and disciplined spiritual growth. The clergy mentor will attend the probationer's first retreat as a part of the process. The retreat will include clergy mentor training and the specific expectations of the process. At the retreat, the clergy mentor and the probationer will begin the process of working on a growth agenda. The growth agenda will be individually tailored for the optimum growth of the probationer. After the retreat, the clergy mentor will meet monthly with the probationer for approximately two hours per session. The clergy mentor agrees to prepare for the sessions as appropriate and as agreed upon with the probationer.

The clergy mentor does have seniority and greater experience as a clergy member of the conference. Even so, the emphasis is placed on the probationer as a clergy colleague. Studies have shown that personality and chemistry are irrelevant to the mentoring relationship. More important are discipline and commitment to the relationship and the goals set.

The clergy mentor and the probationer may decide together that a site visit from the mentor would be advantageous in the course of the relationship.

Mentor support

The board of ordained ministry is appreciative of the time and talents you are contributing to the newer members of our conference. Your contributions will make a difference to those who are mentored and to the churches of the conference. For this reason, we are available for any support you may need. A member of the board will contact you periodically to check on progress and to see if you need anything. Also, we will have some informal times for all clergy mentors to gather together to ask questions or to seek guidance from other clergy mentors. (Perhaps at preaching institute and/or school of ministry)

Responsibilities of the probationer

The probationer is responsible for contacting the mentor before the first retreat and setting the process in motion. The probationer agrees to prepare for each session as appropriate. The probationer is responsible for the timely return of the yearly reports and scheduling a session with the mentor to be sure they are completed and signed. The preparation of the ministry event to be used in a session should be completed in time to have it in the hands of the mentor at least a week in advance of the session. The following areas will focus your discussion around the ministry event:

Vocational identity

How are you living out your call in this event?

Give evidences of your call in your daily life.

How do you perceive that others see, hear, experience, your call affecting their lives?

What do you identify as your values? Responsibilities? Authority?

Relationships? Skills?

Where do you struggle in living out your call?

Spiritual and life disciplines

What are you doing to nourish your vocation and mission?

What are the public and private dimensions of what you do in nourishment of vocation?

What is your understanding of spiritual formation?

What are you reading for your spiritual development?

With whom do you share your faith development and your sense of call?

What are barriers to sharing your faith development? What are the bridges?

With whom do you share your questions, doubts, joys, and concerns?

How are you meeting your needs as a whole person?

What would you list as your spiritual disciplines? What disciplines, if any, would you like to add?

What disciplines bring you the most comfort/peace/joy?

Which disciplines frighten you? How might those disciplines change you?

Authority

What is your authority in your current appointment?

What is the source of your authority?

With whom do you exercise authority?

What are the limitations of your authority?

As you carry a particular clergy office, what are the discomforts with the authority of that office?

What are your concerns about your potential to abuse the authority of your office?

How is your exercise of authority consistent with your call?

How do your spiritual disciplines aid in your exercise of authority?

If you are not taking care of yourself, how might you struggle with a boundary in the following areas: sexuality, finances, popularity, power as control?

Accountability of the relationship

At the first retreat, you and your clergy mentor will be given time to work out your own goals and agenda items. You will be given some tools and tests to help you to determine the topics you will work on for the year. Then you and your mentor will write and sign a covenant for the year that will outline:

- The focus of the year
- Your learning goals
- Resources to be used
- Expectations you share for the year
- A statement about agreed-upon meeting dates, times, and places
- A statement about preparation and follow-up each of you commit to do

At the end of the year, you and your clergy mentor will evaluate where you are in the process and determine the goals and schedule for the following year. The same process will be completed for the third year.

