Liberty University School of Divinity

Leadership Factors That Influence Church Growth for Western North Carolina Churches of God

A Thesis Project Submitted to the

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in Candidacy for the Degree of

Doctor of Ministry

by

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Thesis Project Approval Sheet

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MENTOR _____

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READER _____

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Abstract

Leadership Factors That Influence Church Growth for Western North Carolina Churches of God

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Liberty University, School of Divinity, 2016

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The purpose of this project is to identify and describe the essential leadership factors required to stimulate and sustain church growth for Church of God churches operating in Western North Carolina. This will be accomplished using a grounded theory research approach.

Sample (N = 30) analysis of statistics provided by the Western North Carolina State Offices of the Church of God showed 3% of the churches in this region to have recorded significant overall growth in attendance and membership (=>10% per year) from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016. Few of the sampled churches recorded benchmark conversion growth for the same time interval (=>10% per year). The aim of this project is to develop a substantive theory from grounded data, identifying and describing the common leadership traits, aptitudes, and strategies utilized by successful regional pastors to promote church growth.

A constructivist grounded theory qualitative approach will be utilized to collect and analyze data. Data will be collected through recorded personal interviews of senior pastors practicing ministry within the Western North Carolina region of the United States. ATLAS.ti data analysis software will be used to code, analyze, and categorize data until similarities, differences, incidents, and causal relationships are identified between emerging categories. Data collection will continue until theoretical saturation has been achieved.

The results of this thesis project will provide Church of God pastors experiencing growth stagnation with insight into how their successful colleagues and contemporaries are presently stimulating and maintaining church growth in the Western region of North Carolina.

Words: 249

Chapter 1: Introduction

Experts have defined biblical church growth as "all that is involved in bringing men and women who do not have a personal relationship to Jesus Christ into fellowship and into responsible church membership."[1] The Church of God, headquartered in Cleveland, Tennessee, is among the largest Pentecostal church bodies in America. Since its inception as an organization in 1886, the Church of God has experienced biblical church growth and disseminated the gospel message across the globe through the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.[2] Denominational leaders have always recognized the Church of God as a movement dedicated to mission and ministry.[3] The overarching mission of this Christian fellowship is "to communicate the full gospel of Jesus Christ in the Spirit and power of Pentecost."[4]

Historically, Church of God administrators have recognized Scripture as the legitimate source for doctrine and direction. The founding fathers of this Pentecostal fellowship believed that all believers can demonstrate a holy lifestyle, personally experience an intimate and growing relationship with God, and be endued with power for witness and service by the Holy Spirit. The Church of God vision includes the idea that the church must love all people and address the physical, spiritual, and emotional issues of the unsaved through ministries that are culturally relevant, evangelistic, discipling, and nurturing.[5] Church of God administrators believe the mission of the church can be realized on regional and global echelons when church leaders and

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[1] Gary L. McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth: How You Can Work with God to Build a Faithful Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 18.

[2] Stanley M. Burgess, *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, rev. and expanded ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 530.

[3] Stanley M. Burgess, "A Brief History of The Church of God," *Church of God International Offices*, last modified 2013, accessed October 18, 2016, http://www.churchofgod.org/about/a-brief-history-of-the-church-of-god.

[4] Daniel L. Black, ed., *Minutes 2014: Church of God Book of Discipline, Church Order, and Governance* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God Publishing House, 2014), 35.

[5] Black, *Minutes 2014*, 35.

membership commit to prayer and Pentecostal worship that glorifies God, and when the intentional targeting of the unchurched in surrounding communities, the planting of new churches, and the effective utilization of current media, is integrated into evangelism and discipleship paradigms.[6]

Local church congregations registered with the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, are part of the International General Assembly, which is the universal governing body for the organization. Empowered by membership, the assembly designates laws and bylaws, as well as delineates dogma and theological praxis across denominational domains.[7] Approximately 250 Church of God churches exist in the Western region of North Carolina. For purposes of this thesis project, Western North Carolina embodies three of the physiographic provinces of the state: the mountains, piedmont, and sandhills (see Figure 1).

