


Spring 5-2018

# Elders Intentionally Developing Future Leaders Through a Mentoring Program at the Central Church of Christ in Topeka, KS

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## Recommended Citation

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to implement an Elder Mentoring Program for the Central Church of Christ in Topeka, KS. In the first chapter, the context for this project, the Central Church of Christ, is described. The theological constructs for the project were drawn from *The Book of Pastoral Rule* written by Gregory the Great 590 C.E. and built upon by the application of contemporary Christian authors, and Biblical examples. The three key concepts taken from *The Book of Pastoral Rule* are contemplation, pastoral care, and mentoring. The third chapter reviews project methodology and mentoring curriculum. The findings and results of the project are discussed through the collected data in chapter four. In the last chapter, the conclusions of the Elder Mentoring Program are established by reviewing trustworthiness, significance, future impact of the program, and questions outside the purview of this study.

Elders Intentionally Developing Future Leaders Through a Mentoring Program at the  
Central Church of Christ in Topeka, KS

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School of Theology

Abilene Christian University

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Ministry

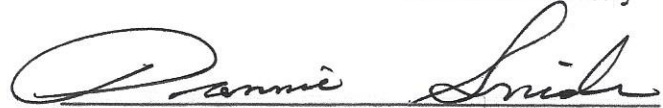
By

Terry R. Kitson

May 2018

This thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Council of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Ministry




Assistant Provost for Graduate Programs

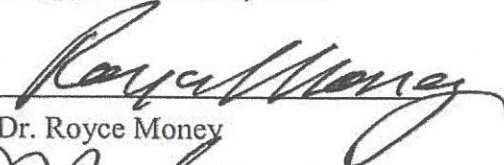
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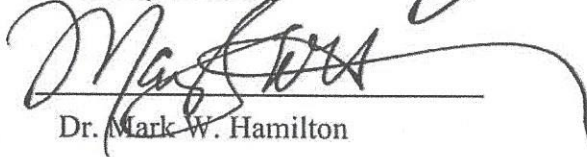
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Dr. Mark W. Hamilton

To my supportive, devoted wife and partner in ministry, Cindy.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This project addresses the need for intentional elder training at the Central Church of Christ in Topeka, KS. The purpose of this project is to implement an Elder Mentoring Program using the five current elders as mentors. Chapter one establishes the context of the Central Church of Christ<sup>1</sup>, my history with the congregation, the state of church leadership, and defines the project's problem, purpose, assumptions, delimitations, and limitations. Chapter two identifies the theological constructs of the project based on a reading of *The Book of Pastoral Rule* by Gregory the Great. The project's methodology is detailed in chapter three, along with a description of the participants, the mentoring sessions, and the evaluation methodology. Chapter four reveals the findings and results of the project. Interpreting the data is the focus of chapter five, including implications for the church, enhancements to future mentoring programs, and personal reflections on the research.

#### **Title of Project**

The title of this project is “Elders Intentionally Developing Future Leaders Through a Mentoring Program at the Central Church of Christ in Topeka, KS.” The phrase “mentoring program” emphasizes the relational nature of the project. The title

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1. Hereinafter labeled “Central Church” or “Central.”

clarifies that the elders hold responsibility for leadership development. The project seeks to implement an elder-led mentoring program to develop future leaders within the church.

### **Description of the Ministry Context**

For greater understanding of this project and the valuable impact it may have on Central Church, my description of the ministry context will include a brief history of the church, my journey to Central, membership demographics, church leadership, congregational rituals, and leadership retreats. Throughout the chapter, I will share the results of surveys and leadership planning sessions that reveal the concerns of the church and the need for an Elder Mentoring Program.

#### Brief History of the Central Church of Christ, Topeka, KS

In 2009, the Central Church of Christ hosted a homecoming to celebrate her one-hundredth anniversary. For that occasion, John Merryman, long-time member and former elder, compiled a two-page history of the congregation. John found the following quote “in a book kept by Brother Wyatt Roush.”<sup>2</sup>

On Lord’s Day, February 21st, 1909, a number of members of the Church of Christ, located in the city of Topeka, Kansas, believing there not to be a Church of Christ in said city, meeting and worshipping according to the divine pattern given by Christ and the apostles in the New Testament scriptures and seeking to establish primitive Christianity that they might worship according to divine authority, met for worship at the house of Brother Wyatt Roush at 522 Buchanan Street, said city, there being present Brother Wyatt Roush and family, and Brother O.M. Whitlow and family. After reading of the scriptures, songs, prayers, exhortations, communion and contributing of our means, it was determined that these meetings would be kept up, and meet from house to house until a suitable place could be obtained for public gatherings and an appointment was made for the next Lord’s Day at the home of Brother O.M. Whitlow.

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<sup>2</sup> John Merryman, comp. “A History of Central Church of Christ: Topeka, KS” *Homecoming Program*, 2009.

The church quickly grew from her humble beginning with two families.<sup>3</sup>

By March 14, 1909, the church had grown beyond meeting in homes and began renting the Adventist's Chapel. The church purchased a building in 1916, but outgrew it quickly. In 1938, the church purchased a building at the current location on the corner of College Avenue and Huntoon Street. The church constructed a new building at that location in 1953 and added an education wing and parsonage ten years later. The parsonage currently houses the church offices, benevolence pantry, and youth ministry classes.

Maureen Stelzner was the last remaining member with any links to that original group of Christians who met in Brother Roush's home. Maureen was still worshipping with the Central congregation upon my arrival in 2009 and passed away at the age of ninety-three in 2012.

Another person with a long history with the Central Church of Christ was Herbert M. Broadus. According to his obituary, "Before he retired from a life-long preaching career, Broadus became an elder for College Avenue Church of Christ where he preached for 30 years between 1945 and the early '80s."<sup>4</sup> Herbert's influence continues to affect the Central congregation now, twenty-five years after his passing. He has been frequently mentioned by older members and in our surveys as someone who made a difference in the lives of the church body.

Including myself, several ministers have served the Central congregation since Herbert's retirement. Most recently prior to my arrival, Jim Dubose served as Central's

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3. Ibid.

4. Obituary of Herbert M. Broadus, *Nashville: Gospel Advocate*, December 1993. In this quote College Avenue refers to the Central congregation.

preaching minister. After Jim left, there was a three-year interim before my arrival during which Evan Burdan, former Central youth minister, preached on Sunday mornings. Evan is now a licensed counselor.

### My Ministry Journey

In 2009, my wife Cindy and I experienced our first white Christmas in Texas. We had lived in the Dallas–Fort Worth area for twenty-five years, working with two churches, and raising our two daughters. Within just a few days of celebrating a surprisingly snowy Christmas in Texas, we moved to northeast Kansas, which is known for its snow. We arrived on December 29, 2009, to find one of our new elders and his daughter clearing snow from our driveway in Topeka. Anticipating another snowstorm, the movers unloaded the truck in a hurry, and had just unloaded the last box when it began to snow again.

The snow continued the rest of the evening and well into the next day. Through streets blanketed in half-a-foot of white snow, we drove to church for our first Wednesday evening service. That first winter seemed to bring snowstorm after snowstorm. When spring arrived, we discovered numerous perennials springing up all over our yard. We could see that maintaining our yard would take a lot of work, but that it would be beautiful. Likewise, the arrival of spring revealed a beautiful congregation and many opportunities where hard work would help us grow and sustain the church for the future.

### Central Demographics

According to the Central Church database we have 146 family units and 329 active members, which includes 263 baptized believers and 66 children or teenagers who

have not yet been baptized. On Sunday mornings, worship attendance fluctuates between 250 and 295 individuals. A typical average Sunday morning attendance is 280 people.

In the fall of 2010, I wanted to get to know the congregation better and help our leadership team of elders, deacons, and ministers do the same. To this end, we used an instrument called *Family Needs Analysis*, an adaptation of a similar survey provided by Don Hebbard in a Family Life Ministry graduate class that I completed in 1999. Through the survey, the leadership team gained a better understanding of our membership, their needs, and their perception of the church. The survey was completed by approximately fifty percent of members. We received responses from 112 members at a time when our highest recorded attendance was 256 individuals.

The survey response pool was an accurate representation of our congregation in 2010 and remains very similar today. Women make up a little more than sixty percent of our congregation. Our congregation has a good generational mix with the largest group of members belonging the forty to forty-nine-year-old age range. The smallest group is the eighteen to twenty-nine-year-old age range. All our members have completed high school with most completing some college or trade school, and more than half completing a college degree or graduate degree. Most members are still in the workforce although thirty percent are in retirement. Most members are married and more than half have been married twenty or more years. Not only are the majority of our members married, but an even larger percentage of members are parents. Forty percent of our members still have children at home.

We ended the *Family Needs Analysis* by asking three open-ended questions, including a request for respondents to list our congregation's strengths. The

overwhelming response was that the elders of the church were our top strength. Admiration for our elders has been a constant theme throughout both surveys and conversations I have had with members.

In the spring of 2014, a newly formed worship committee administered a survey to define what inspiring worship meant to our members. One hundred thirty-eight members participated in the survey, a twenty-four percent increase over the participation in the *Family Needs Analysis*. A significant note in both surveys was that forty-seven to fifty percent of respondents had been members at Central ten years or less. This number is highly significant because it means the current leadership team has been in place for the entire time forty-seven percent of our members have been a part of the congregation. Because all of our elders have been members for considerably longer than half the congregation, there is a significant opportunity for misunderstandings. Communication is an important piece of the puzzle at Central, and leadership often tell stories or reference past events with the expectation they are shared stories. But if those stories are more than ten years old, at least half of the congregation has no context to understand the story.

#### Central Leadership Team

The current Central leadership team consists of five elders, seven deacons, and three full time ministers, which include a senior/preaching minister, children's minister, and youth minister. I have been at Central as the senior/preaching minister for eight years. Our youth minister, a twenty-nine-year old man, has been on staff since April 2014. The children's minister, a sixty-seven-year old elder's wife, has been a full-time employee for nine years.



Elders are a vital component of leadership at Central Church. Based on Paul's directives to the elders of Ephesus in Acts 20:28–29, our elders oversee the church as shepherds to a flock. They lead the church, hire church staff and manage the deacons. They are responsive to the needs of the church every day of the week and carry out many pastoral duties including visiting the homebound, ministering to the ill and needy, and praying for the congregation. Every week the elders have a two-hour meeting following the Wednesday evening bible study.

The church affirmed the current deacons and elders in June 2001. Two deacons and two elders affirmed in 2001 have since moved. The ages of our five elders range from mid-sixties to late-seventies. Four of our elders have been members since 1974 or before, and the fifth elder has been a member of Central Church since the mid-nineties. No new elders have been affirmed since 2001.

To become an elder at Central Church, a man who meets the qualifications of the office must be nominated by at least twenty-five members. The nominee and his wife are asked to pray and seek discernment before accepting or declining the nomination. The nominees who decide to proceed are presented to the church as elder nominees so the congregation can get to know them better. Then the members have the opportunity to affirm "Yes, I am willing to submit myself to this man as a shepherd." In 2016 members could alternatively vote "I don't know this man well enough," or "I have a scriptural objection to this man serving as elder." A nominee must be affirmed by eighty-five percent of the congregation to become an elder.

In the spring of 2016 the Central Church reaffirmed all five current elders. Unfortunately, no new elders were affirmed. The lack of new elders had been a growing

source of anxiety for the existing elders. The elders' concern is that given their age and health, Central Church is a couple of illnesses or deaths away from having just two or three elders shepherding a flock of nearly three hundred. Their anxiety is heightened by the fact Central has no intentional training or mentoring for future elders.

### Intentional Rituals

As Central Church has grown with young families in recent years, our youth and children's ministries have flourished. Additionally, the Central Church participates in a variety of intentional rituals that unite our members and support them in life changes.

Following baptisms, Col 3:1–4 is read as a charge to the new Christian, and at the end of the service the congregation celebrates with a family circle led by one of our elders including a song, a prayer and lots of hugs.

Physical birth is also recognized with a charge given to the parents on the first Sunday their newborn attends with his or her family. The parents are given a book on parenting and a jar of marbles. The marbles represent the number of weeks that the child will be in their home before graduating from high school. Each of those weeks is an opportunity for the parents to influence their son or daughter in the image of God. Following the presentation of the marbles and book an elder prays for the child and the parents.

Our congregation recognizes that death is as much a part of life as birth. For that reason, each year we have a Sunday of Remembrance when we recognize all our members who have lost a loved one that year. After they have been acknowledged in their loss, an elder prays for them. During the sermon, I deliver a message of comfort and hope from God's Word while attempting to normalize grief.

In February, we celebrate marriage on the Sunday closest to Valentine's Day by recognizing those who have been married forty years or more. I pray, thanking God for their example of commitment in marriage and deliver a marriage-focused sermon. We believe this is an important statement to our culture and to our young people.

Along with these rituals, our congregation tries to live out a message of grace. A recent example of this occurred during the summer of 2016, when one of our young adults came before the church to confess he had fathered a child outside of marriage. He asked the congregation's forgiveness. This young man also asked the congregation to accept his daughter as he helped raise her. At the time, he made it clear that he was not planning to marry the mother and was not living with her. When the young man brought his baby to a subsequent service, she was welcomed to our church and her mother as well. Our elders included both the father and the mother, not yet a member of our church, in their charge to the parents and gave the book and marbles to both. The mother has since been baptized. I cannot help but believe that it was due in part to the message of grace that she received. The couple is dating, living separately, and raising their daughter together as affirmed members of our faith community.

#### Leadership Analysis Through Survey

In January 2011, the leadership team, elders, deacons, ministers and their spouses, participated in a retreat to survey our strengths as individuals and as a team using *Leading from Your Strengths*<sup>5</sup> as the analysis instrument. Additionally, each team member received the companion book to the profile, *Leading from Your Strengths:*

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5. Rodney Cox and John Trent, "Leading from Your Strengths Profile," Ministry Insights, <http://www.ministryinsights.com/leaders/leading-from-your-strengths-profile/>.

*Building Close-Knit Ministry Teams*.<sup>6</sup> A sister book, *Leading from Your Strengths: Building Intimacy in Your Small Group*<sup>7</sup> was also used in my preparation for the retreat.

The *Leading from Your Strengths* profile identifies an individual as a beaver, lion, otter, or golden retriever. These identifiers and their score are used to plot each member on the *Success Insights Wheel*, a pie chart adding additional descriptive terms based on scores. Those descriptive terms are: coordinator, analyzer, implementer, conductor, persuader, promoter, relater, and supporter. Half of the pie chart is labeled as task-oriented and half is labeled as people-oriented.

Twenty-nine members on our leadership team took the survey, which revealed we are mostly relaters, supporters, and coordinators. All of the elders and ministers fall into this first group. Additionally, all the elders and ministers are people-oriented except for one elder who is a task-oriented coordinator. The leadership team also has one analyzer, one implementer, one conductor, one persuader, and two promoters.

The balance of strengths in our leadership team has not changed much in the past five years. Since that time two deacons and their wives have moved away, along with the youth minister and his wife. One of the major insights from this instrument is that in our eldership we have four men that are people-oriented and one elder who is equally balanced in people and task orientation. When these men began serving together in 2001, there were two additional elders who both moved due to job changes. At least one of

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6. Rodney Cox, Eric Tooker, and John Trent, *Leading from Your Strengths: Building Close-Knit Ministry Teams* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishing, 2004).

7. Rodney Cox, Eric Tooker, and John Trent, *Leading from Your Strengths; Building Intimacy in Your Small Group* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishing, 2005).

those elders was an implementer. The elders often discuss that they miss the implementation component on their team.

### Leadership Analysis Through Team Retreat

In the fall of 2014, the elders and I began a dialogue concerning the need for additional elders. Affirming additional elders has been a frequent topic of elders' meetings since spring 2013. Another topic often discussed in the elders' meetings was the desire to empower others in leadership and in the congregation. We invited Doug Peters, at the time serving as Baugh Chair of Gospel Preaching in the College of Biblical Studies at Oklahoma Christian University, to facilitate a leadership team retreat centering on a SWOT analysis, which identifies perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The leadership team included elders, deacons, ministers, and spouses. This is the same group invited to the retreat in 2011 minus the two deacons and the youth minister who moved and with the addition of our new youth minister and his wife.

In preparation for the retreat in September 2015, we asked the retreat attendees to complete a survey with open-ended questions concerning our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Completing the survey in advance helped Doug get better acquainted with the leadership team through their responses and helped participants prepare by truly considering our strengths and weaknesses as a church.

On Friday night of the retreat, Doug led us through educational exercises to get us prepared for the hard work to come. After the exercises, we were sent off to read the anonymous responses to the survey. Many participants had been quite blunt in their appraisal of weaknesses and threats and the responses were quite sobering to read. I feel confident the group had not anticipated that anyone other than Doug would read their

answers. We came back, debriefed, and had a prayer to close the evening. Most of the participants returned home from the camp that night and I spent much of the night in prayer that all would return. Thankfully everyone returned the next morning and we had a very productive Saturday.

We spent most of the day in small groups considering our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. As the day progressed we narrowed our discussions to issues or opportunities that should be considered priorities. From that discussion, the whole group created a list of fifteen priority items. We each created a double-weighting form listing the fifteen items. We compared each item to all the other items and chose which we would give priority. The forms were all collected and the scores were tallied. By the end of the day the following six items were listed as our critical issues:

- Improve Leadership and Congregational Communication (270)
- Leadership Development (222)
- Focus on Family Development (205)
- Equip and Utilize More/New People in Ministry (200)
- Enhance Spiritual Growth – Classes (189)
- Develop Small Groups (171)<sup>8</sup>

We met again on Sunday and assigned volunteers to the top three critical issues. We agreed to reconvene on October 25, 2015, to present recommendations and discuss further.

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8. Numbers in parentheses indicate the scores on the double-weighted form.

My group focused on leadership development. We divided our work into four quadrants: training of current elders, training of current deacons, training of future/potential elders, and training of future deacons, and presented our recommendations for each quadrant to the leadership team.

Based on our list of recommendations, the leadership team prioritized seven items from the four quadrants. The seven items are listed in no particular order:

- Clear expectations of the new deacon's assignment.
- Clear expectations of the existing deacon's assignment being evaluated by the deacon and the elders.
- In the future identify areas needing special servants/deacons prior to deacon selection process.
- Clear expectations for new elders.
- Clear expectations for current elders including self-evaluation and peer evaluation.
- Elder-led new member class in which the elders share who we are as a congregation and what is expected of members.
- Current elders intentionally mentoring others as servant leaders.

From this list, it's obvious that clarifying expectations was important to the leadership team. The leadership team also identified that "elders intentionally mentoring" was a priority. At first glance, clarifying expectations and mentoring may seem unrelated, but in reality, an effective mentoring experience will create clear expectations of our elders and deacons for the mentee. The mentee is likely to then share his new understanding concerning the work and duties of elders with family and friends.

### **Problem Statement**

Since 2013, leadership development and empowering others to lead were issues that weighed heavy on the hearts of the elders at Central Church. Likewise, lack of leadership development was listed high among the critical issues identified by the leadership team in September 2015. An implication in this problem is aging leadership, especially among the elders. As complications of aging arise among elders and their spouses, they strive to continue to serve our church faithfully. Encouraging leadership development among members at Central Church would decrease anxiety about the need for leadership to step down in the future.

As a way to resolve the lack of leadership development, the follow-up committee identified a need for elders to intentionally mentor others as servant leaders. Elder mentoring is an important step in the development of future leaders for the Central Church. A mentoring program will enable the Central elders to be proactive regarding the need for additional elders. The problem this project will address is the lack of intentional elder training at the Central Church of Christ.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this project is to implement a mentoring program for current elders to develop future leaders. The leadership team agreed that a mentoring training program led by our current elders was an appropriate method to develop future leaders. Considering the congregation's love and respect for her elders, and that our people-oriented elders thrive in one-on-one relationships, Central's elders will make wonderful mentors. Each elder invited one man to walk alongside of them as mentees for the seven-week program.



### Basic Assumptions

As a mentoring program is implemented using the elders of the Central Church as mentors, some basic assumptions should be considered.

The first assumption is that our five elders are willing to serve as mentors. This was confirmed on August 17, 2016. Their propensity toward being people-oriented will facilitate their efforts as mentors. With the added structure of a program and curriculum, our elders will shine.

An additional assumption is that elders are male; therefore, those being mentored will be male. The Central Church of Christ follows the historical and ecclesiastical practices of the Churches of Christ as reflected in Everett Ferguson's book, *The Churches of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today*, which states, "The qualifications of elders-bishops discussed above have in mind men fulfilling this responsibility (1 Tim 3:2, 4-5; Titus 1:6)."<sup>9</sup>

The last assumption is that Doug is a reasonable choice to serve as an independent observer. Although not a member of our church, Doug has intimate knowledge of the congregation since he served as a facilitator for the 2015 leadership retreat. Doug serves as a consultant for churches through Hope Network Ministries and Interim Ministry Partners and has years of experience as a minister, serving churches in Houston and Arlington, TX with long tenures.

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9. Everett Ferguson, *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 341.

## Delimitations and Limitations

### Delimitations

As I embark upon the project of intentionally training future leaders through a mentoring program, the intervention has delimitations. This program can only have an impact on the Central Church of Christ in Topeka, KS. Though others may read the final thesis, the reader would need to create their own intervention in their own context.

### Limitations

The Elder Mentoring Program will have limitations. One limitation is that a single program will not create additional elders or leaders. There is no guarantee that more men will be prepared or fully qualified to serve as elders when the next elder selection process takes place in 2018.

Another limitation concerns the possibility of the Hawthorne Effect, where participants are aware they are involved in an intervention, and their awareness can potentially impact the experiment's results.<sup>10</sup> Our elders are especially proud that I have been working toward a Doctorate of Ministry. Tim Sensing addresses the Hawthorne Effect in his book, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses*: "On the one hand, congregants want their ministers to do well. When they know the minister is doing the project for a grade, they want their minister to make an A."<sup>11</sup> However, in the past the elders been upfront about questioning my schoolwork when they perceive it is steering the church away from our mission.

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10. Stephen W. Draper, "The Hawthorne Effect and Other Expectancy Effects: A Note," <http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~steve/hawth.html>

11. Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 84.

To manage the Hawthorne Effect during the Elder Mentoring Program, I intend to deemphasize that the program is meeting requirements of my DMIN studies. At the same time, I will emphasize the value of the program for the participants and the congregation. The benefit the mentees receive through their relationship with their mentor, an elder of Central Church, will be emphasized repeatedly. Stressing the influence each elder has on his mentee rather than completing my studies will help to manage the Hawthorne Effect. Finally, prioritizing that the elders are intentionally training future leaders, achieving a goal they have discussed for years, will help regulate the influence of the Hawthorne Effect.

### **Conclusion**

The elders contribute vital leadership to the Central Church. Their leadership includes overseeing the church, managing church staff and deacons, responding to the needs of the congregation through pastoral care. The health issues and the aging of the Central elders along with some of their wives' health issues create concerns about the leadership of the congregation in the future. Losing two or three of our elders would create a leadership crisis. The Central church has no intentional mechanism for training future leaders. The Elder Mentoring Program provides an instrument for intentionally training future leaders.

## CHAPTER II

### THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The purpose of the project was to implement an Elder Mentoring Program to develop future leaders and address the lack of intentional elder training at Central Church of Christ in Topeka, KS. The project's theological constructs were drawn from *The Book of Pastoral Rule* written by Gregory the Great, researched in contemporary literature and based upon Biblical principles. To appreciate *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, it is helpful to know a little about the life and work of Gregory the Great. This chapter introduces Gregory the Great and *The Book of Pastoral Rule*. Following this introduction, I examine three pertinent concepts: contemplation, pastoral care, and mentoring as found in *The Book of Pastoral Rule*. Each concept is discussed as applicable to the need for developing church leadership. To develop each concept, I will draw from the *Pastoral Rule*, from the reflective work of other Christian leaders, and from the witness of the New Testament as it speaks to contemplation, pastoral care, and mentoring. Finally, we will review how contemplation, pastoral care, and mentoring are essential for effective spiritual leadership and how they will be integrated into the project.