Yearly Reports to the Board of Ordained Ministry

We understand the confidentiality of the mentoring relationship. Therefore, the reports to the Board of Ordained Ministry will be nonevaluative. We will, however, expect an evaluation of the fulfilling of the covenant. Separately, the mentor and the probationer will review the themes, dates, and settings of the mentoring sessions. Each will write a separate report to include the above items. They will each edit the report to remove any evaluative words or phrases. Together, you will compare both reports and prepare a common report. Both the clergy mentor and the probationer will sign the finished report. Make four copies. Send one to the district superintendent, one to the office of the registrar of the Board of Ordained Ministry, and each of you keep a copy for your own records. See the appendix for a report form.

**The
Small Group
Dimension**

THE SMALL GROUP DIMENSION

Each class of probationary members will be divided into small, geographical groupings. The groups will meet monthly. The time will be structured to allow for mutual support and for the opportunity to review ministry events through the lens of theology. A clergy member of conference will facilitate the group and assist in the group covenant and the group expectations. The committee on the probationary process will provide the themes for the group. Spiritual formation and worship should be a regular part of the group process. The group will be a place where you are able to think through your theology and therefore to prepare your written work for the board.

Each of you will take your turn as presenter for the group. At the end of each meeting, the next month's topic and presenter will be chosen. All written materials should be sent out a week in advance of the group so all have time to read and process before the group meets. This will make the time together more productive and beneficial to all.

Guidelines for group discussions

Ministry events

The purpose of the first small group meeting will be to work out a covenant with the group and to decide on regular meeting times and places. The group will also schedule the presenters for the ministry events that will be discussed in the course of the year. The event should be something that gives a basis for reflection about "who I am, my roles, and my words and actions." The ministry event gives the group the opportunity to reflect on how theology informs and influences the day-to-day occurrences in ministry. The presenter either describes the event or writes a verbatim and mails it to the rest of the group a week in advance of the scheduled meeting. That way, all will have a chance to read the event and begin to process it before the meeting. Some questions to be considered ahead of time:

For the presenter:

1. What are the issues you see for yourself in this ministry event as the probationer?
2. What is important for you in the ministry event?
3. What is the theme of the event?
4. How does this ministry event reflect your spiritual growth?

For the group

1. What are the issues you see for the presenter in this event?
2. What is the theme of this event?

Begin the meeting with worship and prayer. Then move to the reflection questions above. In the process, note the key messages that took place. What is each person or group really saying to each other? Other questions to consider:

1. What is your understanding of God's involvement in this event? How is God speaking in this event?
2. Where is Christ in this event?
3. How do you speak and think theologically about this event?
4. How do your actions as clergy convey your theology?
5. Are there biblical stories or passages that are pertinent in this event?
6. How might this event shape your spiritual growth? The growth of your congregation?

Finally, each person should answer the following questions at the end of the session:

1. As a result of the discussion today, what personal learning needs have I identified for myself?
2. As a result of the discussion today, what professional learning needs have I identified for myself?

Preparing for Ordination

The group may choose to focus some months on the theological questions for the board of ordained ministry. The following questions are suggested for use:

1. Describe the minister's role as a spiritual leader of a congregation.
2. Share your principles of church growth. How do you grow a church?
3. Describe the unfolding of God's plan for your life and your church or ministry; and give evidence of this plan being God's will and not somebody's idea.
4. (For Elder) How has serving as a commissioned minister affected your understanding of ordained ministry and the expectations and obligations of the itinerant system?
(For Deacon) How has the experience of serving as a commissioned minister affected your understanding of ordained ministry and the expectations and obligations of serving in a non-itinerant appointive process through which you are to connect Word and Service to the community and the congregation?
5. Provide evidence of experience in peace and justice ministries.
6. How has the practice of ministry deepened your understanding of God? Integrate your personal experience with your understanding of God.
7. What effect has the practice of ministry had on your understanding of humanity and the need for divine grace?
8. What changes has the practice of ministry had on your understanding of (a) the Lordship of Jesus Christ (who do you say that Jesus is) and (b) the work of the Holy Spirit?
9. The United Methodist Church holds that Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are sources and norms for belief and practice but that the Bible is primary among them. What is your understanding of this theological position of the Church?
10. How do you understand the following evangelical (Wesleyan) doctrines: (a) repentance; (b) justification; (c) regeneration; (d) sanctification? What are the marks of a Christian life?