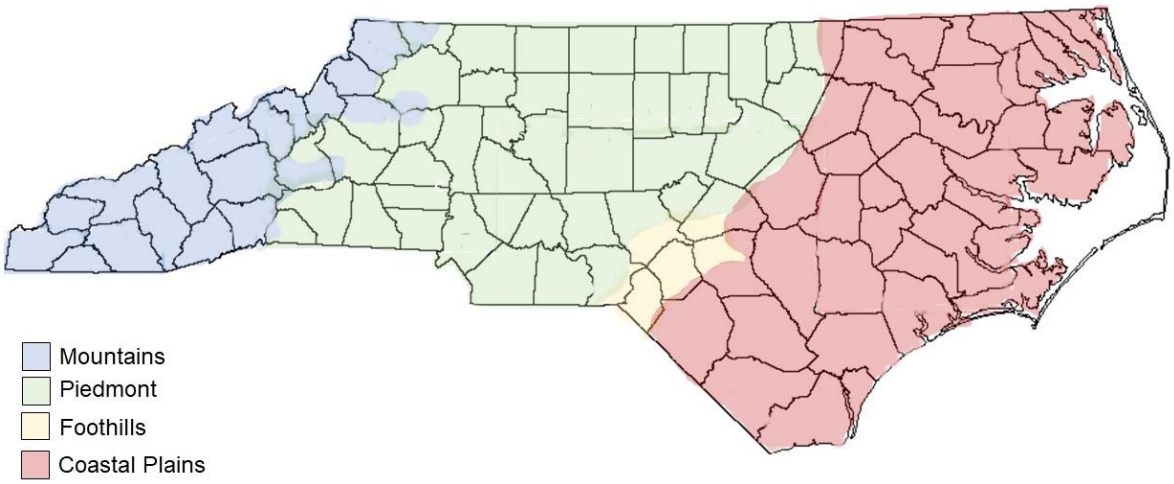

Figure 1 Image of North Carolina Physiographic Provinces, Source: Adapted from Ecoregions as Landscape Boundaries, http://ncwildlife.org/Learning/Habitats, Copyright © 2018 N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission.

[6.] Black, *Minutes 2014*, 36–40.

[7.] Ibid., 138.

These churches share similar organizational, ministry, and worship characteristics. However, current research has shown divergences in the health and wellbeing of these churches. Some of these local communities exude life-giving vitality and are experiencing biblical church growth, while others are experiencing growth stagnation or exhibiting signs of declining health.[8]

Problem Statement

Some theorists and leadership specialists regard leadership as the fundamental factor for predicting the success or failure of an institution. Leadership behaviors and praxis have been shown to influence organizational climate, ministry effectiveness, and church attendance. The effects of leadership indirectly impact employee morale, perceptions of equity in the workplace, and stakeholders' interpretations of organizational mechanisms for reaching goals and objectives.[9]

Recent studies have revealed leadership styles to have a direct and significant effect on crucial growth mechanisms and relationships that dictate overall church vitality and effectiveness.[10] Research in ministry milieus comparable to that of Western North Carolina has established a correlation between the attitude of senior pastors and the rate of church growth. It seems that pastors serving in large growing churches exhibit a greater receptivity to organizational change. Pastors of these growing churches were more inclined to attempt innovative ideas and recognized change as being personally beneficial and equally advantageous

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[8.] McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth*, 8.

[9.] Bernard Bass and Ruth Bass, *The Bass Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research, and Managerial Applications*, 4th ed. (New York: Free Press, 2008), 11–13.

[10.] David D. Rumley, "Perceptions of the Senior Pastors' Transformational Leadership Style and Its Relationship to the Eight Markers of Natural Church Development," (PhD diss., Indiana Wesleyan University, 2011), 151–52.

for staff and membership.[11]

The local churches in Western North Carolina affiliated with the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, are faced with decline and stagnated growth. The Church of God General Assembly recognizes 10% a year as the benchmark for healthy local church growth.[12] Preliminary research analysis on a random sample of thirty churches utilizing statistical data provided by the Western North Carolina State Offices of the Church of God showed that a mere 3% of the churches in this region recorded benchmark growth from January 2013 to December 2015. A second analysis of a sample of 184 churches from the Western region of North Carolina revealed seventy-one churches reporting growth (39%) over the three-year interval, 104 (57%) reporting attrition over the three-year interval, and nine churches (5%) exhibiting growth stagnation over the same period. Local churches in this ministry locale experienced an overall average decline of 7% per year. Twenty churches (11%) out of the 184 churches sampled reported benchmark numerical growth between April 1, 2014 and April 30, 2016.