Admittedly, prior to entering the Doctor of Ministry program at ACU, I have no recollection of Gregory the Great. In the initial two-week intensive of the DMIN program Dr. Jeff Childers asked each student to share our anticipated projects. When he heard I wanted to implement an elder-led mentoring program, he encouraged me to have Gregory the Great as a “conversation partner.” Once I began to read *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, I

discovered that it was a very fitting recommendation indeed. Gregory provides intentional teaching for Christian leaders in *The Book of Pastoral Rule*. He wrote this book with balance between the inner life or contemplative life and the outer life or life of service seen in pastoral care. The harmony of the contemplative life and pastoral care affords a healthy structure for the intentional training of future leaders of the Central Church.

### **Gregory the Great**

Written circa 590 C.E. by Pope Gregory I, *The Book of Pastoral Rule* made an incredible impact on church leaders and was the preeminent guide on how to be an effective spiritual leader, administrator, and pastor for nearly one thousand years. The author was an unlikely candidate to write the world's most compelling text for pastors. Gregory the Great thrived in the silence and seclusion of the monastery and was very reluctant to be confirmed as pope.

### **The World Gregory Entered**

The world Gregory was born into was changing; Rome was no longer the capital of the empire and the world was changing. Robert Markus explains, "To pass from the world of Augustine and his pagan contemporaries into the world of Gregory the Great (Pope 590 C.E.– 604 C.E.) is to move by imperceptible stages from a world in which the basic question was 'What is a Christian?' to one in which it has become 'How should a Christian live, behave, be a good Christian?'"<sup>1</sup> In the world Gregory knew, Christianity was the official religion of the empire, which meant Christianity saw mass conversions.

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1. Robert Markus, "From Rome to the Barbarian Kingdoms (330-700)," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, ed. John McManners (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 84.

The monastic life grew rapidly paralleling the mass conversions. The numerous conversions were perceived by some to be for civil advantages rather than deep-rooted convictions. Many disturbed by the laxity sensed in the mass conversions turned to the monastic life.

The origins of monasticism have often been attributed to a combination of factors associated with the move of Christianity from persecuted minority to the dominant religion of the empire. First, the rapid expansion in numbers of Christians, often for social reasons, led to a growing sense of laxity. Second, the ideals of martyrdom transferred from physical death to a spiritualized replacement.<sup>2</sup>

Though born into a family of means, Gregory the Great passionately adopted the budding monastic lifestyle.

Gregory's adoption of the monastic lifestyle was influenced by his family. He mentions three maternal aunts, Tarsilla, Gordiana, and Aemiliana. All three aunts lived as virgins "mainly in the family home in a monastic fashion under a private or public vow,"<sup>3</sup> according to Barbara Müller. Tarsilla and Aemiliana prayed so intensely and frequently the skin on their knees and elbows were hardened. Gregory's mother upon the death of his father converted to the monastic life. Müller adds, "She entered the convent Cella Nova near the basilica of St. Paul."<sup>4</sup>

Concerning his conversion to the monastic life, "Gregory goes into detail in only one passage of his works."<sup>5</sup> In the dedication of his commentary on Job, he cites habits

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2. Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality: A Brief History Second Edition* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 50.

3. Barbara Müller, "Gregory the Great and Monasticism," in *A Companion to Gregory the Great*, eds. Bronwen Neil and Matthew Dal Santo, (Boston: Brill, 2013), 83.

4. *Ibid*, 84.

5. *Ibid*.

which distanced him from God. “The restraining habit that he sites is his office as prefect of the city of Rome, which he had undertaken in patriotic enthusiasm combined perhaps with a certain amount of vanity.”<sup>6</sup> His own repentant heart impacted Gregory to adopt the monastic lifestyle as did family influences, the least of which was his father’s death.

#### From Monk to Pope

Gregory’s family had many connections with the church and enjoyed the benefits of wealth. Justo Gonzalez writes, “He was born in Rome around 540 C.E., apparently to a family of the old aristocracy.”<sup>7</sup> Within the Roman Catholic Church, Gregory’s father was a minor officer.<sup>8</sup> His great-great-grandfather was Pope Felix III and another kinsman was Pope Agapetus. Arthur Holder addresses Gregory’s education, “He received the best education available and was marked for a career in administration.”<sup>9</sup> Early in his adult life Gregory was called to use his administrative gifts for which he was academically trained by serving as the prefect of Rome.

Holder continues, “While still in his early thirties, he was appointed prefect of the city, which was the highest secular office in Rome.”<sup>10</sup> After his father’s death, Gregory inherited property and wealth, and put his beliefs into action.<sup>11</sup> Thomas A. Von Hagel

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6. Ibid.

7. Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to the Dawn of Reformation*, (New York: Harper One, 2010), 285.

8. Carole Straw, *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection*, (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), 5.

9. Arthur Holder, “Gregory the Great: Book of Pastoral Rule,” in *Christian Spirituality: The Classics*, ed. Arthur Holder (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 75.

10. Ibid.

11. *ODCC*, s.v. “Gregory the I, Saint.”

writes, “Gregory became an ascetic in 574 C.E. when he sold his belongings giving part to the poor and using the rest to found seven monasteries.”<sup>12</sup> His estate in Rome was transformed into St. Andrews monastery, which Gregory entered as an ordinary monk. The monks followed precepts or a rule, much like the Benedictine monks.<sup>13</sup> “Living in the monastery he established in Rome, Gregory cut off himself from the world and had ample opportunity to live penitently, e.g., poverty, fasting, and humility.”<sup>14</sup> Gregory reports later in life concerning his time in the monastery as when he was the most content.

After five years in the monastery, Gregory was soon called into public ministry. Holder writes, “From his monastic retreat, Gregory was called in 579 C.E. to be one of seven deacons of Rome.”<sup>15</sup> Pope Pelagius II made the request for Gregory to leave the monastery and to become a part of the deaconate, which served as a cabinet for the pope. Soon Gregory was assigned to represent Pope Pelagius II in Constantinople before the emperor. During his seven years in Constantinople he lived in a community with other Italian monks while speaking for “the religious concerns of the papacy”<sup>16</sup> and championing “the military, political, and economic interests of the citizens of Rome.”<sup>17</sup> It is during this period of Gregory’s life that he began writing concerning pastoral care.

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12. Thomas A. Von Hagel, "A Preaching of Repentance: The Forty Gospel Homilies of Gregory the Great," *Homiletic* 31, no. 1 (2006), 4.

13. Holder, “Gregory the Great,” 75.

14. Von Hagel, “A Preaching of Repentance,” 1-10.

15. Holder, “Gregory the Great,” 76.

16. George E. Demacopoulos, *Introduction of The Book of Pastoral Rule*, by St. Gregory the Great, trans. George E. Demacopoulos (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2007), 10.

17. *Ibid.*



Demacopoulos notes, “The *Moralia* written during his stay in Constantinople contains an outline of the book’s (*The Book of Pastoral Rule*) third part, along with the author’s stated intention to return to the topic at a later time.”<sup>18</sup>

In 585 C.E., Gregory returned to St. Andrews monastery in Rome and soon became the abbot of the monastery. Pope Pelagius II died in 590 C.E., leading to Gregory’s election as pope. He was hesitant to accept this new position and even sent a letter to the emperor asking that his appointment not be confirmed. The letter never made it to Constantinople. It is suggested by some that “Gregory’s brother intercepted the letter.”<sup>19</sup> Reluctantly, Gregory was named bishop of Rome, becoming the first monk to become pope.

#### Monasticism and Administration

One reason Gregory was hesitant to become bishop of Rome was his passion for the monastic and ascetic life. A lifestyle characterized by abstinence from worldly pleasures, monasticism allowed Gregory and other monks to pursue religious and spiritual goals with clear focus. “Gregory was a fervent monk, as indicated by a regime of fasting imposed upon himself, a regime that negatively affected his health.”<sup>20</sup> In fact, even after his success as pope and prefect of Rome, Gregory longed for his days in the monastery where he could truly apply himself to knowing God. “Gregory always looked back on this period of monastic seclusion as the happiest time in his life and lamented the

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18. Holder, “Gregory the Great,” 76.

19. Ibid.

20. John W. O’Malley, *A History of the Popes: From Peter to the Present*, (Lanham: Sheed & Ward, 2010), 45.

loss of contemplative leisure that accompanied his call into the ‘secular business’ of pastoral care.”<sup>21</sup>

However, the service he provided to the city of Rome and Pope Pelagius II makes it obvious he was gifted in administration and diplomacy. *The Book of Pastoral Rule* unites Gregory’s passion for the contemplation of the monastic life with his gift for effective administration. Throughout the book, Gregory called spiritual leaders to be connected both to the quiet contemplation of the monastic life while managing the daily tasks of administrative life needed for ministering to the people.

Though passionate for the contemplative life, Gregory exemplified “the active life lived contemplatively.”<sup>22</sup> While in Constantinople he never shirked his responsibility of bringing the needs of Rome before the emperor. It seems the emperor had limited interest in Roman concerns freeing much of Gregory’s time. “He devoted much of his time to personal study and pastoral supervision (he served as the abbot of his community).”<sup>23</sup> Later as pope, “Gregory, himself, exercised a public ministry that included providing food for the poor and negotiating with invading armies.”<sup>24</sup> Stories circulated that he fed three thousand persons a day and another that he had a dozen poor

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21. Holder, “Gregory the Great,” 75.

22. “The active life lived contemplatively” will be defined in greater detail later in the chapter. Simply put it is the synthetization of contemplation and pastoral care.

23. George E. Demacopoulos, *Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 129.

24. Holder, “Gregory the Great,” 79.

men dine with him each day.<sup>25</sup> “Gregory continued to monitor and correct the spiritual state of his most famous disciple”<sup>26</sup> from St. Andrews, Augustine of Canterbury.

### The Book of Pastoral Rule

Gregory was a prolific writer. Though he is best known for *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, Gregory wrote several other highly influential works.

Gregory the great, a diplomat and monk who eventually became pope, is famous ... but also for his important spiritual writings. His *Dialogues* contain all the biographical detail we know of St Benedict, his *Letters* stress especially the contemplative nature of monastic life, his *Pastoral Care* [Another title for *The Book of Pastoral Rule*<sup>27</sup>] is an early example of pastoral theology, and there were commentaries on Job, Ezekiel, the gospels, and the Song of Songs. From these writings emerge an important but not systematically structured theology which had a medieval spirituality. Among his important themes are contemplation, discernment, the role of suffering, stages of spiritual growth, compunction, and joyful desire.<sup>28</sup>

He had an incredible impact on monasticism and asceticism for many years beyond his papacy through his writings.

Shortly after becoming pope in 590 C.E., Gregory the Great wrote *The Book of Pastoral Rule* and sent it to John, archbishop of Ravenna. For the next thousand years this book was the primary text on pastoral ministry for both the Eastern and Western Church. “After reading the *Book of Pastoral Rule*, the Byzantine emperor Maurice ordered the book to be translated and disseminated to every bishop in his empire.”<sup>29</sup>

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25. O’Malley, *A History of Popes*, 47.

26. George E. Demacopoulos, *Five Models of Spiritual Direction*, 153.

27. I added clarification in brackets.

28. Sheldrake, *Spirituality*, 60-61.

29. Demacopoulos, *Introduction of The Book of Pastoral Rule*, 10.

The prevalent influence *The Book of Pastoral Rule* has had on clergy in all of Christianity impacted my selection of this work as the theological construct for my project. The book has proven to be incredibly durable, persuasive, and relevant “Since the 1980’s, some theologians (especially in neoconservative Protestant and evangelical circles) have sought to retrieve Gregory’s *Pastoral Rule* as a vital resource for pastors, preachers, and Christian counselors today.”<sup>30</sup> *The Book of Pastoral Rule* is as relevant today as it was in 590 C.E. as seen from its influence on contemporary Christian authors later in this chapter.

The book’s contemporary relevance is witnessed in the final chapter. “Since it is often the case that when a sermon is delivered in accordance with a high standard, the soul of the speaker is inflated by the hidden joy of self-display, therefore it is necessary that great care be taken so that he might feel the sting of a fearful conscience.”<sup>31</sup> Pastors today are tempted to seek praise and affirmation for their preaching. The modern preacher stands on a stage, a place used for performances, and practices her craft. As Gregory reminds the spiritual leader throughout *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, he must seek a balance between service to others including preaching and time alone with God.

The following one paragraph synopsis of the book is helpful for understanding its structure. In a few sentences, I provide a description of the four parts that make up *The Book of Pastoral Rule*. The synopsis will give deeper context to Gregory’s rules and

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30. Holder, “Gregory the Great,” 81-82.

31. St. Gregory the Great, *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, trans. George E. Demacopoulos (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2007), 209.

descriptions from which the theological framework is based and the concepts of contemplation, pastoral care, and mentoring that will be built upon in the coming section.

*The Book of Pastoral Rule* is divided into four parts of differing lengths. The first part depicts the qualifications and challenges facing a spiritual leader. The next part calls pastors to an exemplary life of service while acknowledging their own sinfulness and need for time alone with God. The longest section describes spiritual medicine the preacher can administer to different sorts of people. In the last and shortest part of the book, spiritual leaders are counseled to return to God seeking care for their soul.

### **Modern Need for Contemplation**

Gregory was well aware of the dangers of excessive business and the draining nature of pastoral work. In order to have sanity in life, Gregory relentlessly pursued the contemplative life as well as activism and public life. Recently a friend shared his need for similar sanity in life. This friend could be considered a modern day itinerant preacher, preaching in a different city most weekends. During a recent visit he shared that he was going to take a break from itinerant preaching, saying “I need to spend some time listening, so that I will have something to say.” I understood that my friend was saying he needed to spend a season in prayer and other spiritual disciplines, to listen to discern God’s will for his life and for contemporary messages God would have him to deliver. I believe most preachers and teachers of the Word would benefit from a season of intentional listening to God and engaging their parishioners’ worlds. Holder also wrote about how Gregory’s message applies to modern church leaders: “Reading the *Pastoral Rule* today makes one aware human nature has remained the same through centuries of societal change, technological development, and scientific advance. Several of Gregory’s

favorite themes have particular resonance for people in the contemporary world.”<sup>32</sup> I think we will see that Gregory the Great would applaud my friend and other preachers who take similar actions.

### **Three Pertinent Themes**

Though many themes regarding leadership and church organization are found in *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, I selected three pertinent themes as the theological framework for the Elder Mentoring Program. The themes of contemplation, pastoral care, and mentoring are essential to the spiritual leader, and will be examined from the writings of Gregory the Great, contemporary Christian literature, and the Bible.

#### Contemplation

“This is what contemplation is – *being present to the One who is always present with us and being radically given over to that Presence.*”<sup>33</sup> Contemplation involves disciplines which make one available to the Triune God. It is participation in disciplines such as prayer, Lectio Divina, silence, solitude, and meditation. “In silence and contemplation, we rest from all our human striving and division and touch the deeper current of truth that runs underneath everything else – the truth that all things have already been reconciled by Christ.”<sup>34</sup> Contemplation is the life-giving source from which the spiritual leader may administer pastoral care.

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32. Holder, “Gregory the Great,” 82.

33. Ruth Haley Barton, “Contemplation in Action: Learning from Martin Luther King, Jr.,” *Conversations: A Forum for Authentic Transformation* 8:2 (2010), 83.

34. Ruth Haley Barton, “Make a Joyful Silence,” <http://www.transformingcenter.org/2009/02/make-a-joyful-silence/>, 4.

Based on Gregory the Great’s passion for monasticism, the emphasis he places on contemplation is not surprising. Gregory writes, “concerning what sort of qualities should be present for one to assume spiritual leadership.” (Part One Rule Ten)<sup>35</sup> and then lists the qualities needed in the life of the spiritual leader. When speaking of the spiritual leader Gregory says, “he must desire the internal life only.”<sup>36</sup> Gregory even suggests, “Indeed, a man is ‘blind,’ if he is ignorant of the light of heavenly contemplation because he is oppressed by the darkness of the present life.”<sup>37</sup> Several more items from this list of qualities will be considered under the section on mentoring.

Gregory insists that *contemplatio* and *discertio* are the two most important attributes for successful leadership. By the sixth century *contemplatio* had long been synonymous with the ascetic retreat – a life of quiet meditation. *Discertio*, likewise, had long been used with ascetic literature to describe the key supernatural gift bestowed by God upon a worthy spiritual advisor.<sup>38</sup>

Demacopoulos also noted that Gregory emphasized contemplation to the degree that “the ideal candidate is measured in ascetic terms.”<sup>39</sup> He placed such incredible emphasis on spiritual contemplation because he was personally aware of the burden ministry could be to the pastor. Holder outlined the danger a spiritual leader faces when they fail to make time for contemplation: “The heaviest burden of the pastoral office is

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35. The part/chapter number and rule number from *The Book of Pastoral Rule* will be placed in parentheses following the insertion of a rule for ease of reading the thesis. Other quotes from *The Book of Pastoral Rule* will be cited in a footnote.

36. St. Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Rule*, 43.

37. *Ibid.*, 45.

38. George E. Demacopoulos, *Five Models of Spiritual Direction*, 132.

39. *Ibid.*, 134.

that the leader is distracted by external affairs so that the mind loses concentration, forgoes self-examination, and soon falls into sin.”<sup>40</sup>

As Gregory suggests, it is easy for the spiritual leader to become distracted by the busyness of ministry. Because of the natural tendency for ministry to become a burden, Gregory insists the spiritual leader must return to silence and solitude regularly to meet with God. Similarly, a contemporary author, Ruth Haley Barton appeals for the silence and solitude associated with the monastic lifestyle: “The longing for solitude is the longing for God. It is the longing to experience union with God unmediated by the ways we typically try to relate to God.”<sup>41</sup> By “unmediated” Barton is suggesting a union with God unfiltered through words, theological constructs, religious activity, or manipulation by oneself or by others. But Barton is not advocating for the silence and solitude of a monastic setting. She is appealing for an experience in which the twenty-first century Christian makes space in their schedules to be contemplative.

Solitude is a place. It is a place in time that is set apart for God and God alone, a time when we unplug and withdraw from the noise of interpersonal interactions, from the noise, busyness and constant stimulation associated with life in the company of others. It is the practice that spiritual seekers down through the ages have used to experience intimacy with God rather than just talking about it.<sup>42</sup>

Approximately fourteen hundred years divide the time between *The Book of Pastoral Rule* and the contemporary writings of Barton. Countless others have written about the importance of seeking contemplation while providing pastoral care. Another example of one who both taught and lived contemplation to power pastoral care is Thomas Campbell.

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40. Holder, “Gregory the Great,” 77.

41. Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2006), 32.

42. Ibid.



Like Gregory, Thomas Campbell practiced contemplation as an individual, familial, and congregational activity. Thomas Campbell was the father of Alexander Campbell, from which the Stone-Campbell movement derives its name. While Alexander was a lad, Thomas pastored the Ahorey Presbyterian Church in Ireland. The synod required the minister's participation in daily prayers with his family. His contemplative activities exceeded those legislated by the synod. Eva Jean Wrather writes the following concerning father and son: "Like his father before him, he took to lonely walks in the fields and to prayer in secluded spots."<sup>43</sup> While valuing contemplative pursuits, Campbell did not neglect pastoral care of the congregation. "Some four times a year, accompanied by one or two of his ruling elders, he made parochial visits during which every family in his charge was examined and catechized and admonished."<sup>44</sup>

Jesus provides the greatest example of the contemplative lifestyle. Throughout the Gospel accounts of his earthly ministry, Jesus created a place of silence and solitude to be alone with God. "One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God" (Luke 6:12).<sup>45</sup> Following his night alone in prayer, Jesus chose the twelve apostles and sent them out on an evangelistic mission. Matthew records a similar event following the feeding of the five thousand. "After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray." (Matt 14:22). Earlier in Jesus' ministry Mark depicts Him rising early in the morning to be alone with God. "Very early

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43. Eva Jean Wrather, *Alexander Campbell: An Adventurer in Freedom*, ed. D. Duane Cummins (Fort Worth: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 2005), 32.

44. *Ibid.*

45. The New International Version translation will be quoted throughout the thesis unless otherwise noted.

in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.” (Mark 1:35). Jesus’ habit of silence and solitude was so well known by his apostles that Judas knew just where to find Jesus on the night he was betrayed. “Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed.” (Luke 22:39, 41).

Gregory the Great, in the sixth century, and Ruth Haley Barton, in the twenty-first century, appeal to Christians, especially Christian spiritual leaders, to “desire the internal life”<sup>46</sup> and suggest that the internal life is found in “a place in time that is set apart for God and God alone.”<sup>47</sup> For the Christian, the importance of pursuing the inner life was modeled in the life of Jesus, the greatest Christian spiritual leader to walk the face of the earth.

### Pastoral Care

Pastoral care is the service that fulfills God’s directive for all Christians to love their neighbor. Though the term may seem specific to pastors, the definition reveals that a minister, elder, deacon, or member of the congregation can administer pastoral care by loving and serving others. The struggle for the shepherd of a church is to find the balance between the two. Mark Searby expresses the struggle in his book, *The Resilient Pastor*: “The enemy delights in distracting a Christian leader from the commitment to doing this

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46. St. Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Rule*, 43.

47. Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*, 32.

inner work which provides a solid foundation for public ministry.”<sup>48</sup> The spiritual leader must strive to find the balance of contemplation and pastoral care in her life.

For effective pastoral care, Gregory the Great encourages pastors to know their parishioners well enough to meet the specific needs of each one’s soul. Gregory writes, “That the spiritual director be a humble companion to the good and firm in the zeal of righteousness against vices of sinners.” (Part 2 Rule 6). The word “companion” implies a sort of intimacy and he uses several images to describe this intimacy. “Therefore, the spiritual director must be careful that he show himself to the laity as a mother with respect to kindness and as a father in respect to discipline.”<sup>49</sup> The apostle Paul also uses the image of a mother and a father in writing to the Thessalonians and the Corinthians. “As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children.” (1 Thess 2:6b–7). Paul knew the Thessalonians well enough to understand their need for a type of maternal care. Paul must have needed a different tactic with the church in Corinth. To the Corinthians he interacts with the church as a father: “I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children. Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.” (1 Cor 4:14–15). In an ideal family nobody knows a child better than her parents. Her parents, based on their intimate knowledge, provide the loving support and the loving discipline appropriate for her.

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48. Mark A. Searby, *The Resilient Pastor: Ten Principles for Developing Pastoral Resilience*, (Eugene: Resource Publications, 2015), 20-21.

49. St. Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Rule*, 67.

Gregory the Great also uses the image of a medical caregiver. “It is necessary that whoever directs the healing of wounds must administer with wine the bite of pain and with oil the caress of kindness, so that what is rotten may be purged by the wine and what is curable may be soothed by the oil.”<sup>50</sup>

A “bite of pain” and a “caress of kindness” reminds me of the injury I received after sliding into third base while playing softball at church camp. I thought I had cleaned the dirt from the wound. A few weeks later my right calf was inflamed and infected, showing I had not cleaned the wound adequately. The doctor performed a procedure similar to Gregory’s description. First the doctor poured a medicine on the wound, which brought tears to my eyes and made me want to jump off the table. Next, he coated the injury with a soothing medicated lotion, bringing relief from the pain. Today I bear no mark from that injury because of the compassionate care given by a physician willing to give medicine with a “bite of pain” and to apply lotion with a “caress of kindness.”

In a modern ministry context, a teenager struggling with her sexuality and a widower grieving the loss of his wife are both in need of compassionate care. A pastor may need to apply medicine with a “bite of pain” and to apply lotion with a “caress of kindness. He applies the medicine of scripture with wisdom counter to the world’s advice upon the teenager struggling with sexuality. The pastor tells the widower his grief will diminish but will never go away. In both cases the pastor applies the lotion by communicating he and the church will walk alongside both the teenager and the widower.

Gregory desires to ensure the pastor will provide the pastoral care or message needed by his parishioner in a specific situation and dedicates more than half of the book

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50. Ibid.

to the topic. Part three delivers this information through thirty–six pairs of dyads, ensuring the spiritual director will have the right medicine to administer for the spiritual patient.