11. For the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world and the most effective witness to the Christian gospel, and in consideration of your influence as an ordained minister, you are asked to make a complete dedication of yourself to the highest ideals of the Christian life; and to this end to exercise responsible self-control by personal habits conducive to physical health, intentional intellectual development, fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness, integrity in all personal relationships, social responsibility, and growth in grace and the knowledge and love of God.
 - a. Are you willing to do so?
 - b. What is your understanding of this agreement?
12. What is the meaning and significance of the Sacraments?
13. What is your understanding of the church? How do you see your role as a leader accomplishing the nature and mission of the church?
14. How do you understand the Kingdom of God as future and present reality? How do you understand resurrection and eternal life?

**The
Supervision
Dimension**

THE SUPERVISION DIMENSION

The district superintendent provides a vital link to the process of supervision. He/she will make at least two site visits per year to each probationer in his/her district. It is the responsibility of the probationer to schedule the site visits with the district superintendent. The foci of the visits are as follows:

Year one: pastoral care and teaching

Year two: worship/proclamation of the word and leadership

Year three: worship and any of the above that may have needed improvement

Guidelines for observation and evaluation will be given to the district superintendents and the probationers. The district superintendents will file the guidelines until the yearly reports are written. Then they will be sent to the registrar as part of the probationer's file. The district superintendent is also encouraged to attend the training and evaluative sessions of the SPRC/PPRC.

The SPRC/PPRC will meet with the probationer soon after appointment. Present at the meeting will be the mentor and the district superintendent. This will be the get-acquainted/training session for the SPRC/PPRC. At this meeting the SPRC will be informed of the responsibilities of the probationer to the probationary process. They will be given the dates of the retreats (as known) and the time commitment needed by the probationer. They will be given a copy of report forms and trained in the importance of filling them out honestly and fairly. In each case, each member of the committee will fill out a form independently, then as a group. The schedule of evaluative sessions is as follows:

December-January of the first year

January-February of the second year

August-September of the third year

Appendices

4. How would you describe the commissioned minister's ability to preach/proclaim the word? 1 2 3 4 5

Please explain:

5. How would you describe the commissioned minister's ability to communicate his/her faith? 1 2 3 4 5

Please explain:

6. How would you describe the commissioned minister's ability to teach? 1 2 3 4 5

Please explain:

7. How would you describe the commissioned minister's administrative skills? 1 2 3 4 5

Please explain:

8. How would you describe the commissioned minister's relational skills? 1 2 3 4 5

Please explain:

9. How would you describe the commissioned minister's effectiveness in pastoral care? 1 2 3 4 5

Please explain:

What are the strengths of the commissioned minister?

In what areas does the commissioned minister still need to grow?

Are there any other insights you wish to share about the leadership of this commissioned minister?

Chairperson, Staff/Parish Relations Committee

ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT

Date: _____ Year of Probation: _____

Probationer: _____

Appointment: _____

Please answer the questions using the observations you made while on the site visits to the probationary member's appointment.

1. How does the probationary member express "servant ministry" in the current appointment?

2. Describe the effectiveness of how the probationary member communicates his/her faith through personal actions, preaching, and/or teaching.

3. In worship, is the probationary member an effective preacher/proclaimer of the word? (Please enclose a copy of your site visit evaluation)

4. Administratively, please describe the effectiveness of the probationary member. Has he/she been faithful with reports? Has he/she been able to manage time with family as well as personal time?

5. Is the probationary member knowledgeable in managing the operating life of the church? Is the probationer guided by the Discipline of the church in the making of decisions for the church?