Thus, this research analysis revealed that nearly half of the local churches in Western North Carolina affiliated with the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee, are increasing Sunday morning worship attendance by 5% per year. The other half included in this research project are hemorrhaging Sunday morning worship participants by 7% per year.[13]

The aim of this thesis project is to explore, identify, and describe the common leadership traits, aptitudes, and strategies utilized by successful regional Church of God pastors to promote

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[11.] Nicholas Alfred Natale. "Relationship between Senior Pastors' Attitudes toward Organizational Change and Church Growth Factors" (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007), 101-12.

[12.] Black, *Minutes 2014*, 37.

[13.] Church of God State Executive Offices, *Western North Carolina Church of God Statistical Reports* (Charlotte, NC, 2015).

church growth. The teleological goal for the research is to develop a substantive theory from grounded data and construct a leadership growth model that will provide pastors experiencing growth stagnation with insight into how their successful colleagues and contemporaries are presently stimulating and maintaining church growth in the Western region of North Carolina.

Definitions

Several terms used in this project need to be defined for the purpose of clarification. The definitions are offered below in alphabetical order.

Benchmark growth. Local churches reporting an average yearly increase in worship attendance of 10% or greater from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016 were considered growing at what the Church of God General Assembly recognizes as viable healthy numerical growth.

Church growth status. For the purpose of this research project, church growth status was extrapolated from statistical data provided by the Western North Carolina Church of God State Executive Offices located in Charlotte, North Carolina. Growth status was demarcated into three distinct categories based on recorded worship attendance from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016. The established categories were growing, plateaued, and declining.

Church of God. A local body of Christian believers affiliated with the Church of God, headquartered in Cleveland, Tennessee, instituted under the name "Christian Union" on August 19, 1886, and operating under the extant ruling of the Church of God International General Assemblies 1906 through 2014.[14]

Church size. The average Sunday morning worship attendance reported by a local church in April of 2016. This research project does not recognize church size as the dimensions of a brick-and-mortar structure.

[14.] Burgess, *New International Dictionary*, 530; Black, *Minutes 2014*.

Declining churches. The researcher considered local churches reporting an average yearly decrease in worship attendance of 1% or greater from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016 as declining churches.

Growing churches. The researcher considered local churches reporting an average yearly increase in worship attendance of 1% or greater from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016 as growing churches.

Leadership. For purposes of this qualitative investigation, leadership is limited to the following delineations and constructs:

1. Leadership is moving God's people onto his agenda.[15]
2. Leadership is the emphasis of authenticity, the utilization of values, a sense of calling, and the ability to influence and motivate followers toward a common goal.
3. Leadership is the ability to assist and guide followers in adapting to situations and change by challenging problems and resistance to change.
4. Leadership is the process of influence utilized to mobilize an individual or group of followers to achieve universal goals and objectives and encompasses all functions of management. This includes planning, organizing, the establishment of organizational direction, communication of vision, staffing, cultivation of workplace ethics, equity, ethos, and the development of present and future organizational leaders.[16]

Plateaued church. Local churches reporting an average yearly increase in worship attendance of zero from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016.

Senior pastor. The person who is primarily responsible for the general organization, administration, and spiritual formation of a local church. The role of this individual is to equip the local body of Christian believers for works of service by teaching and preaching the doctrines outlined in the Bible. This biblically-prescribed leader seeks to ensure that all members of the church family mature into the likeness of Christ and find their place to use the unique gifts

[15.] Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 2011), 36.