Gregory devotes fully two-thirds of *Pastoral Rule* to advising preachers how to address different sorts of hearers, classified in thirty-six pairs of contrasting types. Some dyads are based on conditions of birth or circumstances: men/women, old/young, poor/rich, servants/masters, healthy/sick, married/unmarried. Other pairs describe varieties of temperament, such as bold/modest, lazy/hasty, or humble/proud. The last eight sets describe different types of sinners.<sup>51</sup>

Gregory wrote, “The discourse of the teacher should be adapted to the character of his audience, so that it can address the specific needs of each individual and yet never shrink from the art of communal edification.”<sup>52</sup> Gregory the Great’s desire to equip the pastor to meet the unique needs of each parishioner reminds me of the words of the apostle Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians.

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak, I became weak to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all of this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. (1 Cor 9:19–23).

Though Paul does not have thirty-six pairs of contrasting types of hearers, he does display a desire to know his audience intimately and to address their specific needs.

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51. Holder, “Gregory the Great,” 79.

52. St. Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Rule*, 87.

Revisiting the teenager struggling with her sexuality and the widower grieving the loss of his wife, the specific needs for each are varied. Using Gregory's pairings, you can see an apparent contrast between the two – man and woman, young and old, and single and married. The two are different in their life circumstances. All of these differences impact the way in which the pastor will care for the teenager and widower. The pastor's own station in life will impact how he or she ministers to this pair. The older the pastor the more paternal he can be in dealing with the teenager. The younger the pastor the more like a sibling she needs to be in her interactions with the teenager. The pastor's station in life would in a similar manner impact his or her care of the widower.

Paul and Gregory were both considering pastoral situations outside of public proclamation. Gregory indicates an intimate or one-on-one relationship with parishioners in his teaching concerning spiritual direction. Demacopoulos correlates the spiritual direction described by Gregory to the work of the abba:

The spiritual father or abba identified the unique spiritual condition of each subordinate and then laid out a path of correction accordingly. Gregory anchors his *Pastoral Rule* in this approach. The text not only serves as a sourcebook of spiritual profiles (see book 3) but develops many of the techniques employed by the abba.<sup>53</sup>

### Contemplation and Pastoral Care Synthesized

In the book, *Longing for God*, by Gayle D. Beebe and co-authored by Richard J. Foster, Beebe describes the two concepts already addressed, contemplation and pastoral care, as levels that Christians should pursue. Level one is the active life, the actions of pastoral care or ministry. Beebe states, "The active life begins with love of neighbor,

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53. Demacopoulos, *Five Models of Spiritual Direction*, 135.

which is expressed in concrete acts of service.”<sup>54</sup> Level two is the contemplative life, when one turns inward to reflect.<sup>55</sup> Level three is a synthesis of levels one and two which Beebe names “the active life lived contemplatively.”<sup>56</sup> Beebe suggests, “Gregory found value in all three levels – action alone, contemplation alone, and the commingling of action and contemplation – but he found the third best.”<sup>57</sup>

Beebe credits Gregory the Great for her ability to integrate contemplation and service in her own life.

When I encountered Gregory the Great I realized I had finally found somebody who understood my plight. In 1996 Richard Foster and I were preparing to team-teach this material for the first time. I had been agonizing for nearly twenty-years over how to develop a life of prayer and contemplation when my daily responsibilities were filled with ‘worldly men and their affairs.’ Encountering Gregory the Great gave me permission to be myself – to live the active life contemplatively. I am forever grateful.<sup>58</sup>

The influence of Gregory the Great’s life and work on Beebe is a testament to the durability and relevance of *The Book of Pastoral Rule*.

Fourteen hundred years before Gayle Beebe struggled with balancing the contemplative life with ministry, Gregory the Great attempted to pursue active ministry contemplatively in his own life and eventually as a church leader. Consider what Gregory says in several of the rules beginning with, “That the spiritual director be discerning in

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54. Gayle D. Beebe and Richard J. Foster, *Longing for God: Seven Paths of Christian Devotion* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 300.

55. *Ibid.*, 301.

56. *Ibid.*, 305.

57. *Ibid.*, 307.

58. *Ibid.*, 296.

silence and profitable in speech.” (Part 2 Rule 4). In the next rule Gregory states, “That the spiritual director should be a compassionate neighbor to everyone and superior to all in contemplation.”<sup>59</sup> (Rule 2 Part 5). Still again in the second part of his book, Gregory writes, “That the spiritual director should not reduce his attention to the internal life because of external occupations, nor should he relinquish his care for external matters because of his anxiety for the internal life.” (Part 2 Rule 7). Additionally he addresses the synthesis of ministry and contemplation by chastising those who would choose only to practice the contemplative life. (Part 2 Rule 5). Even the title of part four emphasizes the synthesis that should take place in the life of the pastor: “That the preacher, after he has done everything that is required, should return to himself so he does not take pride in his life or preaching.”<sup>60</sup> Even with his extreme passion for contemplative pursuits, Gregory saw the importance of both internal contemplation and external service in the life of the pastor.

Demacopoulos writes, “Pope Gregory believed that successful pastoral leadership required a balance between the contemplation of the isolated ascetic and the action of the well-trained administrator. This ‘active-contemplative’ was not only a more effective leader, he was also a better Christian than either the recluse or the administrator.”<sup>61</sup> Gregory exemplified the ‘active-compleitive’ in his own life. Gregory used his own inheritance to help the poor and fund seven monasteries, showing that even before he had a leadership role, his actions reflected his ideals and had a long-lasting influence.

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59. Ibid., 58.

60. Ibid., 209.

61. Demacopoulos, *Introduction of Pastoral Rule*, 16.



His was one of the most dynamic and influential careers in papal history. Some of Gregory's achievements include the daily feeding of the Roman indigent, the refurbishing of the city's dilapidated churches and defenses, the initiation of monastics to the papal curia, and the reintroduction of Roman Christianity to Britain.<sup>62</sup>

As pope, Gregory emphasized and practiced contemplation and pastoral care. In the quote from Demacopoulos, we see that Pope Gregory is involved in benevolence, building programs, spiritual disciplines, and evangelism thus living "the active life lived contemplatively."

Another example of pastoral care in a spiritual leader is George Herbert, born in 1333. Philip Sheldrake writes, "While George Herbert is most widely and popularly known for his poetry, notably his major collection entitled *The Temple*, equally important is his lesser-known treatise on the priestly life entitled by Herbert as *The Country Parson, His Character, and Rule of Holy Life*."<sup>63</sup> Following an illustrious academic career and brief political career, Herbert pursued the pastorate in the Anglican Church. He received his first assignment in 1360 in a small rural church and it is in this context Herbert writes *The Country Parson* and has much to say about pastoral care.

*The Country Parson* instructs the pastor in his example and duties toward his congregation in preaching, administering the sacraments, visiting parishioners' homes, even in using medicine and resolving legal disputes. The pastor's life is to touch the lives of the people of his church in every area.<sup>64</sup>

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62. Demacopoulos, *Five Models of Spiritual Direction*, 129.

63. Philip Sheldrake, "George Herbert: The Country Parson," in *Christian Spirituality: The Classics*, ed. Arthur Holder (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 246.

64. William G. Witt, "George Herbert's Approach to God: The Faith and Spirituality of a Country Priest," *Theology Today* 60 (2013), 217.

Herbert suggested the source of this pastoral care was a contemplative life style. He prayed daily at ten o'clock and four o'clock with his wife and their nieces. Congregation members often joined the family to participate in the times of prayer.

Although he emphasized the importance of study and prayer for Christian pastor, there is no hint anywhere in Herbert's writings that he thinks the contemplative superior to the active life. Rather, his ideal for Christian living corresponds to what the medievals would have called the active life – or at least a 'mixed life', combining action and contemplation.<sup>65</sup>

The balanced combination of the ministry and contemplation can be seen in the Bible. Consider Jesus' encounter with the expert in the law in the book of Matthew. The man asked Jesus which commandment in the Law of Moses was the greatest. "Jesus replied, 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Matt 22:37–39). Douglas Hare comments, "We should probably see 'like' as meaning more than 'similar in structure' or even 'similar in importance.' Implied is a similarity in theological depth and interrelationship."<sup>66</sup> In other words Jesus is not handing out ribbons for greatest commandments, and loving your neighbor is awarded first runner up. Loving God and loving your neighbor are of equal importance to Jesus. This is very apparent in the apostle John's first letter.

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen

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65. Ibid., 218.

66. Douglas R.A. Hare, *Matthew: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Preaching and Teaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2009), 259.

God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister. (1 John 4:7 –12, 19 –21 NIV).

John's inspired words confirm the synthesis that must take place between contemplation and ministry, between solitude and pastoral care. Eugene Peterson in his book, *The Contemplative Pastor* states it this way: "Curing souls is a term that filters out what is introduced by a secularizing culture. It is also a term that identifies with our ancestors and colleagues in ministry, lay and clerical, who are convinced that a life of prayer is the connective tissue between holy day proclamation and weekday discipleship."<sup>67</sup>

Ironically, Gregory the Great who attempted to avoid the papacy due to his love for contemplation, later chastised monks who attempted to avoid clerical assignments, and chastised pastors who spent all their time in contemplation: "Concerning those who in the position of leadership are able to benefit others by the example of their virtue but flee from it in pursuit of personal stillness." (Part 1 Rule 5). Gregory intended for his pastors and other subordinates to practice balanced contemplation and pastoral care: "If, therefore, the care of feeding is a testament to love, then he who abounds in virtue but refuses to feed the flock of God is found guilty of having no love for the Supreme Shepherd."<sup>68</sup> Gregory sounds as if he is echoing the message of John in 1 John 4: "And so there are those, as we have said, who are enriched by many gifts; and because they

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67. Eugene H. Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor: Returning to the Art of Spiritual Direction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 59.

68. St. Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Rule*, 36.

prefer the contemplative study, they decline to make themselves useful by preaching to their neighbors, and preferring the mystery of stillness they take refuge in the solitude of [spiritual] investigations.”<sup>69</sup>

Gregory’s writings give confirmation to my friend’s, the itinerate preacher, “sabbatical” as well as reinforcing the importance he places on both contemplation and service: “Accordingly, the spiritual director should be discerning in his silence and profitable in his speech, otherwise he may say something that should have been suppressed or suppress something that should have been said.”<sup>70</sup>

Gregory the Great epitomized the struggle of balancing the contemplative with pastoral service. In the last paragraph of *The Book of Pastoral Rule* Gregory asks in humility for John of Ravenna to pray for him.

Alas, I am like a poor painter who tries to paint the ideal man. [Again], I am trying to point others to the shore of perfection, as I am tossed back and forth by the waves of sin. But in the shipwreck of life, I beg you to sustain me with the plank of your prayers, so that your merit-filled hands might lift me up, since my own weight causes me to sink.<sup>71</sup>

Even though Gregory may have struggled adjusting to his increased role in pastoral service, I believe his example and especially *The Book of Pastoral Rule* have influenced generations of pastors, using Beebe’s words, to the “active life lived contemplatively.”

### Mentoring

Mentoring is essential in the life of the spiritual leader for influencing the next generation of leaders as well as exemplifying the Christian faith. Mentoring is the method

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69. Ibid., 37.

70. Ibid., 54.

71. Ibid., 212.

by which the Central elders will train future leaders of the congregation. Within this framework, the elders will model contemplation and pastoral care to their mentees. While modeling contemplation and pastoral care, it is my desire that the current five elders will grow in the areas of mentoring, pastoral care, and contemplation.

Gregory the Great expected and required spiritual leaders to be models of the “active life lived contemplatively,” as Gregory’s life was an example to all who followed after him. Keith Anderson and Randy Reese remind us in their book, *Spiritual Mentoring*, “Christian faith is an imitative faith. It always has been. Beginning with Jesus’ earliest words to the men and women who would become his apprentices of faith, Christianity has understood itself to be a faith taught by one to another.”<sup>72</sup>

Jesus is the greatest model for living the Christian life. Several hundred years after Gregory the Great, Thomas A Kempis wrote a reminder of Jesus’ exemplar model of the Christian life: “‘Anyone who follows me shall not walk in darkness,’ says the Lord. These are the words of Christ, and by them we are reminded that we must imitate his life and his ways if we are to be truly enlightened and set free from the darkness of our own hearts.”<sup>73</sup> More contemporary voices echo the sentiment of Kempis. Anderson and Reese wrote, “The life of Christ must be seen and held as the unique model worthy of imitation for Christians.”<sup>74</sup> Also noteworthy is their suggestion that “‘Follow me’ may be

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72. Keith R. Anderson and Randy D. Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide for Seeking and Giving Direction* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 15.

73. Dennis J. Billy, *The Imitation of Christ by Thomas A Kempis: A Spiritual Commentary and Reader’s Guide* (Notre Dame: Christian Classics, 2005), 20.

74. Anderson and Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring*, 15.

the simplest description of Christian spirituality that exists anywhere.”<sup>75</sup> George Lane also pointed to Jesus as the true Christian model saying, “Jesus, then, is always the attractive source and challenging exemplar of Christian spirituality.”<sup>76</sup>

In 1 Cor 11:1 Paul charged the Corinthians, “Follow my example, as I follow Christ.” Gregory the Great likewise charged his spiritual leaders to live as Christian models and be examples for the laity. He states, “Concerning what sort of qualities should be present for one to assume spiritual leadership.”<sup>77</sup> (Part 1 Rule 10). Gregory outlines three requirements for the spiritual leader to live a life to be imitated. “He must therefore, be the model for everyone,”<sup>78</sup> and more specifically, “he must be devoted entirely to the example of good living.”<sup>79</sup> Gregory continues to charge his spiritual leaders to an exemplar life: “He must set such a positive example for others that he has nothing for which he should ever be ashamed.”<sup>80</sup>

In the previous section we reviewed the rule, “Concerning those who in the position of leadership are able to benefit others, by the example of their virtue but flee from in pursuit of personal stillness,”<sup>81</sup> (Part 1 Rule 5), as a warning against fleeing

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75. Ibid.

76. George A. Lane, *Christian Spirituality: An Historical Sketch* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1984), v.

77. St. Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Rule*, 43.

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid, 36.

service for contemplation. It is important as well to note that by fleeing service, one also flees the opportunity to be an example of Christian spirituality and Christian service.

There is no doubt that Gregory the Great intended for his spiritual leaders to model the Christian life to those in their care. In outlining how a spiritual director, like an elder or a teacher, should be first in service, (Part 2 Rule 3) Gregory notes two ways the spiritual leader should be an example: “The spiritual director should be the first so that by his way of life he might show the laity how to live, and so that the flock (which follows the voice and behavior of its shepherd) may advance all the better by his example than by his words alone. For indeed, the one who is compelled, by his position to speak of the highest things is also compelled by necessity, to show the highest things by his example.”<sup>82</sup>

The Bible also has much to say about living as an example and mentoring. In high school, I remember memorizing this passage, “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example to the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, and in purity.” (1 Tim 4:12). I memorized this verse to fulfill a requirement for a summer mission trip. In a context of getting ready for a high school mission trip the emphasis was on “because you are young.” Now some forty-three years later I am no longer considered young by many. Yet I believe as a spiritual leader I, along with all spiritual leaders, elders, and teachers, need to be an example to the believers in speech, life, love, faith, and purity regardless of our age.

The apostle Paul reinforces the importance of Christianity being a faith learned largely by imitation in several other places in his writings. To the church in Corinth he

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82. Ibid, 51.

says, “Therefore I urge you to imitate me.” (1 Cor 4:16). Later in the same letter, in a quote seen earlier in this section, he says, “Follow my example, as I follow Christ.” (1 Cor 11:1). To the church in Philippi he says, “Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do.” (Phil 3:17). Later in the letter to the church in Philippi he says, “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me - put it into practice.” (Phil 4:9a). In Paul’s prayer for the brothers and sisters in Thessalonica he reflects upon their imitation. “You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit.” (1 Thess 1:6). In his second letter to the church in Thessalonica Paul says, “For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example.” (2 Thess 3:7a). After Paul suggested that he and his traveling companions had not been a burden to the Thessalonians, he exclaims, “We did this, not because we did not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow.” (2 Thess 3:9).

Scriptures are filled with “examples of mentors who profoundly shape the lives of their protégés by ‘walking beside’ them: Jethro and Moses, Moses and Joshua, Naomi and Ruth, Eli and Samuel, Elijah and Elisha, Mordecai and Esther, Jesus and his disciples, and, finally Paul and Timothy”<sup>83</sup> Because Paul calls for imitation numerous times in his writings, I will consider his mentor status through his relationship with Timothy.

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83. Jason Bybee, “Developing an Intentional Mentoring Model for Discipleship Formation at the Mayfair Church of Christ” (DMin Project Thesis, Abilene Christian University, 2014), 32.



Paul and Timothy's mentor/mentee relationship exemplifies what I sought to create in the Elder Mentoring Program. On his second missionary journey, Paul invites Timothy to work beside him based on the recommendation of the believers in Lystra and Iconium: "The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him. Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek." (Acts 16:2-3). Throughout the remainder of Paul's life, Timothy served as a co-worker in establishing churches, as an emissary delivering letters on Paul's behalf and checking on the welfare of churches, and pastoral leader the church of Ephesus, where Paul had spent his longest tenure. Paul often used terms of endearment in describing Timothy and in communicating with him. In 2 Timothy Paul wrote, "To Timothy, my dear son." (2 Tim 1:2a). In the same chapter Paul speaks firmly and lovingly to Timothy, saying, "...as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy." (2 Tim 1:3c-4). Paul reminds Timothy of the spiritual formation that began with his mother and grandmother as he continues the paragraph. He firmly reminds Timothy of the work God has empowered him to do.

As Paul invited Timothy to work beside of him, the Elder Mentor Program allowed our elders to invite men of our congregation to work beside them. Like Paul and Timothy, I prayed that the elders and their mentees would grow intimately as brothers in Christ. I would like to see the elder's relationship with their mentees grow beyond the eight weeks of the Elder Mentoring Program.

Considering the Biblical foundation for mentoring, let us return to our supreme example, Jesus. In Luke 11 Jesus' disciples observe him praying: "One day Jesus was

praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.’” Throughout the Gospels, the act of Jesus praying is mentioned frequently, so we know that the disciples saw Jesus pray often. Modeling the contemplative life, afforded Jesus the opportunity to teach those to whom he had been an example.

Spiritual leaders today have a similar opportunity to model the Christian life before others as a way to create dialogue concerning the Christian journey. Ruth Haley Barton in her book, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, uses the illustration of Moses leading the Israelites in the desert as an example for the spiritual leader guiding God’s people today.

The best guide for any journey is one who has made the journey himself or herself — perhaps multiple times — and thus knows something about the terrain, the climate, the beauties, dangers and challenges present at each point along the way. Part of what qualified Moses to lead the people of Israel out of their bondage was that he had already been on his own journey out of bondage and into the freedom to follow God fully.<sup>84</sup>

On the same topic, Barton includes the following quote from Henri Nouwen: “The great illusion of leadership is to think that man can be led out of the desert by someone who has never been there.”<sup>85</sup> As a model of the Christian journey, today’s elder or spiritual leader has an opportunity to mentor others as the spiritual leader imitates Christ.

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84. Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 87.

85. Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York: Image Books, 1990), 72.

### Opportunities for Contemplation and Mentoring

In 1982, I became the Minister of Outreach for the Oakcrest Church of Christ in Oklahoma City, OK. My responsibilities included teaching the class for college-age singles. One morning as I prepared my outline, I started to type, “It is important for the Christian to be in God’s Word daily.” My fingers could not seem to push the keys on my IBM electric typewriter to finish the sentence. Still a full-time student at Oklahoma Christian College, I realized my interaction with the Bible was purely academic. I confessed my sin to God and pledged to be in the Bible daily from that point forward. In visiting with other ministers I have found this experience is common.

Mark Searby in his book, *The Resilient Pastor*, shares the story of Jason, a fourteen-year veteran of ministry, early in tenure at his third church: “Three years into this position, Jason realized that he was teaching others about discipleship and spiritual growth, but that he was personally not experiencing any growth or transformation.”<sup>86</sup> Jason confessed his shortcomings to his wife. Together they prayed for someone to enter Jason’s life to mentor him in discipleship and spiritual formation. A few months later while attending a conference Jason met a pastor from his area who had a passion for discipleship and spiritual formation, and “they soon began meeting and Jason’s spiritual growth took off.”<sup>87</sup> Jason’s story shows the need for spiritual leaders to intentionally seek mentors and growth in spiritual disciplines.

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86. Searby, *The Resilient Pastor*, 17.

87. *Ibid.*, 18.

Searby reported that “Paul Stanley and J. Robert Clinton completed a major study of leaders in which they discovered five characteristics of leaders who ‘finish well.’”<sup>88</sup> In the research, mentoring ranked high in the results. “Every leader that we studied had a network of meaningful relationships and several important mentors during their lifetime.”<sup>89</sup> Searby also recommends that spiritual leaders both have a mentor and be a mentor: “My encouragement to emerging leaders is that they view their involvement in these [mentoring] relationships as an investment in their lives and ministry.”<sup>90</sup>

Like Searby, I have had several mentors through the years. Spending intentional time with them blessed both my spiritual formation and my ministry. Between 1985 and 1994, I was mentored by the six elders of the Westside Church of Christ in McKinney, TX. Recently, I returned to McKinney for the one-hundredth year anniversary of the High Pointe Church of Christ (formerly known as Westside.) I was included in a panel of five ministers representing different points in the history of the church. During my presentation, I credited the involvement of the elders for the fact that I am still in ministry today. Their patience, guidance, and faithful mentoring provided the foundation in ministry that I draw upon to this day.

During my time in ministry, I have also experienced the benefits of being a mentor. Most years I have a summer ministry intern, a position that has afforded me great opportunities to mentor, but sometimes the mentor relationship forms elsewhere. There are two former mentees to whom I’ve grown especially close. One of these young men

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88. Ibid., 34.

89. Paul Stanley and Robert Clinton. *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1992), Kindle Edition, location 1689.

90. Searby, *The Resilient Pastor*, 35.

served as my intern while the other was a youth minister for the church down the road. We have stayed in touch through the years. In 2012, the three of us were reunited in a graduate class and at the conclusion of the class we committed to Skype with each other monthly. Though these young men still count me as a mentor, I consider them dear friends. One outcome of a mentoring relationship can be a deeper, more meaningful relationship. Over the years, my investment in the lives of my interns has proven beneficial for them and a true blessing for me. The blessing to me has come in the form of energizing my own ministry while helping them begin their ministry. Whether in the role of the mentor or mentee, I have found the investment of time in mentoring as spiritual leader has paid great dividends.

#### Application to Elder Mentoring Program

Drawn from *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, shown relevant through examples of contemporary Christian literature and proven worthwhile through scripture, the key components of the Elder Mentoring Program are contemplation, pastoral care, and mentoring. All three concepts are interwoven within the framework of Elder Mentoring Program at the Central Church of Christ.

Each of our five elders chose a mentee and served as examples to the mentees in contemplation and service. During our Wednesday night meetings and their weekly shepherding assignments, the elders served as models for their mentees, while the mentees learned more about the skill and application of contemplation, pastoral care, and mentoring. Through the intentional mentoring program, the mentees developed a better understanding of the duties of the elders of the Central Church of Christ.

The Elder Mentoring Program met as a group seven times, and at each meeting, we practiced at least two spiritual disciplines. Often, we entered a brief period of contemplation through *Lectio Divina*, also known as devotional reading. Passages chosen for *Lectio Divina* addressed the work of an elder and prepared the elders and mentees for their weekly service activity.

Learning and observing the act of pastoral care was a focus in the Elder Mentoring Program. At the end of each program meeting, the elder and mentee pairs were assigned a shepherding activity that embodied pastoral care to complete by the following Wednesday. Most of the activities involved serving members of our congregation or learning more about what it means to be a shepherd or elder at our church.

The Elder Mentoring Program emphasized balancing contemplation and service. For example, in one of the shepherding activities, the elder and mentee spent time in prayer together. As they prayed, they were to discern what service God called them to do in their shepherding activity for that week.

### **Conclusion**

The Bible and Gregory the Great place an emphasis on contemplation, pastoral care, and synthesizing the two through modeling and mentoring. All three concepts are important to the Christian's spiritual journey and have been plainly applied to the Elder Mentoring Program.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this project is to implement an Elder Mentoring Program at Central Church to develop future leaders and provide intentional leadership training. In this chapter I will explain the intervention strategy and format, describe the participants, provide an overview of the program, and the individual sessions. Then I will review the evaluation methodology, data collection, and data analysis.