6. How well does the probationary member interact with the congregation?

7. What are the strengths of this probationary member?

8. What areas should the probationary member explore further? Please explain.

9. Is there anything you would like the Board of Ordained Ministry to know about the probationary member that is not covered in this report?

District Superintendent

YEARLY REPORT OF MENTOR AND PROBATIONARY MEMBER

Date: _____ **Year of Probation:** _____

Probationary Member: _____

Appointment: _____

Mentor: _____

1. How often did you meet? How long was each session?

2. What topics were you able to cover this year?

3. Which topics from your covenant did not get discussed or resolved?

4. Have you made a new covenant for the coming year? Does it include the topics from question 3? What are the new topics you have planned?

Probationary Member's signature

Mentor's signature

APPENDIX B

Probationary In-Ministry Training Program Survey

Pre-program

1. For you personally, which of the following skills needed improvement upon entering the program?

Interpersonal Relationships

- _____ a. problem solving
 _____ b. conflict management
 _____ c. confrontational skills
 _____ d. personal self-care and time management
 _____ e. personal relational to God through regular discipline
 _____ f. developing relationships with peers
 _____ g. developing relationships with parishioners.

Administration/Management

- _____ h. denominational forms and responsibilities
 _____ i. reading financial statements
 _____ j. planning a budget
 _____ k. choosing and implementing a stewardship drive
 _____ l. organizing and conducting meetings that matter
 _____ m. effective delegation
 _____ n. supervising staff
 _____ o. hiring and firing staff

Worship

- _____ p. weddings, funerals, special services
 _____ q. starting new services
 _____ r. types of worship, discerning which is best for your congregation
 _____ s. creative, relevant worship
 _____ t. worship resources

Ministry Development/Discipleship

- _____ u. resources for ministry
 _____ v. how to discover what is needed in your church (small groups, spiritual development, basic Christian beliefs, new member classes, etc.)
 _____ w. how to start new programs and small groups
 _____ x. finding and training teachers and small group leaders

Leadership

- _____ y. creating and sustaining a vision
 _____ z. implementing change
 _____ aa. developing trust with the congregation and its leaders
 _____ bb. lay leader selection and development

Post program

1. In your opinion, how much change did you experience as a result of the program in each of the following areas using a scale from one to ten with one being no change and ten being the greatest change?

_____ **Interpersonal Relationships**

_____ **Administration/Management**

_____ **Worship**

_____ **Ministry Development/Discipleship**

_____ **Leadership**

2. In the area of greatest change, tell one story that illustrates the change.
3. In the subsections of interpersonal relationships, how much change did you experience as a result of the program, again using a scale of one to ten?

Interpersonal Relationships

- _____ a. problem solving
- _____ b. conflict management
- _____ c. confrontational skills
- _____ d. personal self-care and time management
- _____ e. personal relationship to God through regular discipline
- _____ f. developing relationships with peers
- _____ g. developing relationships with parishioners.

4. In the subsections of administration/management, how much change did you experience as a result of the program, again using a scale of one to ten?

Administration/Management

- _____ h. denominational forms and responsibilities
- _____ i. reading financial statements
- _____ j. planning a budget
- _____ k. choosing and implementing a stewardship drive
- _____ l. organizing and conducting meetings that matter
- _____ m. effective delegation
- _____ n. supervising staff
- _____ o. hiring and firing staff

5. In the subsections of worship, how much change did you experience as a result of the program, again using a scale of one to ten?

Worship

- _____ p. weddings, funerals, special services
- _____ q. starting new services
- _____ r. types of worship, discerning which is best for your congregation
- _____ s. creative, relevant worship
- _____ t. worship resources

6. In the subsections of ministry development/discipleship, how much change did you experience as a result of the program, again using a scale of one to ten?