[16.] Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 7th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2013), 2-14.

within the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11-16).[17] The senior pastor casts the overarching vision and mission for the local church and serves as the church's ambassador to the surrounding community.[18]

Spirit filled. The Church of God recognizes the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as synonymous with the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Church of God does not consider the baptism of the Holy Spirit as an act of grace, but rather a gift of empowerment by the Holy Spirit for witness and service. Church of God pastors do not believe the experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit simultaneously takes place at the time of conversion, but rather is a unique experience apart from the new birth (Acts 2:38-39, 8:14–17, 10, 19:2).[19]

Successful pastor. A senior pastor of a local Church of God reporting 1% or greater church growth from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016.

Statement of Limitations

The scope of this thesis project is to determine the common leadership factors that have positive implications for church growth and vitality. Project research parameters will be restricted to Church of God pastors practicing ministry in Western North Carolina. The researcher's denominational affiliation, standing with state administrators, and personal ministry locale delimited research restrictions.

The focus of this project is to identify and describe the shared characteristics, perceptions, and strategies of successful senior pastors, in order to develop a substantive theory from grounded data. Therefore, the project includes personal interviews with senior pastors who

[17] Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages are referenced in the King James Version.

[18] S. Joseph Kidder, "The Biblical Role of the Pastor," *Ministry International Journal for Pastors* (April 2009): 1, http://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2009/04/the-biblical-role-of-the-pastor.

[19] Ray H. Hughes, *Church of God Distinctives*, rev. ed. (Cleveland, TN: Pathway Press, 2008), 32–37.

had reported significant growth in the three-year analysis outlined above. Limiting data collection to the churches reporting benchmark growth afforded the researcher rich growth influencing phenomena for theme development. Restricting the qualitative data collection group allowed the researcher to flesh out and define the leadership dynamics of Church of God pastors practicing within the geographical confines of Western North Carolina. It also facilitated the creation of rich descriptions of healthy church growth through the Pentecostal theological orientations of the research participants.

Statement of Methodology

A qualitative methodology seemed most appropriate for this research project, as viable quantitative instruments proved to be unattainable. The researcher administered a twelve-question personal interview to research participants. Five methodological traditions are associated with qualitative research: biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case studies. This research project utilized the grounded theory method, as this approach afforded the researcher the ability to allow themes to emerge from collected data.[20]

The goal of the grounded theory method is to generate a substantive theory from data collected in the field. The analysis process of grounded theory is a systematic comparison and contrasting of collected data. This research method was exceptionally suitable for this thesis project, as the qualitative phenomenological nature of the method inductively derives meaning from human behavior. The researcher was able to discover the underlying meanings of behavioral patterns and observed phenomena.[21]

The researcher administered personal interviews to each senior pastor and transcribed the

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[20.] Carl C. Green, "Pastoral Leadership, Congregational Size, Life Cycle Stage, and Church Culture: A Grounded Theory Analysis" (PhD diss., Gonzaga University, 2005), 98-101.

[21.] Ibid.

digitally-recorded interviews using Express Scribe Transcription Software.[22] Collected data was coded categorically, with associated properties, and compared in cyclical patterns using ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis software, Version 7.5.15.[23] A constant process of moving back and forth between data collection and data analysis continued until causal relationships were identified and theoretical saturation was achieved.[24] Chapter two describes in detail the research methodology for this thesis project.

The primary purpose of this research project is to identify and describe the essential leadership factors required to stimulate and sustain attendance growth for Church of God churches in Western North Carolina. The constant comparing of collected data identified three major categories and several relevant subcategories that suggest pastoral leadership factors have implications for church growth. Results of data analysis recognized three major leadership constructs to have significant correlations with church growth and vitality: the personal dynamics of the senior pastor, the ideology and perceptions of the senior pastor, and the modes and means utilized by the senior pastor to address church growth predictors. The following written presentation will discuss independently each of the foremost influencing leadership factors that directly and indirectly contribute to church growth and vitality.

Chapter two discusses the grounded theory method utilized by this researcher to generate the substantive theory and practical leadership model from data collected in the field. This chapter also presents the researcher's perceptions regarding the appropriateness of employing a

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[22.] NCH Software Pty Ltd, "Express Scribe Transcription Software," last modified 2016, accessed July 12, 2016, http://www.nch.com.au/scribe/index.html.