#### **Intervention Strategy**

The intervention strategy of this project was the Elder Mentoring Program that sought to implement an intentional training method for future leaders, empower the Central Church elders to seek mentorship opportunities, and to teach others the skills, duties, and expectations of a Central elder. While much of the success of the program is contingent on the relationship between the elder and mentee, I wrote a curriculum to support that relationship and fulfill the project goals.<sup>1</sup> The curriculum was organized drawing from the four parts of *The Book Pastoral Rule: Qualifications of a Spiritual Leader, The Life of the Pastor, How to Teach and Advise the Laity, and Humility*.<sup>2</sup> In the curriculum, emphasis is given to contemplation, pastoral care, and mentoring, the three key components of the project's theological framework. To encourage contemplation,

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1. Appendix D.

2. Here I have given the titles of the four parts of *The Book of Pastoral Rule* in an abbreviated form.

prayer and other spiritual disciplines were incorporated in each group session. Every session included a teaching or learning activity regarding the skills or duties of pastoral care. The shepherding activities assigned each week built upon that knowledge with personal experience, as the mentor and mentee pair completed a hands-on activity. The combination of teaching and experience gave all ten participants the opportunity to grow in pastoral care. Through every session and shepherding activity, the elder served as a mentor to his mentee, allowing both to learn and grow in mentorship roles.

### **Format**

Qualitative research was used in the Elder Mentoring Program and was gathered through the experiences of the elders of the Central Church, their mentees, and myself. According to Tim Sensing, “Qualitative research is grounded in the social world of experience and seeks to make sense of lived experience.”<sup>3</sup> Data found in qualitative research is descriptive. The data “takes us, as readers, into the time and place of the observation so that we know what it was like to have been there.”<sup>4</sup> In other words, the data creates a narrative and tells a story.

The elders and mentees participated in the research through the shared experience of the Elder Mentoring Program. They likewise participated in the research by the written documentation of their experience during the weekly shepherding activity. As the facilitator in the mentor program, I also participated in the research.

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3. Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Theses* (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 57.

4. Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, 4th ed. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2015), 54.



Sensing describes DMIN projects: “DMIN projects are a type of participatory action research that introduces an intervention in order to provide ministerial leadership for the transformation of the organization.”<sup>5</sup> In this project, the intervention is the Elder Mentoring Program in which the elders and their mentees participated. “Participatory action research is a sum of its individual terms. Participation is a major characteristic of this work, not only in the sense of collaboration, but in the claim that all people in a particular context need to be involved in the whole of the project undertaken.”<sup>6</sup> In the *User’s Guide to Qualitative Methods*, the authors propose that including participants in the research can create valuable inventions. “Rather than conducting research *on* people, practitioners of PAR [participatory action research] conduct research *with* the people who are being studied.”<sup>7</sup> Action is a part of the process because change is brought about through a purposeful intervention that seeks to address a problem. “The action side of PAR is to make the findings useful, and there is clear benefit to the communities participating in these projects.”<sup>8</sup> “Research as a social process of gathering knowledge and asserting wisdom belongs to all people.”<sup>9</sup> In chapter four, it will be evident that the participants, the elders and their mentees, made discoveries within the scope of the intervention and beyond the scope of the intervention.

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5. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 58.

6. Mary Brydon-Miller, et al., “Jazz and the Banyan Tree: Roots and Riffs on Participatory Action Research,” in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. (Los Angeles: Sage, 2011), 388.

7. Lyn Richards and Janice M. Morse, *User’s Guide to Qualitative Methods* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2007), 58.

8. Brydon-Miller, “Jazz and the Banyan Tree,” 395.

9. *Ibid.*, 388.

### Description of the Participants

Participants of the Elder Mentoring Program were selected purposefully. As Sensing shows, “Purposive samples select people who have awareness of the situation and meet the criteria and attributes that are essential to your research.”<sup>10</sup> Patton suggests, “Purposeful sampling focuses on selecting information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study.”<sup>11</sup> The elders agreed to participate as mentors in the program and were a natural fit for the format, given that they have served the Central Church of Christ as elders for more than fifteen years and that the congregations has demonstrated great respect for them.

The purposeful selection process continued through snowball sampling. Each of the elders invited a man from the congregation to participate in the Elder Mentoring Program. During an elder meeting, the elders discussed men to potentially invite to participate in the Elder Mentoring Program. The discussion was reminiscent of Patton’s considerations concerning snowball sampling, sometimes referred to as chain sampling: “In most programs or systems, a few key names or incidents are mentioned repeatedly. Those people or events, recommended as valuable by a number of different informants, take on special importance.”<sup>12</sup> Of the men discussed, those repeatedly mentioned in the discussion were those invited to participate in the program. Each elder selected one of the men and extended a personal invitation to be his mentee.

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10. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 83.

11. Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, 230.

12. *Ibid.*, 237.

The five men selected represented several demographics of our congregation. Two mentees were in current service to the Central Church as deacons. Three of the men are public educators, one at the elementary level, one at the high school level, and one at the collegiate level. Two of the educators chair their departments while the elementary teacher coach's high school football and track. One mentee was self-employed. Another mentee was the employee of the Federal Government. All five mentees are married. One was an empty nester, while another has two children in high school. Two of the mentees had pre-school age children at the time of the Elder Mentoring Program. The fifth mentee has a child in elementary school and another in high school. All five men accepted the elder's invitation.

In chapter one, the need for additional elders was discussed along with the lack of intentional training of future leaders. This need for elders led to the creation of the Elder Mentoring Program. The aim of the program, however, is to produce leaders, not necessarily future elders. Because of this, the elders and I decided to include men who might not currently meet the characteristics of an elder found in 1 Tim and Titus. For example, if a young father's children were not old enough to make their own faith decisions, this did not eliminate him from being a mentee in the Elder Mentoring Program. There are three reasons behind this decision. First, we did not want to give the impression that the elders and I were choosing the next elders of the Central Church without the input of the congregation. Secondly, intentional training for leaders is both an immediate and a long-term need. Finally, the reality is that some men may never serve the congregation as elders, but may be leaders and shepherds within their sphere of influence among the congregation.

### **Elder Mentoring Program Overview**

The Elder Mentoring Program consisted of seven group sessions, and seven shepherding activities. The group sessions were two-hour meetings on Wednesday evenings during the normal time for Bible study. I served as a discussion leader and learning facilitator at the sessions. Our curriculum included activities to encourage growth in spiritual disciplines, group discussion, and eldership skills and duties taught from scripture, workbooks, and videos to prepare the teams for practicing those skills in the weekly shepherding activities.

Each week the participants reported their experiences in the previous assignment. Because some participants prefer to share information orally and some prefer written reports, the participants were asked to submit a written report and share an oral report at each session. The report consisted of two questions concerning the previous week's activity:

- Describe the shepherding activity you participated in last week.
- What did you learn from this activity? (It could be about being a shepherd, about a fellow member, about your mentor or mentee.)

After sharing oral reports, we participated in a learning activity that emphasized an aspect of pastoral care. The sessions were planned in such a way that the mentee would gain a greater understanding of the elder's duties by studying, experiencing, and reflecting upon them. As the mentor and mentee are expected to grow closer through the program, the assignments allow for the progress of that relationship. There were seven group sessions that followed this format.

On the eighth and final group session, the mentees had the opportunity to demonstrate what they had learned through the program. After submitting their reports, the elders were dismissed and independent expert Doug Peters joined the mentees. Doug presented a case study to the mentees, asked them to complete it as if they were Central Church elders, and observed their process in working through the case study.

### **Description of Individual Sessions**

#### Session One

As the first group session, we started by introducing the five elders and five mentees to the Elder Mentoring Program and allowed participants to ask questions. Each participant signed a consent form and received a copy of the signed form. (Appendix C)

As an exercise in contemplation, we entered a time of *Lectio Divina*. “*Lectio Divina* invites us into God’s presence to listen for his particular, loving word *to me* at this particular moment in time. In *Lectio* one listens to the word as it is read aloud, or read the text aloud for yourself.”<sup>13</sup> I introduced *Lectio Divina* as devotional reading because I knew that some of the participants hadn’t experience this form of scriptural reflection and I didn’t want the Latin name to be a barrier. I believe *Lectio Divina* is understood best through experience, so we will walk through the process once.

We read from Daniel: “Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue.” (Dan 4:27). I asked participants, “What word or phrase jumps out which might apply to present day spiritual

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13. Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 168.

leaders?” A moment of silence was given. Some of the participants shared the word or phrase that came to mind as time allowed. A different person read the same passage from the NRSV and I asked the following question, “Where does the spiritual leader’s counsel come?” Like before, a moment of silence was followed by participants verbally answering the question. After the passage had been by a third person from the NCV, one of the elders prayed for the group to seek Godly counsel over the next seven weeks.

Having considered the spiritual leader’s counsel comes from God, we moved to our next passage of scripture, 1 Cor 9:19–23.:

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

As with the previous passage, three different participants read from three different translations, NIV, NRSV, and NCV. Two questions were asked concerning those to whom we minister and those with whom we interact. The first question was, “What characteristics do most people you are drawn to have in common?” After the second reading, participants were asked, “What message does this passage have for us when we are not naturally drawn to another person?” Following the third reading, a mentee prayed for us to learn to become all things to all men.

Our last scripture for the evening was Ps 37:7: “Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.” Following the first reading, participants pondered, “What comes to

mind when you hear, ‘Be still before the Lord?’” The passage was read again followed by, “When do you find it hardest to wait upon the Lord?” Again, time was given for internal processing and group discussion. After the final reading, I prayed asking God to grow us in our patience and trust of Him.

For the first shepherding activity, I asked that the elder and his mentee to have dinner with their wives. During dinner, the elder and his wife were to share their perception of the role of elder based on their experience as well as their understanding of Biblical teaching concerning elders. Each participant received a “Weekly Shepherding Activity Report”<sup>14</sup> and was directed to complete it and turn it in at the following session.

As a congregation, we acknowledge that the elder works in partnership with his wife. This is one point where the contemporary spiritual leader in Central Church would differ from the spiritual director described by Gregory because he was an advocate of clerical celibacy.<sup>15</sup> However, there is a clear connection between Gregory’s teachings and an elder’s involvement with his mentee and the community. He says, “that the spiritual director should be a compassionate neighbor to everyone.” (Part 1 Rule 5). Earlier in that section, Gregory explains, “What he enjoins by speaking he helps by showing how it is to be done.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, Gregory would see the importance of a spiritual leader being involved in the community of faith via service or sharing a meal.

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14. Appendix E

15. George E. Demacopoulos, *Five Models of Spiritual Direction in the Early Church* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 145.

16. St. Gregory the Great, *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, trans. George E. Demacopoulos (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2007), 51.

## Session Two

Each participant turned in a completed “Weekly Shepherding Activity Report” upon arrival. Like a typical church class, the elders shared any pertinent announcements or updates concerning the church family. Based on the announcements, a prayer list was compiled and one of the participants prayed for the individuals and situations listed. Then oral reports concerning their weekly shepherding activity were given.

The main goal of session two was to introduce the participants to Gregory the Great, *The Book of Pastoral Rule* and its key concepts of contemplation, pastoral care, and mentoring. I also wanted the men to begin thinking of themselves both as mentors and mentees in different areas.

I passed out index cards and asked each participant to write down an activity that they have mastered enough to teach someone else. I clarified that this activity does not have to be church related. (Examples: Throw a curve ball, create a website, overhaul an engine, etc.)

Once the participants had finished writing on their index card, I introduced them to Gregory the Great and *The Book of Pastoral Rule*. I shared with the participants that *The Book of Pastoral Rule* was the standard rule for spiritual leaders for nearly 1,000 years. I emphasized that much of *The Book of Pastoral Rule* is applicable today. We considered the following quote, “No one presumes to teach an art that he has not first mastered through study.”<sup>17</sup> I asked the participants to look at the activity on their index card. While they were looking at their index cards, I asked this question, “Considering your activity, are there others in that same field you could still learn from, though no

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17. Ibid., 31.



longer a novice ourselves? After some discussion, I made the point that a spiritual leader may have spirituality enough to teach or mentor others while continuing to grow themselves.

Each elder and his mentee were asked to read together Matt 15:10-14:

Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen and understand. <sup>11</sup> What goes into a man’s mouth does not make him ‘unclean,’ but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him ‘unclean.’”

Then the disciples came to him and asked, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?”

He replied, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”

After reading the passage, I asked each elder and mentee pair to discuss what this passage says concerning spiritual leaders, their own learning, and their ability to teach others.

Once the whole group reconvened, we returned to Gregory the Great. Later in his book he says, “Those who preside over others should consider not their rank, but the equality of their condition. Moreover, they should revel not in ruling over others but in helping them.”<sup>18</sup> In the same vein consider the words of Peter as he encounters Cornelius in Acts 10:25-26: “As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. But Peter made him get up. ‘Stand up,’ he said, ‘I am only a man myself.’” After reading the quote from Gregory the Great and the passage from Acts, each elder and his mentee were to discuss both quotes. The pair was asked to consider the following question. “Is spiritual leadership about power and rank or is it about humility and service?”

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18. Ibid., 62.

To conclude the evening, I introduced the group to a book by Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*.<sup>19</sup> The emphasis of this devotional book is on spiritual leadership. From the book I shared a moving story that illustrates the depth of respect and care we owe to the people we serve, and that an elder doesn't always know what the service will look like until it's completed.

The shepherding activity for the week was that each elder and his mentee would attend the Monday Evening Devotional, or M.E.D.s, an activity of Central's youth ministry. Each elder and mentee were asked to engage two young people in conversation to inquire about the world in which our teenagers are growing up. I recommended that the elder and mentee be prepared to share about their own adolescence as well as asking questions about our teenagers' experiences. If the elder and/or mentee had a scheduling conflict on Monday, I recommended that they visit with two of our teens following the Sunday morning service. The purpose of this activity was to create interaction between the mentees and a group of the congregation they might not engage with typically, the youth of Central Church, and to allow the mentees to see the elders interact with the youth.

### Session Three

Each participant turned in a shepherd activity report, we prayed for congregational updates and gave oral reports. Then we entered a time of *Lectio Divina*

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19. Henri J.M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*, (New York: Crossroad Publishing, 1989).

focused on the lives of spiritual leaders, and how leaders need Jesus in order to minister to others. One of the elders read Ezek 24:17-19:

As for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats. Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet? Must my flock feed on what you have trampled and drink what you have muddied with your feet?

In silence, the group focused on a word or phrase that stood out to them from the reading. The passage was read two more times by two other elders, once from the NRSV, and once from the NCV. Between the second and third reading the participants reflected how the word focused on previously relates to their life as a spiritual leader. When the readings were completed, I asked the participants another question to meditate on: “How can a spiritual leader make sure he is not ‘crushing the food and muddying the water’ God has provided through His Word for the flock?”

I invited the group to consider Gregory the Great’s comment on this passage.

Indeed, pastors ‘drink the clearest water’ when, with an accurate understanding, they imbibe the streams of truth. But the same ‘disturb the water with their feet’ when they corrupt the study of holy meditation with an evil life. Obviously, the sheep drink that which was muddied by feet when, as subjects, they do not attend to the words they hear but imitate only the depraved examples that they observe.<sup>20</sup>

After considering Gregory’s comment, I asked a mentee to read Heb 7:27:

“Unlike the other high priest, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.” Connecting Heb 7:27 and 1 Pet 3:15-16, I shared the following information: Like the high priest, we have more in common with our fellow-worshippers,

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20. St. Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Rule*, 31.

our fellow-sheep, than we do with Jesus. Daily we must confess our own sins and frailties. In confessing our sin and frailties, spiritual leaders recognize their need for Jesus and God's salvation. I then asked this question of the group, "How does this reality shape the "answer" we give in 1 Pet 3:15-16?"

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. (1 Pet 3:15-16).

To conclude this session, we listened to the epilogue of Henri Nouwen's book, *In the Name of Jesus*.

For the shepherding assignment, I asked each elder and his mentee to visit one of Central's homebound members. The homebound members may live in a private residence or community with other homebound members. I provided a list so that we could make sure that five homebound members were visited. Each pair decided whom they would go visit before leaving.

#### Session Four

Each participant turned in a shepherd activity report, we prayed for congregational updates and gave oral reports.

Session four emphasized the qualities of a spiritual leader. Gregory the Great lists eleven qualifications of the spiritual leader in his part one. In this session, we considered number ten which states, "Concerning what sort of qualities should be present for one to assume spiritual leadership." (Part 1 Rule 10). I will not enumerate all that Gregory presents describing this rule, but I do want to list a few of his chosen qualities.

- "He must be devoted entirely to the example of good living."
- "He must desire the internal life only."
- "He must be dead to the passions of the flesh and live a spiritual life."

- “In his own heart, he must suffer the afflictions of others and likewise rejoice at the fortune of his neighbor, as though the good thing was happening to him.”<sup>21</sup>

Also in his description of the life of the spiritual leader Gregory suggests, “The spiritual leader should always be first in service.”<sup>22</sup>

Gregory’s work is filled with Biblical references and Biblical teachings. First, we could find scriptures that teach all the principles Gregory suggests for the spiritual leader. This should not be surprising considering the amount of time Gregory spent in the Word. Second, Gregory’s list is closer to the heart of God on the matter of spiritual leadership than the corporate model of leadership present in some churches today.

Following this discussion, I used Lynn Anderson’s DVD series, *They Smell Like Sheep*,” to delve further in the skills and attributes a spiritual leader needs to have in the twenty-first century.<sup>23</sup> Each participant received the accompanying workbook as we watched the lesson, “What Shepherds Do for Flocks?” This lesson breaks down into two sections: “What Shepherds Don’t Do” and “What Shepherds Do.”

The shepherding assignment was designed so that the participants would apply the knowledge they had received from the session and to encourage the mentor/mentee relationship to grow. The assignment was that each mentee and his elder were to meet for coffee and review pages 32-33 from *They Smell Like Sheep* workbook together. Each elder was asked to share with the mentee his personal struggle between being a shepherd

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21. Ibid, 43.

22. Ibid., 51.

23. Lynn Anderson, *They Smell Like Sheep: Spiritual Leadership Training* (San Antonio: Hope Network Ministries, 2003), DVD.

and a “member of a board of trustees.” I encouraged them to conclude their meeting with the mentee praying for the elder and the task of shepherding to which he has been called.

### Session Five

Each participant turned in a shepherd activity report, we prayed for congregational updates, and gave oral reports.

As the session continued, I invited one of the mentees to read 2 Tim 2:1-7:

You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer. Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor’s crown unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.

After the reading, I asked the elders to differentiate between kingdom business and civilian affairs. I encouraged the elders to be specific and practical.

Next, we entered an exercise concerning spiritual discernment and spiritual leadership. I asked Rex Allen, current elder and unofficial elder historian, for his help with this activity. We created a timeline of decisions made by the existing elders. I asked the elders to place stars by those decisions viewed as positive. From the starred list, I encouraged the elders to choose the top three decisions they considered most positive. Exploring those three decisions I inquired of the elders how they arrived at that decision and asked them to consider the following: Would the elders have been even more positive concerning those decisions if they had: (a) given the decision more time, (b) spent more

time in prayer, (c) intentionally laid out fleece,<sup>24</sup> or (d) spent more time in silence and solitude listening for God's leading?

The shepherding assignment for the week concerned discernment and pastoral care. I asked each mentee and his elder to spend time discerning who and how they were called to minister over the next week. Once each pair discerned the activity to participate in, they were to carry out that activity.

### Session Six

Each participant turned in a shepherd activity report; we prayed for congregational updates and gave oral reports.

I had an elder and a mentee read John 21:15-17. The elder read Peter's words and the mentee read Jesus' words.

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?"

He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep." (John 21:15-17).

After the reading, I invited the group to consider Gregory the Great's comment on this passage: "If, therefore, the care of feeding is a testament to loving, then he who abounds in virtues but refuses to feed the flock is found guilty of having no love for the supreme

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24. This is an intentional reference to Gideon seeking God's Will in Judges 6 by laying out the fleece and asking God to cause it to be wet or dry to confirm God's direction.

Shepherd.”<sup>25</sup> As a group, we discussed what we thought about Peter’s and Jesus’ discussion and what we thought about Gregory’s comment.

As the session continued, I shared some facts concerning our congregation. We have around 275 people in attendance on a Sunday morning in worship. We have well over three hundred people on the church roll. We are a large church. It is not possible for one elder to shepherd all three hundred people. The labor of shepherding must be divided. To explore the need for dividing the shepherding labor, we watched a lesson entitled “How Flocks Form,” from the DVD *They Smell Like Sheep*.<sup>26</sup> The importance of this activity was to see the multiple flocks or groups among the larger flock, the local church. Each flock may have or may need a shepherd. In the DVD Anderson presents a variety of ways a local group of elders can have the involvement of others in the task of shepherding.

The shepherding activity for this week was to visualize their flocks. The elder and mentee were asked to gather for coffee, to create a list of people at the Central Church in their sphere of influence or social circle. Each man was asked to consider whether this list constitutes a flock or not. Once the list was complete, the elder was to pray over the mentee’s list and vice versa.

### Session Seven

Upon arrival for session seven, each elder and each mentee turned in a completed “Weekly Shepherding Activity Report.” Oral reports were given after creating a prayer list and praying for the needs.

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25. Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Rule*, 36.

26. Lynn Anderson, *They Smell Like Sheep*, DVD.



Following the reports, I transitioned to a time of contemplation by saying, “During our journey over the past several weeks we have experienced devotional reading of the Bible. Tonight, I want us to consider meditating on a passage. To prepare for meditation on a verse, it is often helpful to get still and quiet. A few deep breaths can allow the clearing of thoughts from the mind with each breath. The clearing of the mind is for opening us to receive the Word of God. Once you have cleared your mind please meditate on John 6:15: “Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.” I continued, “Repeat the passage several times in your mind. Pause between each repetition. As you meditate put yourself in Jesus’ place. Jesus has just fed the five thousand and the people are coming to make him King. What temptations would be confronting Jesus? What temptations would be confronting you?” Once we were through meditating, I allowed the group time to share their experience during this time of meditation.

Now, we returned to the *They Smell Like Sheep* workbook to learn more about shepherding activities.<sup>27</sup> Each pair of mentee and his elder were assigned a section. Our sections were staggered enabling us to cover more material. (Example: Section entitled *Watch* was assigned to an elder and mentee pair. The section entitled *Ask* was assigned to another pair.) From their assigned section, I asked each pair to identify the activity they each find easy and the activity they find difficult. Once they completed their assigned section, the pair was to move to the next section. I allowed for sharing time. Each pair reported their easy and difficult tasks found in the sections they covered.

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27. Lynn Anderson, *They Smell Like Sheep: Spiritual Leadership Training Workbook* (San Antonio: Hope Network Ministries, 2003), 49-54.

For the last shepherding activity of the Elder Mentoring Program, the elder and mentee were asked to choose an individual or family to visit from either the elder's or mentee's sphere of influence.

#### Session Eight - The Case Study for Mentees

Once the elders and mentees turned in their reports concerning the previous week's shepherding activity, the elders and I left the room. The mentees were joined by independent expert Doug Peters, who asked them to consider the following case study as if they were elders of Central Church.

You serve the Central Church of Christ as one of her elders. You and your fellow elders are trying to be more intentional concerning the shepherding aspect of your role as elders. At the same time, you are trying to be equally intentional empowering church members to works of service. As elders, you have a passion for maturing the people of God and for turning members into disciples. You are convicted the bull's eye of your job is, "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." (Eph 4:12). You are determined to mentor and shepherd the people toward useful, active maturity. The elders are in a year-long, full court press to learn relational and equipping hands-on skills to be more empowering and improve their shepherding.

But old habits die hard. Tasks we have inherited or have done for many years are often hard to empower others to do, especially for persons who are task oriented. You have a heart for shepherding and a passion for building people. This new intentionality to shepherding and building people you admit is a challenge. You are a \_\_\_\_\_

by training. Your natural aptitude is \_\_\_\_\_.

Like most of us, you grasp the theory of equipping far more easily than you can apply it. For example, you inherited or have done for years the task of \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

*(In the blanks above each Mentee should answer as openly and honestly as he can.)*

You wonder, “Holding on to the task you inherited or have done for years is a way to hide from the riskier personal stuff. I have been working for years on overcoming this, but I’m still learning.”