Ministry Development/Discipleship

- _____ u. resources for ministry
- _____ v. how to discover what is needed in your church (small groups, spiritual development, basic Christian beliefs, new member classes, etc.)
- _____ w. how to start new programs and small groups
- _____ x. finding and training teachers and small group leaders

7. In the subsections of leadership, how much change did you experience as a result of the program, again using a scale of one to ten?

Leadership

- _____ y. creating and sustaining a vision
- _____ z. implementing change
- _____ aa. developing trust with the congregation and its leaders
- _____ bb. lay leader selection and development

8. In the area of relationship skills, what do you wish had been covered?

9. In the area of worship, what do you wish had been covered?

10. In the area of administration, what do you wish had been covered?

11. In the area of ministry development/discipleship, what do you wish had been covered?

12. In the area of leadership, what do you wish had been covered?

13. Does the program have any lasting impact for you in the area of skill development?

14. Does the program have any lasting impact on you in the area of relationship development?

15. Anything else you would like to add?

Phase Survey

1. Which phase of the program was most helpful to you in developing your needed skills?
 - _____ a. Mentor
 - _____ b. Small group
 - _____ c. Retreats

2. Which phase of the program was most helpful in developing lasting, supportive relationships?
 - _____ a. Mentor
 - _____ b. Small group
 - _____ c. Retreats

APPENDIX C

Retreat Evaluations

The First Retreat

1. My favorite part of the retreat was
2. The part of the retreat that could be improved the next time is
3. Considering the theme of relationships, in your opinion, what did we leave out that would have been of benefit to you?
4. What concerns do you have as you begin this process?
5. Thinking about your seminary training, what do you wish you had been told before you began your appointment?
6. Now that you are several months into your appointment, what surprises have you had?
7. What is one topic you would hope to see as a part of this process?

Retreat Evaluations

Second Retreat

1. My favorite part of the retreat was
2. The part of the retreat that could be improved the next time is
3. Considering the theme “ministry of administration,” in your opinion, what did we leave out that would have been helpful to you?
4. Still considering the theme, how was the panel helpful to you?

The Whole Process

1. Please tell us how this whole process has been helpful to you so far.
2. How are your small groups functioning?
3. How are you finding the experience with your mentor?
4. What else do you have to say to us?

Retreat Evaluations

Third Retreat

1. My favorite part of the retreat was
2. The part of the retreat that could be improved the next time is
3. Considering the worship theme, in your opinion, what did we leave out that would have been of benefit to you?
4. Still considering the theme, how was the panel helpful to you?

The Whole Process

1. Please tell us the ways in which this whole process has been helpful to you so far.
2. How are the small groups functioning?
3. Where do we need to improve the process so far to make it more helpful to you?
4. What else do you have to say to us?

Retreat Evaluations

Fourth Retreat

1. In terms of learning, the most helpful part of the retreat was
2. The part of the retreat that could be improved the next time is
3. Considering the theme of discipleship, in your opinion, what did we leave out that would have been of benefit to you?
4. Was the resource section helpful to you?

The Whole Process

1. How has this process been helpful to you in your ministry and/or your overall growth as a pastor?
2. Has the mentor part of the process been helpful to you? Please explain.
3. The theme of the next retreat is leadership. Do you have any suggestions?
4. What else do you have to say to us?

APPENDIX D

Checklist for Probationary Process Retreats

RETREAT DATE _____

ITEM	COMPLETE DATE	WHO RESPONSIBLE	DETAILS
Invite keynote leader			
Invite additional leaders			
Secure LEC (site)			
Design schedule			
Letter to commissioned ministers			
Letter to mentors (if applicable)			
Produce process booklets (if applicable)			
Send inventory to new commissioned ministers			
Recruit and invite new mentors			
Receive reservations			
Make nametags as needed			
Brochure of schedule, etc.			
Secure music leadership			
Invite worship leader for opening worship			
Invite worship leader for additional worship			
Design & materialize worship centers			
Secure AV equipment			
Set room arrangement throughout retreat			
Follow-up letter to absentees			
Lead fellowship time			

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