[23.] Scientific Software Development GmbH, "ATLAS.ti Qualitative Analysis Software, Version 7.5.15" last modified 2016, accessed June 5, 2016. http://atlasti.com.

[24.] Shawn Joynt and Yolanda Dreyer, "Exodus of Clergy: A Practical Theological Grounded Theory Exploration of Hatfield Training Center Trained Pastors," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 69, no. 1 (2013): 3, doi:10.4102/hts.v69i1.1940.

constructivist grounded theory paradigm for data collection and analysis for this project. The research methodology and historical context relative to grounded theory, and this research project, are outlined in detail in chapter two.

Chapter three addresses the personal dynamics that inform leadership praxis. This includes the subcategories of background, recognition of calling, dedication to personal development, leadership style, personal qualities, and the theological distinctives that influence leadership attitudes and behaviors, which in turn, impact church growth. This chapter also explores the ideology and perceptions of the senior pastor regarding church growth. When they correlate with church growth, the researcher highlights pastoral perceptions of church growth, and where they position their respective churches as an organism in a cycle of life and death. Chapter three also compares common leadership principles shown to have significant implications for healthy church growth.

The modes and means utilized by senior pastors to address church growth predictors are the subjects of chapter four. Research results revealed a plethora of subcategories that seemingly stimulate, maintain, abate, or terminate numerical and/or spiritual church growth. Results of this research suggest that the resources senior pastors assign to strategic planning, organizational and ministry change, conflict resolution, discipleship, mission and evangelism, leadership identification and development, and the overarching mission and vision of the church, impacts the physical, spiritual, and emotional dynamics of church growth.

The project's conclusion will offer a theoretical leadership model for stimulating local church growth to Church of God pastors experiencing growth stagnation in the Western region of North Carolina. Hopefully, the model will offer pastors insight into how their successful colleagues and contemporaries are presently stimulating and maintaining church growth.

The model reflects collected and interpreted data. The researcher formulates the leadership paradigm from data collected in the field with the intent of answering three leadership questions derived from mutually important categories found across research participants. The questions are as follows:

1. What personal factors do successful pastors think influence the growth of their local church?
2. What leadership principles and perceptions do pastors of growing churches identify as important to their roles and healthy church growth?
3. What common strategies, methods, and modes do pastors of growing churches employ when addressing recognized growth predictors?

The plethora of literature reviewed by this author serve as the framework for delineating the leadership and church growth constructs. The examined works helped to demarcate the theological and theoretical parameters of the project and determine the research methodology.

Review of Selected Literature

In preparation for the thesis, the author reviewed a wide array of books, journal articles, and dissertations. The following represent selected sources from experts in church administration, leadership theory, and healthy church growth.

Books

1. Barna, George. *Grow Your Church from the Outside*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2002.

A product of two years of research conducted by the Barna Group, this book provides guidance to pastors seeking to develop viable strategies for reaching the unchurched.[25] The author defines the term *unchurched* and suggests several reasons why unchurched individuals avoid contemporary church paradigms. Barna outlines twelve prevalent misconceptions of how a church should approach the unchurched and offers readers practical suggestions for effectively

[25] George Barna, *Grow Your Church from the Outside* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2002), 13.

ministering to them.

2. Barsky, Allan Edward. *Conflict Resolution for the Helping Professions*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole, 2007.

Barsky argues that ministry professionals must address conflict in virtually all work milieus, social systems, and personal relationships. Therefore, pastors, teachers, and administrators need to understand the nature of conflict and likewise be familiar with the practical approaches for resolving a diverse variety of conflicts. In this book, Barsky discusses the theory and practice of conflict resolution. The author explains that "social conflict exists when a real or imagined divergence in beliefs, values, positions, or interest is recognized by two or more parties.[26] Barsky examines the practical paradigms of negation, mediation, advocacy, and third-party intervention as possible modes for addressing conflict. The discussion also includes the importance of cultural and emotional intelligence, solving ethical dilemmas, and addressing power imbalances.