This means you are involved in a task or tasks you inherited or have been doing for a long time, which takes away from time you could be interacting with the sheep. And valuable shepherding or equipping time during the week gets taken up by these tasks. Yet, several folks in the congregation have the experience, expertise, and interest who could be equipped to do the task you are involved. Currently they are just sitting in the pews. Besides, you may subliminally be training the church to expect the elders to do the chores, rather than to expect personal shepherding and equipping.

Each mentee is to complete reading the paragraphs and filling in the blanks above. Once each mentee is finished, the five mentees will work together as if they are elders of the Central Church of Christ. Using the

book, *They Smell Like Sheep*, pages 49-54 as an aid, they plan for a month of shepherding the Central Church of Christ. Please list both individual and group shepherding activities.

Once you have completed your plan discuss the following:

- Imagine what crises could happen during the month in the life of the Central Church of Christ.
- How could these crises impact the shepherding plan?
- As the shepherds of the Central Church of Christ, what are your members looking for during the crises?
- How do you make sure you do not move from the shepherding plan to crisis management?<sup>28</sup>

### **Evaluation Methodology**

#### Data Collection

Three sources of data were collected. The mentors and mentees submitted written reports each week, which is one source of data. During the weekly presentation of oral reports, I recorded notes on what they shared. From the final session, I have Doug's observation of the case study that he presented to the mentees. This will give an inside perspective from the participants, an outsider perspective from Doug, and my observation as a researcher.

#### Data Analysis

According to Sensing: "The key to interpretation is not in the tools, or the reporting of the information guided by a set of techniques, but rather in how one makes sense of the experiences of everyday life."<sup>29</sup> Three perspectives of the data will provide three angles analyze thus providing triangulation. Triangulation "is a way to cross-check

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28. See Appendix G for Doug Peters' full report..

29. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 72.

your data that provides breadth and depth to your analysis and increases the trustworthiness of your research.”<sup>30</sup> I will use the three angles recommended by Tim Sensing: insider, outsider, and researcher.<sup>31</sup>

I analyzed the Elder Mentoring Program through the eyes of the participants via the reports elders and mentees submitted. In tandem with the participants’ reports, I have my notes from their oral reports. Doug’s report serves an outsider’s observations. I will triangulate their input, with my own observations as a researcher.

Sensing writes, “Collecting and identifying themes is the primary way qualitative researchers process and analyze data. Coding (sometimes called “indexing”, “tagging”, or “labeling”) is a way to get a handle on the raw data so that it is more accessible for interpretation.”<sup>32</sup> “The first reading through the data is aimed at developing the coding categories or classification system.”<sup>33</sup> During that first reading of the data I wrote notes in the margins. Having read through all the data once, I assigned a highlighter with a different color for each preliminary coding category. “Several readings of the data may be necessary before field notes or interviews can be completely indexed and coded.”<sup>34</sup> Codes and categories will be combined and discarded as the data merits. Eventually I will

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30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., 75.

32. Ibid., 202-203.

33. Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, 463.

34. Ibid.

“determine the main themes that emerge from the categories.”<sup>35</sup> The coding used will be reported in the appendices. Emerging themes will be included in chapter four.

### **Conclusion**

Completing the explanation of the methodology used during the project intervention, I transition to my findings and the results. In the following chapter I will share from the participants reports, my field notes, and Dr. Peter’s evaluation the results and findings of the qualitative research.

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35. Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 203.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The purpose of this project is to implement an Elder Mentoring Program at Central Church to develop future leaders and provide intentional leadership training. In this chapter, I describe the results of the Elder Mentoring Program as reported by the participants in their weekly reports, my own field notes, and by Doug, our outside independent expert. Through the reports I looked for evidence the participants had internalized the three key concepts of contemplation, pastoral care, and mentoring.

#### **Description of Results**

The description of the results relies heavily on the written and oral reports pertaining to the weekly shepherding activities of the mentors and mentees. My main goal was to determine whether the elders and mentees had internalized the three concepts of contemplation, pastoral care, and mentoring found in the theological constructs. I observed internalization of the three concepts by analyzing the participants' reports, my field notes on their oral reports, and the case study led by the independent expert.

#### **Field Notes**

My field notes focused primarily on the oral reports the elders and mentees gave at the beginning of each meeting. My field notes also included limited observations of the spiritual disciplines and the learning activities from our group sessions. Because the ability to effectively function as a church leader relies on internal characteristics of spiritual growth and understanding of the duties of an elder, I sought to use the data to

determine if participants had internalized the concepts of contemplation, pastoral care, and mentoring. As our group sessions progressed, it certainly appeared as if participants were growing in leadership; however, this chapter will review data for the evidence that the key concepts were internalized.

### **Contemplation**

In chapter two, we reviewed how both ancient and contemporary Christians advocate that Christian spiritual leaders should “desire the internal life”<sup>1</sup> which is found in “a place in time that is set apart for God and God alone.”<sup>2</sup> The desire for the inner life was modeled for the Christian in the life of Jesus, the greatest Christian spiritual leader to walk the face of the earth.

To analyze the data in search of contemplation is challenging because it’s difficult to show an internalized desire or pursuit of the internal life in another’s life. Monitoring the daily spiritual rhythms of the participants is beyond the scope of this project, but it is reasonable to look for evidence of contemplation through mentions of spiritual disciplines like prayer, Bible reading, confession, and others. Analyzing the data at hand, I made note of spiritual disciplines the participants reported practicing or were observed practicing. The spiritual discipline most often mentioned by the participants was prayer. During most of our group sessions, the collective group of mentors and mentees practiced *Lectio Divina*. Additionally, participants reported confession and Bible study. The topics

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1. St. Gregory the Great, *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, trans. George E. Demacopoulos, (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press), 43.

2. Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2006), 32.



of prayer, Bible study, and confession will be outlined with examples from the data as evidence of contemplation on following pages.

### Prayer

Prayer for the church and her congregation is an important part of the work of an elder. Prayer was mentioned often in the weekly shepherding activity reports. Reports were given of mentees praying for elders, elders praying for hurting sheep, an elder and a mentee praying with a widow, elders and mentees praying for their flocks, and homebound member praying for the elders and mentees. Prayer was incorporated into many of the shepherding activities which led to it being frequently mentioned in the reports. Whether the praying was in fulfillment of the assignments or spontaneous, our elders and their mentees spent much time in prayer.

Each group session began with prayer for the specific needs of the congregation. The group added additional prayer concerns to the prayer list. After compiling a list of situations and people to pray for, one of the participants led us in a prayer. We concluded each session in prayer as well. Several nights during the *Lectio Divina* an elder or a mentee was asked to pray in relation to a reflection of the passage read.

The fourth shepherding activity was the first in which prayer was assigned. Each mentee was asked to pray for his elder. Not every elder reported being prayed for, nor every mentee reported praying. However, many did report prayer was part of their time together. One mentee reported praying for his mentor and his mentor's wife "in their continued work with this church and for the loving examples they are now."<sup>3</sup> Another

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3. While reporting the findings and results quotation marks will be used around comments made either orally or written by elders or mentees. The speaker or writer will not be cited because of the anonymity of the project.

mentee thanked God for his mentor and the mentor's wife with respect to "the wonderful work that they do at and for the Church." One elder reported that his mentee prayed for him and prayed for all the elders of the Central Church.

During this same shepherding activity, one of our elders shared with his mentee and mentee's wife that the current elders desire to pray for hurting sheep whenever possible: "The present shepherds try to pray with our hurting sheep whenever we have the opportunity." Serendipitously, in a later activity, this pair and their wives took a recently widowed woman out to dinner. Both elder and mentee reported the most powerful part of the evening was when they prayed for the widow after dinner. The assignment did not specify that the pair take her to dinner or pray for her. The assignment had been to pray and discern what God was leading them to do for the week's activity.

Another learning activity that involved prayer was centered on identifying the people within the sphere of influence of a particular elder or mentee. Within a large community of faith, there are many smaller flocks that are shepherded by an elder or leader. After identifying their flocks, the mentee was to pray for the elder and his flock and vice versa. Except for one pair everyone reported praying for each other's flock. However, this pair covenanted to pray for each other's flock since the mentee needed to leave before they prayed.

Lastly regarding prayer, one pair reported being incredibly touched by the prayer of a homebound member. The homebound gentleman they were visiting suffers from severe dementia. As a life-long bachelor, the church has been the focal point of this man's life. During their visit, he and the elder recalled memories of the Central Church dating back several decades. At the end of their visit, this gentleman prayed for the elder,

his mentee, and the Elder Mentoring Program. As the mentee shared his account of the visit, it provided a true testament to the benefits of a contemplative life. When the darkness of dementia crept in, this gentleman still clung to his faith and was able to offer a blessing of prayer.

I include here the mentee's report concerning visiting the gentleman with dementia:

I learned a lot I didn't know about the member we visited. Both he and my mentor had a long history with the Central church, and so they shared stories with me from decades of experience. I was struck by how much both of them valued the relationships they had built with people who were only at the church for a short time, but whose influence had lasted with them for many many years. I also learned how much the homebound member values the times he gets to attend services and stay in touch with the church. As his mind has started to weaken as he gets older, his ideas about the church and his faith seem to be as clear and sharp as ever. My mentor and I talked afterward about how as we get older the most fundamental aspects of our faith become more and more apparent and the more superficial aspects seem to fade away.

#### Interaction with the Word of God

One interaction with the Word of God was *Lectio Divina*. I observed mentors and mentees participating in *Lectio Divina*, but I didn't expect to see any mention of it in their weekly reports, as it was not assigned as a part of their weekly shepherding activities. As described in length in chapter three, *Lectio Divina* was practiced as a group in several of the group sessions. From the first night on, I observed openness to *Lectio Divina* on the part of the participants. Even the participants who never had practiced this type of devotional reading were observed as willing participants. I also observed a shift during the Wednesday night sessions from attempting to interpret the scriptures to a more reflective listening to the scriptures.

All of the ten participants are either currently teaching or have taught in the church's education ministry. They place a high value on accurate biblical interpretation. Two of the elders have notes in their Bibles dating back several decades to help in their interpretation. Each week during the Elder Mentoring Program, one participant shared his reflections from the devotional reading. Having a different experience with the same text, another participant would then share his own reflection.

As the program facilitator, watching the participants engage in reflective listening to scripture was very refreshing for me. Each group session became more of a communal learning experience led by a facilitator, rather than a teacher imparting information. Each week it became increasingly difficult to cover all the material in the curriculum because the participants were sharing reflections of the scripture readings. During the introductory week, we completed all the activities planned, including practicing *Lectio Divina* with three separate passages of scripture each read three times. However, by the seventh session I was trimming material out of the session because of the communal learning that was taking place.

Interaction with the Word of God was seen as a priority by the mentees. When the mentees completed their case study for Doug, they planned a month of shepherding activities for the Central Church elders. The mentees' first planned activity was a group Bible study and prayer session to be attended by all the elders. This weekly Bible study would be separate from the weekly two-hour elders' meeting that already exists.

#### Confession

A spiritual discipline I did not anticipate as a part of this program was confession. Five participants made confessions throughout the program. One elder, during the

activity of identifying flocks, made a confession. In his report, he confessed being convicted by the list of people in his flock he had not contacted during the past year.

Another shepherd confessed “ignoring/avoiding/putting off opportunities to interact with members” who tend to drain one’s energy more than others. A mentee confessed being fearful about not knowing how to make a good visit during the same activity. Later the mentee shared that he had learned much from his mentor concerning how to approach making a visit.

One of the other mentees confessed a fear during the activity of visiting the homebound when he and his mentor made a visit to a retirement center. As a child, his mother would take him to visit older women, members of their church, at the nursing home on Sunday afternoons. He noted that “one of the women was particularly unpleasant to speak with and would say nasty things to my mother. The experience left me always uncomfortable in nursing homes.” He reported learning a great deal despite his fear that will be reported later in this chapter.

Lastly, one of our elders confessed to choosing a pleasant person rather than one not as pleasant for his visit with his mentee: “I felt convicted about not going to see someone, who would need the visit even more but would not have been as pleasant a visit. I did what James said not to do, play favorites to the ‘beautiful people.’ Another poor job of mentoring.”

Many times, during the reports, I was moved with awe at the tenderness of these men’s hearts. I would not have dreamed to have these types of confession as a part of the reporting. However, the men’s confessions illustrate how God can work in our lives when we make ourselves available to the God through spiritual disciplines. Searby reminds us

that “The real power behind our mentoring relationships is the Unseen Mentor – the Holy Spirit.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Pastoral Care**

Chapter two reported that numerous pages of *The Book of Pastoral Rule* were devoted to pastoral care. Gregory the Great included instructions for the pastor, or spiritual leader, in how to minister to parishioners in 72 different life circumstances found in part three of the book. The apostle Paul placed similar importance but used fewer words in writing, “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.” (1 Cor 9:22b). Interaction with parishioners in a pastor’s care seems of utmost importance to these two men.

Looking at the findings and results from the Elder Mentoring Program, I will explore in this section the pastoral care reported by elder and mentees. The emerging themes from the participants reports regarding pastoral care surfaced under four headings: knowing the flock, service, direction, and obstacles to pastoral care. The themes emerged in the reports from the elders and mentees participating in pastoral care activities as well as in discussions during their assignments concerning pastoral care.

#### **Knowing the Flock**

Knowing the flock was the most prevalent theme reported by the participants. Several shepherding activities involved an elder and mentee visiting members of the congregation, which led to growing relationships, shared meals, hospitality, and

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4. Mark A. Searby, *The Resilient Pastor: Ten Principles for Developing Pastoral Resilience*, (Eugene: Resource Publications, 2015), 52.

encouragement. In the following paragraphs, knowledge concerning the flock that the participants reported having learned through visits and other activities will be explored.

### ***Elder and Mentee Getting to Know Each Other***

One of the primary goals of the Elder Mentoring Program is that the elders and mentees would develop a closer relationship. The evidence of this in the data indicates a level of success for the Elder Mentoring Program. Now I want to focus on the participants' reports of what they learned about each other.

The elders and their mentees learned more about each other. One of the mentees learned his elder served many years in the Kansas National Guard. His elder also volunteered one day a week at the National Guard Museum. This same elder discovered that his mentee's family lived in Argentina. While in Argentina they became Christians while looking for a church that followed the New Testament pattern. These two men have served on committees together and worked side by side on several projects for years, yet did not know these details about each other. In this more intimate setting they learned more about each other.

Some of the mentees, attending the youth service, M.E.D.s during week two, reported learning about the adolescence of their elder. One elder shared with his mentee and the teenagers about his experiences in 4-H and growing up on a farm in western Kansas. Another elder brought his high school yearbook to share with the mentee and the teenagers. An additional elder who grew up in the congregation, shared a behind the scenes tour of the church building.

### ***Hospitality***

During the program, the elders and mentees experience a variety of hospitality while getting to know each other better. For three pairs, hospitality involved eating a meal together in one of their homes on more than one occasion. Occasionally the mentee's children or grandchildren were included at the meal or visit. Hospitality afforded the opportunity for mentors, mentees, and their spouses to get to know each other.

Outside of home, mentees and mentors reported meeting for a meal at local restaurants. The use of a local restaurant for hospitality extended beyond the program's participants to those they visited. Five occasions were reported of a local restaurant being used to extend hospitality to another individual or group the participants were ministering or getting to know. On one occasion, the elder and mentee mentioned earlier, prayed with a widow after returning to her home following a meal at a local restaurant. Another mentee and mentor had lunch at a local restaurant with the mentee's daughter and her senior adult prayer partner during one of their shepherding activities.

### ***Participants Getting to Know Teens***

The second shepherding activity asked the Elder Mentoring Program participants to engage with teenagers during M.E.D.s, the youth ministry's Monday evening devotional.

One elder was unable to attend due to illness. Another elder and mentee could not attend because of other commitments. The latter two made alternate plans to get better acquainted with some of our teenagers. The remaining seven elders and mentees met with and spent time getting to know the teenagers at M.E.D.s.



In my field notes concerning their reports on the Wednesday following M.E.D.s I recorded how they were paired up for their visits with the teenagers: an odd pair (elder and mentee not normally paired), normal pair (elder and mentee normally paired), normal pair plus one (elder, his mentee, mentee of absent elder), and mentee (could not meet on Monday night so took his daughter and three of her peers to lunch). This is not exactly how I had envisioned the elders and mentees experiencing this activity. Despite the hodgepodge of pairings, this experience gave the mentor teams an opportunity to listen to teenagers. In their experience at M.E.D.s, they reported learning about how diminished safety has impacted the way the teens are being parented.

A “new normal” was a theme the participants heard from the teenagers. In describing the new normal, one of the mentees shared about his elementary-age daughter’s new school building. It is state of the art and includes bulletproof blinds in each classroom that the teacher can roll down with the touch of a button in case the school goes on lock down. His daughter reports this as normal. It may be normal for our children and some of the mentees but the elders and the facilitator learned something new about the world in which our children and grandchildren are growing up. Two mentees reported that they did not learn anything new. This was interesting to me because our oral reporting session for that Wednesday night continued for thirty minutes. I had to draw it to a close before they were really finished processing their experience to move to the next part of the evening’s agenda.

### ***Participants Engage Homebound Members***

In another shepherding activity designed to get to know the flock, our participants visited some of our homebound members the week after they visited with the teens. The

participants moved from spending time with teens, where each mentee could connect with a teen over the shared experience of adolescence, to spending time with our homebound members in a season of life the mentee hasn't yet traveled. The participants may have previously only experienced being homebound through the lives of their parents or grandparents if at all. I intentionally wrote the curriculum this way so the mentors and mentees would interact with the two extremes of our congregation rather than with those in their immediate peer group.

The mentees reported learning much from their visits of homebound members. For the mentees, the learning came both from the homebound members and from watching the elders interact with the homebound members. One pair visited three men in an assisted living facility. All three men had served in the military. Two of the men had interesting tales to share. One man served in the Air Force and shared stories of serving as a crew chief on KC 135 air refueling tanker. The second gentleman served as a carpenter on ships and was at Pearl Harbor during the Japanese attack. Later in World War II, he repaired a hole in the damaged hull of his ship with two mess hall tables and bunk mattresses.

War stories were not all the mentors and mentees reported learning from their visits. One mentee learned about the service one elder provides for three women at a continuous care facility. Two of the women live in skilled nursing care while the third lives in an independent living apartment. The elder and his wife take communion to these ladies each Sunday. The elder does not drop in and quickly administer the sacrament. First the elder presents each woman with a copy of the morning handout from our worship service. Before administering the Eucharist, he recites as much as he can

remember from the “table talk” message presented at the Lord’s Supper that morning at worship. Following the communion service, the elder flips the handout over to the sermon notes. He shares an abridged version of the morning’s sermon. Lastly, he goes over the news from the congregation. The elder repeats the following format in varying degrees depending upon the women’s mental awareness on that given Sunday. His mentee reported, “Great learning experience for me!!” (The double exclamation marks are his.)

### ***Elders’ Knowledge of the Congregation***

The mentees reported learning that the elders’ knowledge of the congregation goes beyond just knowing their names. For the Central elders knowing the congregation involves knowing the members’ gifts and interests as well as their needs and struggles. One mentee reported, “I also learned how intentional our eldership tries to be about finding out where people’s gifts and interests lie and getting those people in ministries where they can use them.” One mentee reported learning this simple lesson of learning about people’s gifts and interests: “My mentor insisted that you just have to give people a chance to talk about themselves and they will take care of the direction of the visit.” Earlier, one pair reported learning a great deal about three members’ military service. Also, while visiting with the teenagers, elders and mentees got to know the teenagers’ interests and gifts.

Elders and mentees gained in their knowledge of the needs and struggles of the members they visited. Elders and mentees learned or were reminded that homebound members need connection to the church even though unable to attend worship services. One mentee commented, “This visit gave me the understanding that we can’t forget those

who are not able to leave their homes.” Another mentee reported, “I also learned how much the homebound member values times he gets to attend services and stay in touch with the church.” One elder reported learning that the needs of members change as in the case of one of the homebound members: “I learned to be more careful when I woke the first lady up from her nap and startled her considerably, as I made her jump. I have awakened her before many times when visiting and taking communion, without this reaction.”

The mentees and elders learned the struggles and needs of the members besides those of the homebound members. The pair taking the widow, and their wives, to dinner followed by prayer has already been reported. In a later assignment, another pair reported taking a widower out for dinner. Over both meals elders and mentees learned the struggles of these two who are grieving the loss of their mates. Others reported visits made to senior adults with dementia. One mentee wrote, “My mentor did a wonderful job prodding her memory when she seemed unable to recall something.” This prodding was enabled by a depth of knowledge concerning this woman, her struggles, and her needs. One elder shared the following with his mentee: “The ones [decisions] I enjoy the most involve getting involved in the lives and struggles of our precious smelly sheep.”

### ***Sphere of Influence***

Much of the shepherding activities interacting with the sheep involved in-person and often in-home visits. An observation made by participants throughout the Elder Mentoring Program was the extreme importance of in-person, face-to-face, visits. Another observation was that as important as in-person visits are, they are not always possible. When not possible other methods need to be employed to interact with the

sheep. Other forms of contact that the participants suggested included contact by phone, text, e-mail, and Facebook. Participants discussing these other forms of contact did not compare the value of these methods to in-person visits nor give them each equal value. The participants recognized that the sheer size of our congregation suggests the need to use a variety of methods of contact to stay connected moving forward.

One of the growing pains the Central Church is experiencing is in this area of knowing the flock. Central Church has around three hundred members. Despite being a larger church, the congregation and her leadership often function as a small family church. In conversations with individual elders they often express the frustration of not knowing every member personally. This was highlighted earlier by the confession of one of the elders who was concerned because he has not interacted with certain members of the flock for over a year. I will address this issue in greater detail in chapter five. For now, I want to acknowledge an observation made by participants. It is impossible for one man to know all three hundred members intimately.

The fact that one man cannot know three hundred members was the impetus behind the shepherding activity concerning flocks. During the group session in which I made this assignment, I added an activity at the last minute. On a white board, I drew eleven circles. Inside each circle, I wrote an elder's name, a mentee's name, or my name. Each circle was linked to at least one adjoining circle. Some circles were linked to more than one circle signifying the overlap in the elders' and mentees' spheres of influence. After watching Lynn Anderson's presentation, "How Flocks Form,"<sup>5</sup> I suggested to the

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5. Lynn Anderson, *They Smell Like Sheep: Spiritual Leadership Training* (San Antonio: Hope Network Ministries, 2003), DVD, Disc One, Session 3.

group that each participant has a flock, a sphere of influence. The shepherding activity involved the pair making a list of people in their individual sphere of influence or social circle within the Central Church.

During this exercise, while listing people within their sphere of influence, participants made several important observations. A couple of the mentees were surprised at the number of people in their sphere of influence. One pair reported seeing a significant number of the same names on the list of the mentee and elder. Another mentee commented that his list was relatively short, likely due to his limited time as a member of the congregation. One mentee and his elder discussed the benefit that would occur if the elders divided the congregation among themselves for intimate shepherding, rationalizing that it would be easier for an elder to know and shepherd a fifth of the congregation rather than attempting to know and shepherd the whole congregation. The elders could be more intentional if they were shepherding a smaller group.

This section highlighted the importance of the shepherd being in the lives of the sheep and knowing their flock. The elders and mentees reported being involved in the lives of some of the sheep. The men agreed on the importance of every single sheep being known intimately by a shepherd.

### Service

Although the participants provided service through hospitality and visits as they gained knowledge of their flock, in this section I want to address additional acts of service. Again, let's consider the words of Gregory the Great. Gregory writes in part two rule three, "That the spiritual director should always be first in service."<sup>6</sup> In this section I

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6. St. Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Rule*, 51.

do not in any way want to diminish the service already described, rather I want to consider other specific acts of service and discussion of service.

Our pair who visited the homebound men who shared stories of military experiences, also served in two very practical ways. First, the elder and mentee expressed gratitude to one of the men. This gentleman, though a member of a sister congregation in town, sends his weekly contribution to our congregation. They thanked him for his weekly contribution.

While sharing their appreciation, the elder and mentee served this military veteran in an even more practical way. Prior to their arrival, he misplaced his television remote. Once the pair “rearranged” the furniture the remote was found. Though he didn’t specifically ask for help, they realized the senior adult veteran in a wheelchair was not able to move the furniture or crawl on the floor to find his missing remote. Both the mentee and the mentor shared in their written and oral reports how happy they were to have served this military veteran.

One elder and mentee supported a program of our youth ministry through one of their activities. While the Elder Mentoring Program was in progress, our youth minister matched each teenager with an adult as prayer partners. In support of the Central Youth Ministry and the prayer partner activity, one of our pairs invited a teenager and her senior adult prayer partner to lunch as their shepherding activity. Though one could categorize this activity under hospitality, it bears mentioning in this section. The elder empowered the mentee and the mentee’s wife to take the lead on this activity by allowing them to take care of all the details. The elder and his wife just showed up to participate. Through

this shared meal, they acknowledged the value of the senior adult woman's investment in their teenage daughter's spiritual formation.

Teenagers were not the only children served through the Elder Mentoring Program. In the first shepherding activity, one elder shared with the mentee and his wife the importance of living a God-prioritized life in front of their preschool children. One mentee couple shared with an elder couple about the support they experienced from the Central Church in raising their three-year-old son who has Down syndrome. Another elder and his wife made the "adoptive" granddaughter of their mentee couple welcome in their home and got to know her better. Encouraging, listening, and engaging were all reported examples of service by our elders.

As Americans, there is a tendency to live segregated lives. In other words, a person has their work life, church life, family life, etc. Often in the West, the importance of honoring God with the whole of one's life is not recognized. One of the mentees reported learning a unique way his elder serves, by volunteering one day a week at the National Guard Museum. This elder's service by volunteering can be as valuable as some of the visits he made with his mentee. The value is in his example to others of honoring God with every aspect of his life and in the expanded influence he has on others he volunteers alongside. In simple and practical ways, the Central elders modeled for their mentees the importance of service in the role of the shepherd.

#### Spiritual Direction

Like hospitality and in-person visits, spiritual direction could be classified under the heading of "pastoral care." In chapter two I often used the terms pastoral care and service interchangeably. In the effort to report the findings and results it seems prudent to



make certain distinctions under the heading of pastoral care. Spiritual direction, as an element of pastoral care, includes vision casting and spiritual guidance. Spiritual direction, as an element of pastoral care, was experienced by the participants. The participants recorded the elders giving and discussing spiritual direction.

One elder shared a vision with his mentee and the mentee's wife: "I told them their time for serving in this important office was coming in the years ahead and to try to be prepared and flexible in their jobs, activities, etc. so they would not have to say, 'I'm too busy right now.'" Just reading the quote one might think this was during the one of the later assignments, if not the last. The elder cast this vision of his mentee eventually serving as an elder during their very first activity. This elder modeled spiritual direction by casting a vision for his mentee.

Two of the mentees struggled during the activity in which they, with their respective elders, identified the flocks within their spheres of influence. One elder reported his mentee's surprise of the number of people within his flock, sphere of influence, within the congregation. This flock increased when the mentee's wife added her sphere of influence. The elder complimented the couple for their impact on lives within the Central Church. During the same activity, another mentee had a very small flock. His mentor quickly pointed out others in the mentee's sphere of influence he could have listed.

To conclude this section let me share a quote from one of the participants: "This study alone opened my eyes to the importance of the church structuring itself so that elders can focus on spiritual guidance."

## Obstacles

The same mentee just quoted regarding spiritual guidance, also shared the revelation that the elders encounter obstacles to providing pastoral care and specifically spiritual direction. He mentioned time conflicts and resource conflicts as obstacles to the elders shepherding the flock. Elders in the program reported that varying expectations of the Central Church hinder the work they believe the elders are called to do. Attempting to meet the needs of a diverse group of people presents obstacles to aspects of pastoral care, especially vision casting and spiritual direction. Throughout the mentoring process, mentees gained a greater understanding of both the joy and challenges present in serving as an elder for the Central Church.

## Mentoring

In *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, in rule ten of part one, Gregory the Great charges his pastors to be examples for the people they live and work among. Several hundred years after Gregory the Great, Thomas A Kempis, wrote a reminder of Jesus' exemplar model of living the Christian life: "“Anyone who follows me shall not walk in darkness,” says the Lord. These are the words of Christ, and by them we are reminded that we must imitate his life and his ways if we are to be truly enlightened and set free from the darkness of our own hearts.”<sup>7</sup> Anderson and Reese remind us in their book, *Spiritual Mentoring*, that “Christian faith is an imitative faith. It always has been. Beginning with

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7. Dennis J. Billy, *The Imitation of Christ by Thomas A Kempis: A Spiritual Commentary and Reader's Guide* (Notre Dame: Christian Classics, 2005), 20.

Jesus' earliest words to the men and women who would become his apprentices of faith, Christianity has understood itself to be a faith taught by one to another."<sup>8</sup>

The purpose of the Elder Mentoring Program is for current elders to develop future leaders through mentoring and seeing "imitative faith" in action. Of the three key concepts found in our theological constructs - contemplation, pastoral care, and mentoring - the third concept is the most important to the results of this project. The primary assumption of this research is that mentoring is the mechanism by which future leaders can be trained. In this section, we will explore the mentees' glimpse of being an elder, what the mentees learned, what the elders learned, and how the elders empowered their mentees.

### Glimpse

In the very first activity, mentees reported getting a glimpse of what it means to be an elder for the Central Church. While mentees, elders, as well as their wives conversed over a meal, mentees heard the ups and downs and joys and heartaches of being an elder. One mentee expressed, "with respect to being a shepherd, there is joy, there is hardship, and there are sleepless nights." One elder recounted his mentee's sympathy concerning the pressures of leadership and the frustration of leadership. All pairs with one exception revealed a discussion of the joys and heartaches of ministry during the first session.

By the fifth activity, mentees reported hearing more specifics concerning the struggle of being an elder of the Central Church. This activity involved working through

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8. Keith R. Anderson and Randy D. Reese, *Spiritual Mentoring: A Guide to Seeking and Giving Direction*, (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1999), 15.

the section of “They Smell Like Sheep Workbook,” contrasting shepherds with a board of directors.<sup>9</sup> In my field notes I observe the elders wrestling with this activity as much as the mentees. The elders describe the struggle of being an elder in terms of expectations. Each elder has his expectation based on an interpretation of God’s role for the elders. The membership has an expectation based on an interpretation of scripture and an opinion regarding the role of elders. Individual elders and their wives hold an opinion and an interpretation leading to an expectation that may agree or disagree with other elders’ opinions and interpretation.

During the fifth activity, mentees reported on struggles their mentor shared with them. One struggle comes from the tension between making decisions or providing direction based on the desires of the flock and the desires of God. Often the struggle comes when neither of these desires seems to be apparent while making a congregational decision. Another challenge one pair divulged was regarding communication: elders to deacons, deacons to elders, elders to congregation, elders to ministers, etc. An elder shared the frustration of a member’s needs being overlooked. One elder shared a list of struggles the Central elders have encountered in the past sixteen years. In my field notes I noted that one elder/mentee pair reporting the burdens of being a shepherd often overshadow the joy in serving God and the church as an elder.

The mentees received a glimpse of the joy that comes from serving as an elder of the Central Church, as well as the heartaches and struggles. One mentee reported, “[Elder’s wife] brought up working with families in the church and how rewarding and

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9. Lynn Anderson, *They Smell Like Sheep: Spiritual Leadership Training Workbook*, (San Antonio: Hope Network Ministries, 2003), 32-33.

tough it is to be there for people.” A different mentee shared this lesson learned from his elder: “I learned how rewarding it is to do things like seeing a church camp built from the ground up and getting to see the impact on the lives of young people when it is used.”

One mentee reported the joy he experienced with his mentor while ministering to a recent widower: “I believe that even if we were doing this exercise to shepherd one of our flock, I sure was enriched by the end as well.”

As was mentioned earlier, two participants reported not really learning anything new during the M.E.D.s activity the pairs attended with our youth. A similar sentiment was shared regarding a glimpse of being an elder at the Central Church early in the Elder Mentoring Program. As one mentee reported, “I don’t think there were any big surprises or revelations.” However, as the program progressed, all five mentees revealed gaining a better understanding of being an elder of the Central Church from their mentor. One mentee wrote, “The current elders enjoy each other so much the weekly two-hour meetings don’t seem like two-hour meetings. Oh, and did I mention that they meet every Wednesday night for about two hours!” A different mentee learned the following from his mentor:

Perceived roles of the elder include striking a vision for the congregation, know the individual members (and their unique needs), anticipating problems, and working to maintain cohesion within the congregation. Of particular importance were thoughts about the multigenerational needs of the congregation, and the importance of unity among the elders (even when there are disagreements on particular issues).

Each of the mentees expressed receiving a glimpse of being an elder at Central as seen in the above examples.

## Lessons Learned

The sections entitled contemplation and pastoral care have already shed light on the lessons learned by the mentees from their elders. For a few paragraphs, I will share some lessons learned and expand upon a few already mentioned. The mentees reported observing the dedication of their mentors. This fact is exemplified in a mentee's report: "And I am always amazed at how much he does know about so many people." Earlier I shared one of the mentees reporting on his mentor's dedication to weekly deliver communion. It bears repeating, "And I really appreciate the dedication that they have to these sisters every week!!" Other mentees commented on their mentor's dedication to meeting the needs of individual members. During the program, all mentees learned a new appreciation for the dedication the elders have for being an elder.

The willingness to serve as an elder was an additional lesson learned. Earlier I described an elder encouraging his mentee to prepare his life to be ready when it is his time to serve as an elder. One elder shared the following with his mentee. "I always felt I should be willing to serve the Lord and his church in every way I could. It has been a humbling, eye-opening experience to serve the congregation with many experiences of joy, sadness, and disappointment. I feel that there is more to serving than just a role." Whether all mentees desire to serve as an elder someday remains to be seen. Through the Elder Mentoring Program, they each witnessed mentors who desire to serve the local congregation as an elder.

It has already been pointed out that in-person visits were highly emphasized in the shepherding activities. Through the process of making these visits with their mentors, the mentees discovered the importance visits have in the work of the elder. In-person visits

are the most intimate way the elders can stay connected with the flock. The mentees learned how short visits can have a powerful impact on members of the congregation whether to teenagers or homebound Christians and everyone in between. One mentee and mentor recognized the enormous task in front of the elders in making visits since the flock has not been intentionally divided among the elders. This puts the burden of visiting all three hundred members on the shoulders of all five elders rather than each being assigned a portion of the flock. Even in the shepherding activities, participants realized some members received multiple visits while others received none. (Of course, in eight weeks we did not intend to visit three hundred members.)

Mentees disclosed learning specifics on how to make a visit as well as the importance of visits. They observed mentors asking a question and then sitting back and listening. Mentees reported how highly effective the elders were asking people questions about themselves, their family, or their interests. It was observed as one listens to another person, problems or trials may rise to the surface. When those trials surface, physical presence, reassurance, a kind word, an appropriate scripture, identifying resources, and praying concerning the situation are all things mentees observed an elder doing. One mentee reported, "I learned how little things like sitting in someone's line of sight, bringing up fond memories, and showing kindness and respect can bring out the best in someone in a visit." Seven of the visits made during the Elder Mentoring Program were to members suffering from dementia. Bringing up fond memories was an important tool observed by mentees on all seven visits.

Two of our mentees revealed fears of making visits and overcame those through the program. Note the excerpt from one of the reports:

I learned a great deal about making a visit and how to approach it. I am not an overly talkative individual and so I was a little nervous about the visit. [Elder] insisted that you just have to give people a chance to talk about themselves and they will take care of the direction of the visit. He could not have been more right! [Couple's names] did 98% of the talking and it was great to learn more about their lives and their story. I felt like they really enjoyed the visit as well so the night could not have gone better.

Mentees discovered the habits of the Central elders. An example already discussed is the elder and wife who take communion to three homebound women each Sunday. Mentees also learned the patterns of the Central elders collectively. The Central Elders meet every Wednesday night for two hours following Bible Class. A top priority of those meetings is to pray for members of the congregation, especially those who are hurting. Agendas are created each week by the elder of the month as the elders rotate chairmanship.

#### Lessons Elders Learned

For many years, I have served as a mentor to interns, both in my previous two congregations and for the last four years at the Central Church. Each year the interns learn from me, but I also learn much from the interns. This was equally true for our elders. One elder reported learning how his mentee and wife support our current elders and the direction they are leading the church. One mentee shared with his elder about a group of elders at another church who meet monthly rather than weekly. The same mentee shared with his elder about a church in which they do not have deacons, but have elders and trustees. The trustees take care of the business affairs of the church while the elders take care of the spiritual matters. The trustees and elders do not meet on a regular basis. Lastly, the elders learned from the mentees about the congregation's appreciation



for them and for the work they do. “Some of the members truly appreciate the difficult work being done by the shepherds,” one elder shared after meeting with his mentee.

### Mentees Empowered

I observed the elders empowering their mentees. Three of five elders reported letting their mentee plan one of their shepherding activities. For example, one elder noted the experience of his mentee in inviting his teenage daughter and the teenager’s senior adult prayer partner to lunch, mentioned earlier. Another elder empowered his mentee to decide upon their activity. This mentee arranged a meal for the elder, mentee, and a recent widower. The third elder allowed his mentee to choose someone to visit from his sphere of influence. One of the elders shared, “Too often we want to control everything and don’t let the one’s coming behind us, [have] the opportunity to put their ideas into practice.”

### Independent Observer

My observations up to this point have been based upon my field notes and the written reports from the participants with a few references to the independent observer’s report. In his report,<sup>10</sup> Doug also observed within the mentees a propensity toward contemplation, pastoral care, and mentoring. As a reminder, at the end of the Elder Mentoring Program, Doug asked the mentees to plan a month of “shepherding activities” as if they were elders for the Central Church as a case study. In this section, I will focus on the mentees’ work on the case study to analyze the emphasis on the three components.

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10. See Appendix G for Doug Peters’ full report.

The first goal for the congregation the mentees stated was to “love God and seek God first in everything.” In practice to fulfill this goal, they proposed a weekly Bible study and prayer session for the elders. Their plan can be seen here:

Group Bible study/prayer session once a week

- All elders will attend
- May invite others to join in special circumstances
- Separate from elders’ meetings (those are more for discussion and decision making)
- May add more sessions in crisis situations

I do share one of Doug’ concerns regarding elder duties.

The mentee dialogue that I observed during the plan development focused primarily on adding additional responsibilities, initiatives and meetings to what I perceive may be an already busy leader schedule. I suspect that current leader and congregational meetings or gatherings could be reframed to help accomplish the group’s worthy goals. More than once, members of the mentee group verbalized concern about the time constraints of enacting their plan.<sup>11</sup>

Doug’s report suggests the group’s plan was not void of contemplation, but it may have been a bit unrealistic.

The mentees include pastoral care in their goals. Their second goal is to “love the sheep.” As an integral part of pastoral care, specifically, they identify loving the sheep as building relationships and service. The mentees would divide the congregation among the eldership, which demonstrates that their plan of caring for the sheep is intentional and sensitive to the realities and limits that shepherds possess. However, such a plan also reflects each elder is expected to be in the lives of the members in his group.

A third goal involves the elders taking a lead to inspire the congregation to better works of service. The elders would also cast a vision of service for the congregation monthly.

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11. See Appendix G for Doug Peters’ full report..

Choose a specific goal for the congregation for the month. For our theoretical month, it is serving others.

- We will choose one service project (like ShareFest<sup>12</sup>) to promote for the month.
- Promote and encourage all members to attend, find a role for all age and abilities to play.
- Elders all commit to participate and lead by example.

The mentees believe the elders should serve as examples without having to lead every activity of the congregation. In this they would agree with Gregory: “The spiritual director should be the first in service so that by his way of life he might show the laity how to live, and so that the flock (which follows the voice and behavior of the shepherd) may advance all the better by his example than by his words alone.”<sup>13</sup>

Developing leaders for the Central Church is their fourth goal with mentoring being the primary training tool. This indicates that the mentees have been impacted by the mentoring program and see the value in future mentoring opportunities. They chose mentoring as an ongoing method to train future leaders. As several of them were empowered as mentees, they would like to empower others they are mentoring. In the case study, the mentees didn’t show as much contemplation as I had hoped, but their plan was full of opportunities to meet needs and care for the sheep through pastoral care and mentoring.

### **Conclusion**

From the length of this chapter, it is clear that the implemented project produced notable data. Between February 1, 2017 and March 22, 2017, five elders and five mentees

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12. ShareFest is a community-wide event with Christian churches joining together to serve the Topeka School District.

13. St. Gregory the Great, *Pastoral Rule*, 51.

of the Central Church participated in an Elder Mentoring Program. This fulfills the project's stated purpose and depicts at least a partial success of the project.

Throughout this paper, three key concepts from *The Book of Pastoral Rule* have surfaced again and again: contemplation, pastoral care, and mentoring. In previous chapters I expounded on the significant impact of mentoring and how this would help the mentee get a better understanding of the expectations of being an elder at Central Church. The project's real merit is found in data showing the participants' internalization of the three key concepts which would both prepare them for church leadership and empower them to lead in their current position.

Prayer, confession and Bible study were reported by all participants and tracked as indications of contemplation. Spiritual disciplines were included in our group sessions and were key in many of the shepherding activities.

In the area of pastoral care, each pair participated in discussion and study of pastoral care principles in the group session and completed hands-on shepherding activities alongside their partner. The data indicates that the mentees participated in pastoral care through the shepherding activities including getting to know various members of the congregation, rendering service, and by praying with hurting church members.

As evidence of mentoring, the data shared in this chapter has shown numerous examples where the mentee learned shepherding skills, exercised spiritual disciplines on behalf of the elders or the congregation, and learned specific truths from their mentor. In discussions with the elders and their wives, mentees heard about the joys and heartaches of being an elder at the Central Church. Through the shepherding activities, the mentees

also witnessed and experienced the work of an elder. Each elder carries out his shepherding duties in a unique way, so each mentee had an individualized mentoring experience.

I will continue to analyze Doug's' evaluation in chapter five. In closing chapter four, it appears from the three angles of observation that the elders and mentees have internalized the three key concepts, contemplation, pastoral care, and mentoring, at varying levels. In chapter five I will share why these findings are important to the Central Church through my conclusions and implications of the study. I will also report lessons learned outside the purview of this project.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSIONS

In this last chapter, I will draw conclusions concerning the project, an Elder Mentoring Program. I will detail the overall conclusions of the Elder Mentoring Program and review the program's trustworthiness, significance, and implications. Additional conclusions include questions left unanswered, future projects and the lasting influence of Gregory the Great.

#### **Conclusions**

As outlined in chapter four, the Elder Mentoring Program at Central Church was a success. The participants completed the program as scheduled and the data revealed that the mentees internalized the key concepts of contemplation, pastoral care, and mentoring. The mentees experienced the duties of an elder and gained hands-on shepherding experience while being mentored. The elders grew in their ability to mentor and delegate through the practice of mentoring. Additionally, the elders developed close relationships with men who may be future leaders in our church, which will enable the elders to serve more effectively.

After the Elder Mentoring Program concluded, the elders asked me to facilitate a second Elder Mentoring Program that same year. As this thesis is being written, the Elder Mentoring Program has been replicated and five new mentees have started the program. As in the first program, the elders invited men to be their mentees. Like the first group of mentees, these men range in age from mid-thirties to early-fifties. Some of the men might

not be considered for eldership soon primarily due to the ages of their children. However, all are willing to be mentored and may one day serve the Central Church as elders.

Another result of the Elder Mentoring Program that shows a successful conclusion is that the program model has already been suggested by participants as a possible template for other groups needing mentoring: potential elders' wives, new members, and young married couples. Using the template or parts of the model for the Elder Mentoring Program has merit. For example, in chapter one I mentioned that the leadership team included a new members' class in its list of priorities. Now, one of the elders suggested using the template of the Elder Mentoring Program for a new members' class or program. I plan to work with a team in the second quarter of 2018 to flesh out a plan using the Elder Mentoring Program as a template for a new members' class.

### **Trustworthiness**

The Elder Mentoring Program has been shown as a trustworthy intervention for the elders of Central Church. The speed with which they requested a second session of the program shows both credibility and dependability. The program has been replicated with new mentees, but the learning experiences at each group session will include the same spiritual disciplines and learning activities. The new group will experience the same shepherding activities as the first group and the goal remains that same. The goals of the program are to provide an intentional training method for future leaders, empower the Central Church elders to seek mentorship opportunities, and to teach others the skills, duties, and expectations of a Central elder.

Although the second session of the program will be executed like the first, the program will produce new and different data. Each elder and mentee will have different

experiences from those of the original program. The new mentees have differing life experiences and expectations. It is improbable that the elders and new mentees will visit the same people as the first pair during the shepherding activity. I am convinced this would be true even if I had the same elders and same original mentees but made different combinations of elder/mentee pairings.

I believe the data collected from the second group of mentees will also indicate an internalization of the three key concepts: contemplation, pastoral care, and mentoring. Within the mentoring, the mentees will get a glimpse of being an elder at the Central Church. While being mentored, each mentee will be exposed to contemplation through the weekly group sessions and the shepherding activities. They will also be exposed to pastoral care through the shepherding activities. Mentees will receive a glimpse into being an elder at the Central Church through the shepherding activities and spending time with their elder.

Though the program has been experienced as successful for the elders of Central Church, I have considered minor adjustments to improve the program.

In his evaluation, Doug pointed out that two mentees missed the final session where the mentees worked together on a case study. Indeed, as He states: “The participation of all who had gone through the seven-week process would have enabled a greater sense of communal discernment in the development of the case study plan.”<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, in hindsight I see the value of including the elders in the final session instead of dismissing them while the mentees worked. During the program I have been observing how the elders internalized the key concepts along with the mentees.

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1. See Appendix G for Doug Peters’ full report.



Also, the final session should be scheduled for two hours instead of one. One hour was not enough for the three mentees who were present. Two hours would have been a more reasonable amount of time.

In chapter four I acknowledged my field notes were limited primarily to the oral reports the participants made at the beginning of each group session. As the facilitator for the evening, I found it difficult to take notes during the spiritual disciplines and learning activities. The core of my observation was focused on the internalization of the three key concepts in the lives of the participants. Because I found it difficult to take notes while the spiritual disciplines and learning activities were occurring, I may have missed recording material that would have given insight into the participants' internalization of the key concepts. Even so, I had sufficient data to triangulate insight into the participants' interaction and internalization of the key concepts. I believe that interacting and participating with enthusiasm was more valuable to the participant's experience than my few additional notes would have been.

During the Elder Mentoring Program, I experienced some evidence of the Hawthorne Effect. Draper explains, "Generally, references to the Hawthorne Effect all concern effects on an experiment's results of the awareness of participants that they are the subject of an intervention."<sup>2</sup> Likewise Sensing writes that "On the one hand, congregants want their ministers to do well. When they know the minister is doing the project for a grade, they want their minister to make an A."<sup>3</sup> In a report from one elder I

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2. Stephen W. Draper, "The Hawthorne Effect and Other Expectancy Effects: A Note," <http://www.psy.gla.ac.uk/~steve/hawth.html>.

3. Tim Sensing, *Qualitative Research: A Multi-Methods Approach to Projects for Doctor of Ministry Thesis* (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 84.

received this comment, “I hope this is helpful towards your assignment, Terry.” Reading his mentee’s reports gives no indication that this impacted the mentee’s experience negatively. I believe any impact the Hawthorne Effect had on the program was positive. If anything, it caused the elders and mentees to be more committed to the program. The more dedicated the participants were to the program the more they gleaned from it.

As a factor that may have impacted program trustworthiness, I want to confess being anxious during the group sessions. I believe this anxiety came from several sources. First, I had discussed the possibility of an Elder Mentoring Program with our elders prior to attending my first two-week residency of the DMIN program in June 2015. Another source of anxiety was the fact we had gone through an elder selection process without gaining new elders a year earlier. I knew our elders were ready for some younger elders to join them. Though I had explained this program could not guarantee additional elders, I sensed they still had that expectation. The last source of anxiety was self-imposed and stemmed from the desire to excel with the Elder Mentoring Program. However, since the second Elder Mentoring Program has begun, I have been much more relaxed.

Concerning this program’s applicability, I stated in the introductory chapter delimitations for this project. The delimitation is this program can only have an impact on the Central Church. Readers of this thesis would need to adapt the project for their context thus creating their own intervention. The project, however, can be replicated in the context of the Central Church with minimal or no adaptation.

To replicate this project in the same context one needs eleven people: a facilitator, five elders, and five mentees. I believe someone other than myself, even one of the

elders, could serve as facilitator. As the preaching minister and not an elder, serving as the facilitator allows the elders to focus on their mentees. Considering my interactions with the elders and with the congregation I seemed to serve as the most informed facilitator outside of our eldership in the congregation.

The second group needed to replicate this program is the elders. Although I enumerated five elders, this number could change throughout the life of the church. The elders must agree to serve as mentors to reproduce the Elder Mentoring Program. It would not be ideal, but possible, to have a portion of the elders rather than all the elders serving as mentors. In a larger congregation with more elders or even as the Central eldership and congregation grows, the Elder Mentoring Program might not require all the elders to serve as mentors. A larger congregation is not the context replicating the program, so it is important all elders serve as mentors.

The last group needed is mentees. It is important for the elders, rather than me, to invite men to participate in the program. The familiarity and commonality the elder will already have with a self-chosen mentee should reduce the time the elder and mentee spend getting to know each other on a surface level. According to Searby, “Beginning the selection process with a sense of affinity with the person being approached will be a positive step in the development of the overall experience.”<sup>4</sup> The elders inviting mentees also signifies the ownership of the mentoring process lies with the elders. Since the program on its own cannot produce elders, nor is being an elder an immediate result of completing the program, it is not necessary to determine a man’s willingness to serve as

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4. Mark A. Searby, *The Resilient Pastor: Ten Principles for Developing Pastoral Resilience* (Eugene: Resource Publications, 2015), 39.

an elder or confirm his qualifications to serve as an elder prior to his invitation. The primary quality the elders should look for in potential mentees is willingness to be a mentee.

The Elder Mentoring Program model could be replicated and successfully transferred to another congregation if some basic requirements were met. First, to be replicated in another church, some or all its elders would need to be willing to be mentors. If held in a larger church with many elders, it may not be necessary for all the elders to participate in the program. The first criteria of how many elders participate in the Elder Mentoring Program would be determined by the needs of that ministry context. Second, the elders would need to be willing to commit to at least two hours of mentoring-related activities a week, one hour for the group meeting and a minimum of an hour for the shepherding activity.

At least two more things are needed for replication in another church. First there would need to be willing mentees. Secondly, a curriculum for the meetings would be needed. The curriculum presented in chapter three might not be applicable in another congregation. Another facilitator or minister may choose to place less emphasis on contemplation. The minister serving as facilitator must know his context well enough to choose or write a curriculum which best matches the needs of the church context and theological constructs which rise out of his study.

Since chapter two, I have discussed the three key concepts of contemplation, pastoral care, and mentoring in many ways. Few pastors or elders will be strong in all three of these. Some elders will be more contemplative while others more pastoral. One pastor may be great at pastoral care but fall short at mentoring. Personally, one of the joys

of the project was the participant's willingness to grow in these areas whether it was their strength or not. I am reminded of the two mentees who confessed reluctance concerning visitation. These two men, despite their reluctance, shared that the example their elder provided for them helped them grow in this experience.

### **Significance and Implications**

The significance for the Central Church has been shown in the growth of ten men who grew in their contemplation, pastoral care, and understanding of being an elder. They provided pastoral care through visits to more than thirty members of our church, approximately ten percent of the congregation. Though less formally, I have observed these men and their families continuing the relationships established originally as elder and mentee.

Like many training opportunities, the real impact or significance of this program may not be seen for years to come. The mentees may or may not serve in role of leadership in the future. It is unknown if any of the five original mentees will serve as an elder in the Central Church. However, if they are chosen to serve and they choose to serve, they will be better prepared after completing the Elder Mentoring Program. And if any of the mentees become an elder, I know they will have a mentor in their corner cheering them on in their service.

This program has significance for ministry leaders outside the Central Church. I have interacted with enough other ministry leaders to know the Central Church was not alone in its void of intentional training of future leaders. To replicate this program in another congregation, the facilitator would need to be willing to explore her own ministry context while exploring the theological constructs. Those theological constructs could

come from a reading of *The Book of Pastoral Rule* by Gregory the Great or from some other conversational partner as the minister explores God's will for elders and leaders.

As mentioned previously in this chapter, the elder's request for a second session of the mentoring program indicates positive impact and sustainability for the Elder Mentoring Program at Central Church. The elders were enthusiastic to begin another seven-week session. I do not believe their enthusiasm will sustain two sessions a year for the long term. After this year, I would be pleased if the Central elders offered the Elder Mentoring Program once a year.

In early 2018, I anticipate the Central Church entering another elder selection process. This could have an adverse impact on the sustainability of the Elder Mentoring Program. First, if we ordain new elders who do not see the value of the program, the program may not be scheduled again. In addition, if no new elders are ordained the existing elders may lose interest in continuing the program. If no new men join as elders, they may not want to continue the program believing it did not influence additional men to serve. Other energy-draining events on the horizon, like a building program, could indirectly influence the continuation of the Elder Mentoring Program.

There are events that could positively affect the sustainability of the Elder Mentoring Program. The ease of replication discussed earlier, my desire to facilitate, and the elders' willingness to mentor others ought to make it a program that survives certain adversity.

The personal significance I found in this project was both pastoral and academic. Pastorally, I could return to some of my favorite tools. As much as I love preaching, I love facilitating smaller groups equally. Much of the teaching I do at Central is lecture or

lecture-discussion. On Wednesday nights, I usually co-teach the auditorium class ranging from forty to sixty students. On Sunday mornings, I co-teach a class for young married couples of twenty to thirty students. I try to generate discussion in both classrooms but neither provides the intimacy of a small group. In the smaller group setting of the Elder Mentoring Program it was possible to facilitate the group and allow their interaction with the Word and with each other to affect them.

Also, pastorally I influenced the mentees and elders. Each week I had an opportunity to validate the participants concerning the shepherding they had done in their weekly activity. In that setting as facilitator, I could share insights concerning pastoral care that I might not have time or inclination to share in a late Wednesday night elders' meeting. Just as the elders grew to know their mentees at a greater level, I grew in my knowledge of the five mentees. I believe their knowledge of me grew as well. This knowledge enabled me to empower both elders and mentees in their work as shepherds, as elders, and as future leaders.

Academically I advanced in my appreciation of qualitative research and the process involved in an intervention. Though I had practiced both qualitative research and process in my ministry prior to this project, the academic experience reignited my passion to continually explore the context in which I serve. Looking at my context through the theological constructs prior to an intervention or new program is a discipline needing to be rekindled in my ministry. Lastly, evaluating the data concerning an intervention or a program causes me to think more analytically. I am observing these aspects of qualitative research and process showing up often in my thinking concerning other areas of my ministry.

Reflecting upon the influence of mentors in my own life, I have so many of them to thank for the growth I have experienced through their example. In chapter two I shared the words of Paul, “Follow my example, as I follow Christ.” (1 Corinthians 11:1). This passage represents several New Testament texts that convey the importance of the Christian example. Influenced by these passages, Gregory the Great called the spiritual director or pastor to be an example to others. Through this program, I witnessed spiritual leaders serving as examples in a very intentional, vulnerable, and tangible way.

### **Questions Still Unanswered**

Three topics that surfaced during the Elder Mentoring Program remain unanswered. The first of the two topics involve how the current elders shepherd a flock of three hundred people. One of the elders mentioned to his mentee that if the elders divided the flock among them each would have sixty sheep to shepherd. He further stated since the elders had not divided the flock for shepherding he continues to shepherd as many people as possible. Another elder during the shepherding activity of identifying flocks, acknowledged two different times that members needing attention fall through the cracks. In the mentees’ response to the case study they set a goal, “Elders will make intentional contact with the membership.” The first proposed action item under this goal was to divide the congregation among the five mentees serving in the case study as elders. I believe this approach to shepherding has merit in our context.

The elders enlisting and empowering others to help them in shepherding the congregation also has merit. In the exercise, identifying their flocks, the elders saw their mentees have a sphere of influence within the congregation. The second mentoring group will experience the same exercise. Whether selected to serve as shepherds or not in the



first quarter of 2018, the ten mentees could be enlisted to help the elders in shepherding the congregation.

Another mechanism that could be used to assist the elders in their shepherding activities could be small groups. During the worship survey mentioned in chapter one, more than half of the congregation expressed an interest in being involved in small groups. Since the survey, we have had many discussions but very little action moving towards implementation of small groups. The Elder Mentoring Program would, however, provide a great template for training small group leaders. Another template might need to be developed for a small group ministry. A small group ministry could assist the elders in their shepherding of the congregation.

The second unanswered topic comes from Doug's' evaluation of the mentee's case study.

Another potential growth area I see is for the mentees to acknowledge and maximize current congregational systems and structures that are already present in their church context. The mentee dialogue that I observed during the plan development focused primarily on adding additional responsibilities, initiatives and meetings to what I perceive to be an already busy leader schedule.<sup>5</sup>

In chapter four I showed that the mentees learned the rhythm of the Central elders. This rhythm includes a two-hour meeting every Wednesday night from 8:15 to 10:15 p.m.

During the program both elders and mentees discussed the busyness of their lives. As a church and as leadership, it seems there should be a streamlining of our time rather than creating more activities. Included in the streamlining could be using Sundays and Wednesday nights more effectively. This topic, like the first, is worthy of the leadership team's attention and consideration.

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5. See Appendix G for Doug Peters' full report.

The third question left unanswered is whether the Elder Mentoring Program will affect the preparation of additional men to serve as elders in 2018. We recognize as stated in the first chapter, that a single program will not create additional elders or leaders. There is no guarantee that more men will be prepared to serve as elders when the next elder selection process occurs. It is my hope and the hope of the Central elders that two completed sessions of the Elder Mentoring Program in 2017 will allow more men to be prepared to serve as elders if chosen by the congregation through a partnership with the Spirit.

### **Future Projects**

With this project nearing its end, I want to explore future endeavors. Earlier in this chapter I referred to interest for small groups among the Central Church. This project has impacted small groups in two ways. First, the amount of time required by this project has limited the investment I could make working on small groups. Secondly, the process involved in this project has inspired me to duplicate the appropriate procedures to design and implement a small group ministry for the Central Church.

The context has not significantly changed, so the information for the project's foundation is the same. Though some of Gregory's writings may be applicable, I believe a different conversation partner to influence the theological constructs would be desired. The first intervention would involve designing a small group ministry out of the theological construct. A team needs to be formed for creating the plan for small groups for the Central Church. It is likely the theological constructs for the design could also be used for the implementation of a small groups ministry. An implementation team would

need to be formed at this point. This second team would be responsible for implementing the design of the first team.

Another activity I can see stemming from this project involves expanding chapter two. Since the late 1980's, I have worked with a summer intern annually, first in youth ministry and now in preaching. I envision morphing chapter two into a book. The purpose of the book would serve several purposes in working with the interns. First it would introduce the intern to *The Book of Pastoral Rule*. More importantly it will impress upon him the importance of contemplation, pastoral care, and mentoring. My experience is that most interns excel in one of these over the others. It is rare to find a student who excels in all three. Additional conversation partners used for this paper, like Mark Searby, would be used in creating this book.

While writing this thesis I was challenged to find others like Gregory and Ruth Haley Barton who lived contemplative lives. The challenge was to discover and write about contemplatives living chronologically between Gregory and Barton. I found this nugget regarding Thomas Campbell from the vantage point of his son, Alexander:

Moreover, he began to observe that his father was becoming increasingly devoted to study of the Scriptures to the exclusion of church creeds or disciplines. In time, as Thomas discovered the children of the parish con-founding the language of the catechism with that of the Bible, he gradually dispensed with the catechism. Whenever Alex now entered the study, where "a large and well-assorted" library lined the walls, he would rarely find any books but the Bible and a concordance on his father's table.<sup>6</sup>

This nugget along with other observations made by Wrather caused me to list Thomas Campbell among the additional contemplatives in chapter two. The limited reading I did

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6. Eva Jean Wrather, *Alexander Campbell: An Adventurer in Freedom*, ed. D. Duane Cummins (Fort Worth: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 2005), 34-35.

concerning Campbell for this project has stirred me to do investigation concerning contemplation within the Stone-Campbell Movement. I can see that investigation leading to an article in late 2018.

### **Influence of Gregory the Great**

Throughout this project, it's obvious the great impact *The Book of Pastoral Rule* has had on me. The conclusion of this thesis will not be the end of my interaction with Gregory the Great or his influence on me. Here are a few lessons from Gregory I will take moving forward.

Like the quote from Beebe cited previously, I also have found the tension between contemplative pursuits and service hard to reconcile: "I had been agonizing for nearly twenty-years over how to develop a life of prayer and contemplation when my daily responsibilities were filled with 'worldly men and their affairs.'"<sup>7</sup> I crave my time in solitude with God. On the other hand, I feel called to serve those in the congregation and my community. Finding a healthy balance between these poles is a challenge. Holder's assessment of Gregory's resolution gives me a sense of resoluteness. "Thus contemplation and action became not two separate lifestyles, or two stages in a person's personal history, but poles between which the Christian man or woman continually oscillates back and forth."<sup>8</sup>

Gregory's chastisement of monks unwilling to serve in the pastorate challenged my thinking. Interpreting Jesus' conversation with Peter on the seaside in John 21,

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7. Gayle D. Beebe and Richard J. Foster, *Longing for God: Seven Paths of Christian Devotion* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 296.

8. Arthur Holder, "Gregory the Great: Book of Pastoral Rule," in *Christian Spirituality: The Classics*, ed. Arthur Holder (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 82.

Gregory says, “If therefore, the care of feeding is a testament to loving, then he who abounds in virtues but refuses to feed the flock of God is found guilty of having no love for the supreme Shepherd.”<sup>9</sup> I tend to passively invite people to join us in the ministry of the church, viewing the invitation as more a marketing event than a call to serve. After spending time with Gregory, I have found myself boldly asking people to serve in ways I believe he has called them. An example is a friend twenty-years my junior.

My younger friend is gifted in many areas. He is sought after by small local churches to come and preach for them. This takes him away from our congregation. Considering the limited amount of time, they have worshipped with us, he and his wife have a significant sphere of influence within our congregation. He is shepherding a flock within the congregation. Over lunch I told him I was convicted that as much as the smaller churches needed him, his calling was to the flock God had given him among the Central Church. Much to my surprise and elation he told another church that December would be his last month to preach for them.

The caution I must give myself in this newfound boldness is to strive for humility. In calling others to service, I must first have the humility to be willing to heed my own words. At the same time, I must humble myself before God to partner with the Holy Spirit. This partnership with the Holy Spirit is to assure that my calling others to service is of God’s will and not my own selfish motives.

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9. St. Gregory the Great, *The Book of Pastoral Rule by St. Gregory the Great*, trans. George E. Demacopoulos (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2007), 36.

## Conclusion

The DMIN project and thesis has stretched me and strengthened me. Numerous conversation partners have influenced my growth through the project and thesis. My reading of the inspired writers of the New Testament and Gregory the Great's *The Book of Pastoral Rule* provided a theological construct for this project. The men who participated in the original Elder Mentoring Program of the Central Church were patient conversation partners with me. The participants allowed me as their facilitator to provide them opportunities to practice the spiritual disciplines while learning what it means to be an elder. The elders and mentees reported back to me their experience from the shepherding activities. The Elder Mentoring Program provided a 360-degree learning experience: the mentees learning from the elders, the elders learning from the mentees, the participants learning from me while I learned from the participants as well as my other conversation partners.

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## APPENDIX A

### Institutional Review Board Exemption Letter

**ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**  
*Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World*  
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103  
325-674-2885



11/22/2016

Terry R. Kitson  
Graduate School of Theology  
ACU Box 29422  
Abilene Christian University

Dear Mr. Kitson

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled

(IRB# 16-104 ) is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human

Subjects as:

- Non-research (45 CFR 46.102(d))
- Non-human research (45 CFR 46.102(f))

Based on:

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If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

*Megan Roth*

Megan Roth, Ph.D.  
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

## APPENDIX B

### Central Pre-Retreat Survey

#### Central Pre-Retreat Survey - September 2015

1. Indicate all that apply to you:

- Elder
- Elder Spouse
- Minister
- Minister Spouse
- Deacon
- Deacon Spouse
- Bible Class Teacher
- Other

2. Reflecting on your experience in this church family, describe a time when you felt the most engaged, alive and motivated. Who was involved? What did you do? How did it feel? What happened?

3. What are the most important things this congregation has contributed to your life? Who or what made the difference? How has it affected you?

1

2

3

4. When you think about how this congregation relates to the community and the world, what do you think has been most important? When we are at our best, how do we express God's love, mercy and justice to others?

1

2

3

5. What have been your own most important ministry or missional experiences in relating to others beyond our congregation?

1

2

3

6. What congregational strengths, if properly leveraged, could have the greatest kingdom impact in the next 3-5 years?

1

2

3

7. What congregational weaknesses, if not taken seriously, have potential to limit our kingdom impact?

1

2

3

8. What opportunities, if properly leveraged, could have the greatest kingdom impact in the next 3-5 years?

1

2

3

9. What threats, if not taken seriously, have potential to limit our kingdom impact?

1

2

3

10. What are the essential, central characteristics or ways of life that make our church unique? What is most important about our church?

1

2

3

11. Make three wishes for the future of our church:

1

2

3

## APPENDIX C

## Informed Consent Document

**Elders Intentionally Developing Future Leaders Through Mentoring at the Central Church of Christ in Topeka, KS.**

Terry R. Kitson - Doctorate of Ministry Student

Terry R. Kitson, as part of a DMIN thesis project, will be facilitating a future leaders training program through mentoring relationships. Each of the existing five elders will mentor one of the men of the Central Church of Christ. Following the seven-week program Terry R. Kitson will evaluate the effectiveness of the ministry.

You are invited to participate in this study by serving as a mentee to one of the existing elders. The existing elders are also invited to participate. By agreeing to participate you will attend a special Wednesday night class with your mentoring elder or mentee and will be asked to participate in a service opportunity with your mentoring elder or mentee weekly for a period of seven weeks. Each week for 7 weeks the mentoring elder and mentee will provide a brief report on their past week's activity by filling out a form provided later. Mentees will also attend an eighth meeting participating in a discussion about a case study. Each meeting will be on Wednesday nights at 7:00 p.m. and is expected to last an hour.

While participating you may gain a new understanding of what it means to be an elder at the Central Church of Christ. You will be contributing to initiating an intentional elder mentoring training program and enhancing its effectiveness. Although each participant will be asked to keep information shared in the meeting confidential, know there is a risk that information shared might inadvertently be shared with someone outside the group by other participants.

All information shared in the weekly reports, meetings, and case study will be kept totally anonymous for the purpose of publishing the effectiveness of the ministry. We will not collect any identifying information about you on the weekly reports, and any identifying information supplied by you will be coded and struck from the original record. This consent form will be stored separately from the reports, and there will be no linkage between the consent form and reports.

If you feel that you have been injured as a direct result of participating in the ministry or

if you have any questions about your participation in this thesis project, please contact Dr. Carson Reed at 1-325-674-3732 or Dr. Meagan Roth at 325-674-2885 both at Abilene Christian University.

After you have read this consent form and had all your questions answered, please sign below if you are willing to participate in the program. You understand that participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

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Signature of Participant

Contact information for Terry R. Kitson (785-506-1338)



## APPENDIX D

### Elder Mentoring Program Central Church of Christ Curriculum

#### Week #1 – February 1, 2017

Introduction. I will share the overview of the program printed above with the five elders and five mentees. After sharing the overview, I will give the ten prospective participants an opportunity to ask questions. Once I have answered their questions satisfactorily, the prospective participants will be asked to sign a consent form agreeing to become participants.

Lectio Divina. Each elder or mentee will be given a sheet of paper containing three scripture texts. The three scripture texts will have three translations each. Each translation will be separated by a question of reflection.

“Therefore, O king, be pleased to accept my advice: Renounce your sins by doing what is right, and your wickedness by being kind to the oppressed. It may be that then your prosperity will continue.” (Dan 4:27, NIV 1984)<sup>1</sup>

- What word or phrase jumps out which might apply to present day spiritual leaders?

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1. All Scripture quotes not otherwise identified come from the New International Version, 1984 edition.

“Therefore, O king, may my counsel be acceptable to you: atone for your sins with righteousness, and your iniquities with mercy to the oppressed, so that your prosperity may be prolonged.” (Dan 4:27, NRSV)

- Where does the spiritual leader’s counsel come?

So, O king, please accept my advice. Stop sinning and do what is right. Stop doing wicked things and be kind to the poor. Then you might continue to be successful.” (Dan 4:27, NCV)

- Ask one of the current elders to pray for the group to seek Godly counsel over the next seven weeks.

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. <sup>20</sup>To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. <sup>21</sup>To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. <sup>22</sup>To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. <sup>23</sup>I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings. (1 Cor 9:19-23, NIV 1984).

- What characteristic do most people you are drawn to have in common?

For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law) so that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings. (1Cor 9:19-23, NRSV).

- What message does this passage have for us when we are not naturally drawn to another person?

I am free and belong to no one. But I make myself a slave to all people to win as many as I can. To the Jews I became like a Jew to win the Jews. I myself am not

ruled by the law. But to those who are ruled by the law I became like a person who is ruled by the law. I did this to win those who are ruled by the law. To those who are without the law I became like a person who is without the law. I did this to win those people who are without the law. (But really, I am not without God's law—I am ruled by Christ's law.) To those who are weak, I became weak so I could win the weak. I have become all things to all people so I could save some of them in any way possible. I do all this because of the Good News and so I can share in its blessings. (1 Cor 9:19-23, NCV).

- Ask a mentee to pray each of us will learn to become all things to all men.

“Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him;

do not fret when men succeed in their ways,

when they carry out their wicked schemes.” (Ps 37:7).

- What comes to mind when you hear, “Be still before the Lord?”

“Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him;

do not fret over those who prosper in their way,

over those who carry out evil devices.” (Ps 37:7, NRSV).

- When do you find it hardest to wait upon the Lord?

“Wait and trust the Lord.

Don't be upset when others get rich

or when someone else's plans succeed.” (Ps 37:7 NCV)

- I will pray over the group asking us to grow in our patience and trust of God.

Shepherding Activity. The first activity the elder and his mentee are to have dinner with their wives. Acknowledging at the outset the elder's service is very much a partnership with his wife. During dinner, I would like for the elder and his wife to share their perception of the role of an elder based on their experience as well as their understanding of Scripture.

Week #2 – February 8, 2017

Reports. Each elder and his mentee will turn in a written report of their shepherding activity of the previous week. After turning in the written report, each participant will be given an opportunity to share concerning their dinner with their wives and subsequent conversation concerning the role of an elder.

Preview Discussion. I will ask each of the participants to write down on an index card an activity. The activity I would like for them to write down is one they feel confident enough in their expertise to teach someone else. I will clarify that this activity does not have to be church related. (Examples: Throw a curve ball, create a website, overhaul an engine, etc.)

Introduction to Gregory the Great. *The Book of Pastoral Rule* was written by Gregory the Great around 590 CE. It was the standard rule for spiritual leaders for nearly 1,000 years. His book influenced the service of spiritual leaders both in the west and the east. Much of *The Book of Pastoral Rule* is applicable today. Consider the following quote from page 29. “No one presumes to teach an art that he has not first mastered through study.”<sup>2</sup> We each identified an activity mastered to the level that we could teach someone else. Considering our activity, are there others in that same field we could still learn from, though no longer a novice ourselves? A spiritual leader may have spirituality enough to teach or mentor others while continuing to grow themselves.

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2. St. Gregory the Great, *The Book of Pastoral Rule*, trans. George E. Demacopoulos (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2007), 29.

Biblical Teaching on Importance of Experience. Each elder and his mentee will be asked to read Matt 15:10-14:

Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen and understand. What goes into a man’s mouth does not make him ‘unclean,’ but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him ‘unclean.’” “Then the disciples came to him and asked, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?” “He replied, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit.”

After reading the passage, discuss among the two of you, what this passage say concerning spiritual leaders, their own learning, and their ability to teach others.

Gregory the Great later in his book says, “those who preside over others should consider not their rank, but the equality of their condition. Moreover, they should revel not in ruling over others but in helping them.” In the same vein consider the words of Peter as he encounters Cornelius in Acts 10:25-26, “As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. But Peter made him get up. ‘Stand up,’ he said, ‘I am only a man myself.’” Again, I would like to ask each elder and his mentee to discuss the quote from Gregory and the passage from Acts. Consider the following question. Is spiritual leadership about power and rank or is it about humility and service?

*In the Name of Jesus.* This is the title of a devotional book written by the late Henri Nouwen. The emphasis of the book is on spiritual leadership. At the second meeting, I will share an audio reading of the prologue. This tells the first half of a story which illustrates tonight’s learning activities. Nouwen in his prologue tells the story of one of the residents at the community where Nouwen served. The community was made up of mentally handicapped people and their assistants. Nouwen had been asked to travel to Washington, DC, to make a presentation. His agreement with Daybreak, the

community of mentally handicapped people, was that when traveling he would take someone with him. He asked Bill one of the higher functioning residents to accompany him. Bill accepted the invitation as an invite to join Nouwen in ministry. “We are doing this together,” Bill often told Nouwen before their trip. The prologue tells the first half of the story. We will listen to the epilogue that completes the story during week three.

Shepherding Activity. Next Monday night each elder and his mentee will attend M.E.D.’s, Monday Evening Devotional. This is an activity of Central’s youth ministry. I will coordinate with Aaron, our youth minister in advance. Each elder and mentee will engage two of our teens in conversation. The purpose of the conversation will be to inquire concerning the world in which our teenagers are growing up. I would recommend that the elder and mentee go prepared to share about their own adolescence as well as asking questions about our teenagers’ experiences. If the elder and/or mentee have a scheduling conflict on Monday, I would recommend visiting with two of our teens following the Sunday service.

Week #3 – February 15, 2017

Reports. Each elder and his mentee will turn in a written report of their shepherding activity of the previous week. After turning in the written report, each participant will be given an opportunity to share concerning their conversation with two of our church's teenagers.

Prayer. Invite one of the mentees to pray that God will direct our thoughts as we consider the Word of God.

In the Word. Invite the group to silence themselves before God so they may focus on the reading of the Word. I will invite one of the elders to provide the first reading of Ezek 34:17-19:

“As for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats. Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet? Must my flock feed on what you have trampled and drink what you have muddied with your feet?”

- Spend a minute focusing on what word or phrase jumps out at you from the reading.

After giving the group a minute to focus, I will ask them to share that word or phrase with the group. Another elder will be asked to read the passage again from the New Revised Standard Version.

As for you, my flock, thus says the Lord God: I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats: Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture, but you must tread down with your feet the rest of your pasture? When you drink of clear water, must you foul the rest with your feet? And must my sheep eat what you have trodden with your feet, and drink what you have fouled with your feet? (Ezek 34:17-19, NRSV)

- Where does the word or phrase, you focused on earlier connect with your life as a spiritual leader?

Allow again time for the group to share their responses, once they have meditated on an answer. Now we will hear the passage read a third time. While I read the passage if you have not already, consider how your word or phrase impacts the handling of God's Word, the spiritual nutrition needed both by ourselves and by His flock.

This is what the Lord God says: As for you, my flock, I will judge between one sheep and another, between the male sheep and the male goats. Is it not enough for you to eat grass in the good land? Must you crush the rest of the grass with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you make the rest of the water muddy with your feet? Must my flock eat what you crush, and must they drink what you make muddy with your feet? (Ezek 34:17-19 NCV)

- Thought question: How can a spiritual leader make sure he is not “crushing the food and muddying the water” God has provided through His Word for the flock?

Consider Gregory the Great's comment on this passage. “Indeed, pastors ‘drink the clearest water’ when, with an accurate understanding, they imbibe the streams of truth. But the same ‘disturb the water with their feet’ when they corrupt the study of holy meditation with an evil life. Obviously, the sheep drink that which was muddied by feet when, as subjects, they do not attend to the words they hear but imitate only the depraved examples that they observe.” (*Pastoral Rule*, 31)

I will invite a mentee to read Heb 7:27: “Unlike the other high priest, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.” Like the high priest we have more in common with our fellow-worshippers, our fellow-sheep, than we do with Jesus. Daily we must confess our own sins and frailties. In confessing our sin and frailties spiritual leaders recognize their need for Jesus and God's salvation. How does this reality shape the answer we give in 1 Pet 3:15-16? “But in your hearts set apart



Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.”

In the Name of Jesus. We return to listen to the conclusion of Henri Nouwen’s and his travel companion, Bill’s trip to Washington, D.C. Nouwen recounts the fulfillment of Bill’s “we are doing this together.” During Nouwen’s presentation Bill converses with Nouwen in the hearing of the audience. I wish for our elders and their mentees to leave with a vision of participatory leadership. “We are doing this together.”

Shepherding Activity. Before next Wednesday night I would ask that each elder and his mentee visit one of our congregation’s homebound members. The homebound members may live in a private residence or community with other homebound members. I will provide a list so that we can make sure that five homebound members are visited.

Week #4 – February 22, 2017

Reports. Each elder and his mentee will turn in a written report of their shepherding activity of the previous week. After turning in the written report, each participant will be given an opportunity to share concerning their visit with a homebound member of the congregation.

Qualities of a Spiritual Leader. Gregory the Great lists eleven qualifications of the spiritual leader. The last two are somewhat broad. The tenth qualification simply stated, “Concerning what sort of qualities should be present for one to assume spiritual leadership.” (*Pastoral Rule*, p. 43) I will not share all that Gregory presents under this heading. I do want to list a few of qualities he lists under this heading.

- “He must be devoted entirely to the example of good living.”
- “He must desire the internal life only.”
- “He must be dead to the passions of the flesh and live a spiritual life.”
- “In his own heart, he must suffer the afflictions of others and likewise rejoice at the fortune of his neighbor, as though the good thing was happening to him.” (*Pastoral Rule*, 43)

Gregory also in his description of the life of the spiritual leader suggests, “The spiritual leader should always be first in service.” (*Pastoral Rule*, 51)

I would be the first in not giving Gregory an equal footing with Scripture. Yet I believe two things about Gregory’s work. First, I believe we could find scriptures that teach many of the principles Gregory suggests for the spiritual leader. That should not be surprising the amount of time Gregory spent in the Word. Second, I believe Gregory’s list is closer to the heart of God on the matter of spiritual leadership than the corporate

model of leadership prevailing in many churches. Let's transition to see what the Bible says concerning the qualities of a spiritual leader.

*They Smell Like Sheep.* I will use Lynn Anderson's DVD series for us to look at the Biblical qualities of spiritual leaders, specifically shepherds. The lesson we will look at from the DVD is entitled, "What Shepherds Do for Flocks?" I will make available accompanying workbooks. The pages we will look at from the workbook will be pages 32 -33.

Shepherding Activity. Over a cup of coffee, I want to invite each mentee and his elder to review pages 32-33 from *They Smell Like Sheep* workbook. Once they have reviewed those pages, I would like for the elder to share his personal struggle between being a shepherd and "member of a board of trustees." I would encourage their time to end with the mentee praying for the elder and the task of shepherding he has been called.

Week #5 – March 1, 2017

Reports. Each elder and his mentee will turn in a written report of their shepherding activity of the previous week. After turning in the written report, each participant will be given an opportunity to share concerning their review of *They Smell Like Sheep* pages 32-33 and their discussion concerning the struggle between being a shepherd and a “member of board of trustees.”

In the Word. I will invite one of the mentees to read 2 Tim 2:1-7. “You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer. Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor’s crown unless he competes according to the rules. The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.”

- I would ask the current elders how they differentiate between Kingdom business and civilian affairs. I will prepare the elders in advance. It will be advantageous for the discussion if the elders can be specific and practical.

Spiritual Discernment. I will ask Rex Allen, current elder and unofficial elder historian, for his help with this activity. With Rex’s help, we will create a timeline of decisions made by the existing elders. We will ask the elders to put stars by those decisions they deemed as positive. From the starred list, we will now ask the elders to choose the top three decisions they felt most positive concerning. Exploring those three

decisions I will ask the elders to share how they arrived at that decision. Would the elders have been even more positive concerning those decisions if they had?

- Given the decision more time.
- Spent more time in prayer.
- Intentionally laid out fleece.
- Spent more time in silence and solitude listening for God's leading.

Shepherding Activity. I would like for each mentee and his elder to spend time discerning how they feel called to minister this week. Once they have discerned the activity to participate in they are to then carry out that activity.

Week #6 – March 8, 2017

Reports. Each elder and his mentee will turn in a written report of their shepherding activity of the previous week. After turning in the written report, each participant will be given an opportunity to share concerning their discernment process and subsequent activity.

Into the Word. I will have one elder and one mentee read John 21:15-17. The elder will read Peter's words and the mentee Jesus' words. "When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?'"

'Yes, Lord,' he said, 'you know that I love you.'

Jesus said, 'Feed my lambs.'

Again Jesus said, 'Simon son of John, do you truly love me?'

He answered, 'Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.'

Jesus said, 'Take care of my sheep.'

The third time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?'

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.'

Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep.'"

- Consider Gregory the Great's comment on this passage. "If, therefore, the care of feeding is a testament to loving, then he who abounds in virtues but refuses to feed the flock is found guilty of having no love for the supreme Shepherd."

(*Pastoral Rule*, 36) As a group discuss what you think about Peter's and Jesus' discussion. What do you think about Gregory's comment?

Turning Herds Into Flocks. We have around two hundred seventy-five people in attendance on a Sunday morning in worship. We have well over three hundred people on the church role. We are a large church. We are not a mega church, but we are a large

church. It is not possible for one elder to shepherd all three hundred people. The labor of shepherding must be divided.

We will watch the lesson entitled, “How Flocks Form,” from the DVD, *They Smell Like Sheep*. The importance of this activity is to see there are diverse flocks or groups among the larger flock, the local church. Each flock may have or may need a shepherd. A variety of ways are presented so a local group of elders can have the involvement of others in the task of shepherding.

Shepherding Activity. It’s time for another cup of coffee. While drinking coffee, the elder and mentee should each make a list of people at the Central Church of Christ in their sphere of influence or social circle. Each should consider whether this list constitutes a flock or not. Once the list is complete the elder should pray over the mentee’s list and vice versa.

Week # 7 – March 15, 2017

Reports. Each elder and his mentee will turn in a written report of their shepherding activity of the previous week. After turning in the written report, each participant will be given an opportunity to share concerning their list in their sphere of influence among the Central congregation and subsequent prayer.

Meditation. During our journey over the past several weeks we have experienced devotional reading of the Bible. Tonight, I want us to consider meditating on a passage. To prepare for meditation on a verse it is often helpful to get still and quiet. A few deep breaths can allow the clearing of thoughts from the mind with each breath. The clearing of the mind is for opening us to receive the Word of God. Once you have cleared your mind please meditate on John 6:15, “Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.” Repeat the passage several times in your mind. Pause between each repetition. As you meditate put yourself in Jesus’ place. Jesus has just fed the five thousand and the people are coming to make him King. What temptations would be confronting Jesus? What temptations would be confronting you? Allow the group time to share their experience.

Simple Shepherding Skills. Tonight, we will return to our *They Smell Like Sheep* workbook. Turning to pages 49-54 each mentee and his elder will be assigned a section to begin. (Example: Section entitled *Watch*) From that section they will identify the activity they each find easy and the activity they find difficult. Once they complete that section they will move to the next. I will allow for sharing time. Each group will report their easy and difficult tasks found in the sections they covered. Our beginning sections are staggered enabling us to cover more material.



Shepherding Activity. The elder and mentee should choose an individual or family from their spheres of influence. Once chosen the elder and mentee will go and visit the individual or family.

Week #8 – March 22, 2017

Reports. Each elder and his mentee will turn in a written report of their shepherding activity of the previous week. Once this is done the elders will be dismissed. No oral reports will be made this week.

Outside Expert. Doug Peters will observe the mentees as they work through a case study.



## APPENDIX F

### **Coding Scheme For Field Notes, Shepherding Activity Reports, And Peters' Report**

1. Contemplation
  - 1.1 Spiritual Disciplines
    - 1.1.1 *Lectio Divina*
    - 1.1.2 Prayer
      - 1.1.2.1 Mentee for Elder
      - 1.1.2.2 Elders for Hurting Sheep
      - 1.1.2.3 Elder and Mentee Praying for Others
      - 1.1.2.4 Elder and Mentee Praying for Flocks
      - 1.1.2.5 Homebound Member Praying Elders and Mentees
    - 1.1.3 Confession
    - 1.1.4 Discernment
2. Pastoral Care
  - 2.1 Knowing the Flock
    - 2.1.1 Elder and Mentee
    - 2.1.2 Teenagers
    - 2.1.3 Homebound Members
    - 2.1.4 Hospitality
    - 2.1.5 Forming Flocks
    - 2.1.6 Gifts and Interests of the Flock
    - 2.1.7 Needs and Struggles
    - 2.1.8 Cannot know everyone
    - 2.1.9 Forms of Contacting Members
  - 2.2 Service
  - 2.3 Direction
    - 2.3.1 Spiritual Guidance
    - 2.3.2 Vision Casting
  - 2.4 Obstacles to Pastoral Care
    - 2.4.1 Time Conflicts
    - 2.4.2 Earthly Concerns
    - 2.4.3 Family Responsibilities
3. Mentoring
  - 3.1 Glimpse of Being an Elder
    - 3.1.1 Ups and Joys

- 3.1.2 Downs and Heartaches
- 3.1.3 Struggles
- 3.1.4 No Big Surprises
- 3.1.5 Great Learning Experience
- 3.1.6 Dedication to Being an Elder
- 3.1.7 Desire of Being an Elder
- 3.2 Mentee Learned
  - 3.2.1 Importance of Visiting Members
  - 3.2.2 How to make a visit
  - 3.2.3 Rhythm of the Central Church of Christ Elders
  - 3.2.4 Overcoming Fears
- 3.3 Elders Learned
- 3.4 Elders Empowered

## APPENDIX G

### Independent Observer Evaluation – Terry Kitson’s D.Min. Project

I was privileged to serve as an independent observer and evaluator for Mr. Terry Kitson’s Doctor of Ministry project. The focus of Mr. Kitson’s project was the development of a seven-week Elder Mentoring Program for the Central Church of Christ in Topeka, KS. Five elders served as mentors with five mentees selected from the congregation.

Through the course of the project, Mr. Kitson led the group through spiritual reading of scripture, prayer and other spiritual disciplines. The curriculum developed by Mr. Kitson was derived from the four themes of Gregory the Great’s *The Book of Pastoral Rule*: Qualifications of a Spiritual Leader, The Life of the Pastor, How to Teach and Advise the Laity, and Humility.

Each mentoring pair was assigned a relevant shepherding activity to be completed before the next weekly session. Subsequent sessions began by reporting and reflection upon the learnings from the previous assignment.

At the conclusion of the seven-week series, I met alone with the mentees to present a church leadership case study. My role was to observe the efforts of the mentees apart from the mentoring elders and Mr. Kitson and evaluate their group participation in the case study process.

### **The Case Study for Mentees – Presented March 22, 2017**

You serve the Central Church of Christ as one of her elders. You and your fellow elders are trying to be more intentional concerning the shepherding aspect of your role as elders. At the same time, you are trying to be equally intentional empowering church members to works of service. As elders, you have a passion for maturing the people God and for turning members into disciples. You are convicted the bull's eye of your job is, "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." (Ephesians 4:12) You are determined to mentor and shepherd the people toward useful, active maturity. The elders are in a year-long, full court press to learn relational and equipping hands-on skills to be more empowering and improve their shepherding.

But old habits die hard. Tasks we have inherited or have done for many years are often hard to empower others to do, especially for persons who are task oriented. You have a heart for shepherding and a passion for building people. This new intentionality to shepherding and building people you admit is a challenge. You are a

\_\_\_\_\_ by training. Your natural aptitude is

\_\_\_\_\_. Like most of us, you

grasp the theory of equipping far more easily than you can apply it. For example, you

inherited or have done for years the task of

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

*(In the blanks above each Mentee should answer as openly and honestly as he can.)*

You wonder, “Holding on to the task you inherited or have done for years is a way to hide from the riskier personal stuff. I have been working for years on overcoming this, but I’m still learning.”

This means you are involved in a task or tasks you inherited or have been doing for a long time, which takes away from time you could be interacting with the sheep. And valuable shepherding or equipping time during the week gets taken up by these tasks. Yet, several folks in the congregation have the experience, expertise, and interest who could be equipped to do the task you are involved. Currently they are just sitting in the pews. Besides, you may subliminally be training the church to expect the elders to do the chores, rather than to expect personal shepherding and equipping.

Each mentee is to complete reading the paragraphs and filling in the blanks above. Once each mentee is finished, the five mentees will work together as if the elders of the Central Church of Christ. Using the book, *They Smell Like Sheep*, pages 49-54 as an aid, plan for a month of shepherding the Central Church of Christ. Please list both individual and group shepherding activities.

Once you have completed your plan discuss the following:

- Imagine what crises could happen during the month in the life of the Central Church of Christ.
- How could these crises impact the shepherding plan?
- As the shepherds of the Central Church of Christ, what are your members looking for during the crises?
- How do you make sure you do not move from the shepherding plan to crises management?



### **Goals Established During the Case Study Presentation**

The group of mentees which worked through the case study identified and summarized the following goals:

1. Love God and seek God first in everything.
2. Love the sheep.
  - Build relationships.
  - Have servant hearts.
3. Focus the church on spiritual matters.
  - Prioritize congregational spiritual development.
4. Develop leaders for the church.
  - Spiritual matters
  - Physical/earthly issues
  - Develop deacons.
5. Communicate clearly and frequently with the church.

The group determined to accomplish these goals by developing the following plan:

1. Elders will participate in frequent Bible Study/Prayer.
  - Group: Bible study/prayer session once a week
    - All elders will attend
    - May invite others to join in special circumstances
    - Separate from elder's meetings (those are more for discussion and decision making)
    - May add more sessions in crisis situations

- Individuals: Each will commit to personal study and prayer daily

2. Elders will make intentional contact with the membership.

- Divide the congregation into five groups
  - Communicate to the congregation: “Expect to hear from one of us soon”
  - Each elder will commit to contact/serve/pray/study with each member in his group
  - Encourage each elder to invite part of group to their home during the month
  - Use opportunity to listen/solicit feedback
  - Connect people with resources when we can’t meet needs
- As a group, make time during weekly elder’s meeting to discuss visits and need that arise

3. Choose a specific goal for the congregation for the month. For our theoretical month, it is serving others.

- We will choose one service project (like ShareFest) to promote for the month
- Promote and encourage all members to attend, find a role for all ages and abilities to play
- Elders all commit to participate and lead by example

4. Each elder during their visits with members will identify a need and put together a team of members to meet that need

- Identify a leader and give them power to do it
- Participate if asked, but don’t be in charge
- Use to develop a mentoring plan for future leaders, especially deacons

- Create a monthly workshop/training for different types of leaders

#### 5. Increase our level of communication over the month

- Task younger members with finding new effective methods to communicate, have them help distribute our messages
  - Traditional methods (announcements, news and notes, etc.)
  - Nontraditional methods (text messaging, social media, videos, etc.)

Having carefully read through the material provided and observed the case study working group, I am able to offer some comments on the strengths and weaknesses of the project, as well as some suggestions for improvement.

#### Strengths

First, it is clear that a great deal of thought has gone into the organizational, pedagogical and theological components of the project. Mr. Kitson has thoroughly reflected upon a spiritually formative leadership exercise appropriate to his ministry context.

Second, the process itself has several impressive aspects. It maximizes the collective wisdom of the current body of elders through intentional mentoring relationships with future leaders. The design of the weekly sessions provides opportunities for enriching the lives and ministries of both the current elders and the mentees. This design should result in an overall increase in congregational leadership capacities from current and future leaders over time. The process is reflective, measured, and compatible to the typical polity model of most Churches of Christ.

Another strength is the way in which historical and theological themes are made integral to the process, so that it encourages leaders toward an informed and reflective

ministry of leadership. Intentional practice of time-tested spiritual disciplines should be transformative for all involved. By deriving teaching themes from Gregory the Great, participants were able to stand on a foundation that has stood the test of time.

A fourth strength is that this project has the advantage of not having to create new entities: it utilizes the resources and structures presently available to the community of faith. Leaders mentor new leaders who eventually will mentor newer leaders. The process is replicable. It is indeed a great strength in a proposal or project that it can actually be done in a church setting!

#### Weaknesses or Opportunities for Further Development

One limiting factor for the project was the absence of two of the five mentees during the case study presentation. According to Mr. Kitson, two of the mentees had travel obligations that came up after the session was scheduled. The participation of all who had gone through the seven-week process would have enabled a greater sense of communal discernment in the development of the case study plan. However, since we now live in a very mobile society, it is important for leader groups to learn how to develop trust and proceed toward positive solutions without all members being present.

Another potential growth area I see is for the mentees to acknowledge and maximize current congregational systems and structures that are already present in their church context. The mentee dialogue that I observed during the plan development focused primarily on adding additional responsibilities, initiatives and meetings to what I perceive may be an already busy leader schedule. I suspect that current leader and congregational meetings or gatherings could be reframed to help accomplish the group's worthy goals. More than once, members of the mentee group verbalized concern about

the time constraints of enacting their plan. I perceived the discussion to assume that their ideas would have to go on top of traditionally scheduled congregational priorities.

For instance, could the goals of increased shepherding contact be enabled by reframing Sunday evenings from a large gathering to intentional small groups where a component of the purpose was intentional member care and communication with leaders? Another possibility would be repurposing Wednesday nights, at least for leaders, to pray, visit and equip. If the congregation already has an emphasis on a large group worship gathering and several Bible classes on Sunday mornings, might a re-visioning and re-purposing of Sunday evenings and Wednesday evenings be appropriate to help accomplish other goals that are not currently being met? Congregations schedule what is important to them. If the goals outlined by the mentees are indeed important congregational priorities for leaders, is it a healthy stewardship of time to use valuable evenings to repeat priorities that were already scheduled on Sunday mornings? I have observed that this can be an issue for congregations that are seeking out new and younger leaders. Younger leaders need to see a workable pathway so that shepherding and oversight can be compatible with their family and job.

A third concern I observed relates to use of biblical and theological language. Instead of hearing more terms such as “Spirit,” “equip” and “gifts,” I frequently heard terms such as “duties,” “skills,” “assignments” and “delegate.” While I do not want to take this concern too far, since it may largely be a matter of traditional congregational semantics, it does offer a reminder of the powerful and performative function of language. A new vision for congregational leadership could be cast by re-investing in the intentional usage of strong biblical and theological language. Perhaps related, I

repeatedly overheard an expressed contrast between ministry that addresses physical issues and ministry dealing with spiritual matters. Could that line of thinking be a false dichotomy more influenced by Platonic dualism than scripture? Enhancing the thoughtful use of biblical and theological language could be a real growth opportunity for the leadership and the congregation.

In conclusion, I commend Mr. Kitson's project as a cogent and meaningful ministry response to his current context at the Central Church of Christ. The intentional formation of shepherding leaders is indeed a worthwhile project and Mr. Kitson has contributed to the body of knowledge in his own ministry context and beyond.

Dr. Doug Peters

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## BRIEF VITA

Terry Kitson was born in Oklahoma City, OK, on April 3, 1961 and grew up in the suburb of Del City. He graduated from Del City High School in 1979. Four years later Terry graduated from Oklahoma Christian College with a Bachelor of Arts in Bible. While attending Oklahoma Christian, Terry married Cindy Mitchell from Las Animas, CO. During his junior year at Oklahoma Christian College, Terry joined the ministry staff of the Oakcrest Church of Christ. Three years later he moved to Texas where he served as youth and family minister at Westside Church of Christ in McKinney and then Pleasant Ridge Church of Christ in Arlington. In 1991, he graduated with a Master of Science in Biblical and Related Studies from Abilene Christian University. In January 2010, he became the preacher for the Central Church of Christ in Topeka, KS, and continues to preach there currently. He completed the Master of Divinity Equivalency at Abilene Christian University in 2014. Terry and Cindy have two daughters and a son-in-law: Katie Kitson of Fort Worth, TX, and Kelcy and Drew Messick of Redondo Beach, CA.