3. Bass, Bernard, and Ruth Bass. *The Bass Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research, and Managerial Applications*. 4th ed. New York: Free Press, 2008.

The Bass Handbook of Leadership is one of the most extensively utilized and cited resources in the study of leadership. Ronald Riggio considers this book to be "the bible for all things leadership."[27] The fourth edition, which addresses the history, definitions, and concepts of leadership, is an invaluable source for church leaders attempting to develop evaluation continuums on constructs such as personal attributes, training and discipleship schemes, leadership styles, and the management and organizational strategies that stimulate and maintain healthy church growth. Additionally, this book provides helpful insight into how diversity and

[26] Allen Edward Barsky, *Conflict Resolution for the Helping Professions,* 2nd ed. (Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning, 2007), 2.

[27.] Bass and Bass, *Bass Handbook of Leadership,* v.

culture impact contemporary leadership.

4. Berkley, James D. *Leadership Handbook of Management and Administration: Practical Insight from a Cross Section of Ministry Leaders*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994.

This book is addressed to church administrators and contains articles written by diverse authorities on a variety of church management issues. It offers readers practical leadership advice in the areas of personal management, vocational transition, church leadership, staff supervision, and resource management.[28]

5. Callahan, Kennon L. *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church: Strong, Healthy Congregations Living in the Grace of God*. 2nd ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010.

Callahan addresses church vitality and growth by presenting the relational and functional characteristics that a strong and healthy church should demonstrate. Church administrators should find this book's assessment and planning tools to be excellent aids for long-range strategic planning and the evaluation of the health and growth of their churches. Callahan presents his idea of a healthy church congregation and proposes benchmark indicators that are common to healthy churches with a commitment to ministry and mission.[29]

6. Carbonell, Mels Ph.D. *How to Solve the People Puzzle Understanding Personality Patterns*. Blue Ridge, GA: Uniquely You, 2008.

Carbonell compares learning to understand the personality traits of others, with solving a puzzle. The goal of this book is to help individuals gain a better understanding of human behavior and the DISC® Personality Test, which yields end user data on four models of human behavior.

7. Dayton, Donald W. *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1987.

[28.] James D. Berkley, *Leadership Handbook of Management and Administration: Practical Insight from a Cross Section of Ministry Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), xiii.

[29.] Kennon L. Callahan, *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church: Strong, Healthy Congregations Living in the Grace of God*, 2nd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 5.

The theological orientations of Church of God pastors have had disastrous implications for spiritual health and growth in past generations. Dayton skillfully traces Pentecostalism through its nineteenth-century Holiness influence, and indirectly through its Methodist heritage. His exhaustive discussion also tackles the influence of Pietism and Puritanism on the Pentecostal movement.[30] Dayton proposes a theological analysis of Pentecostalism, outlines the historical amalgamation of Christian Perfectionism into Pentecostal doctrine, and discusses primitive Pentecostal eschatological and pneumatological perceptions.[31]

8. Everist, Norma Cook. *Church Conflict: From Contention to Collaboration*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004.

Everist posits the idea that conflict coexists with the human predicament. She suggests that even the seemingly calmest of church milieus may have conflict brooding beneath the surface. The insights and conflict resolution tools proposed in this book are exemplar rubrics for assessing the proficiency of church leaders in conflict resolution. Senior pastors can utilize Everist's insight to identify personal relationships to conflict, the methods they employ to respond to conflict, and the impact these interpersonal skills have on the growth and vitality of their respective churches.[32]

9. Getz, Gene A. *The Measure of a Man*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2004.

Many contemporary church discipleship paradigms advocate placing fledgling believers into leadership roles. The goal of this book is to aid Christian men in their development as Christlike husbands, fathers and Christian administrators. Getz outlines a compelling

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[30.] Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1987), 143.

[31.] Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism*, 180-90.

[32.] Norma Cook Everist, *Church Conflict: From Contention to Collaboration* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2004), viii–22.

comprehensive study of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-10. The twenty indicators of spiritual maturity that the author fleshes out of these two periscopes can serve senior administrators as guiding principles for appraising church leader perceptions and strategies regarding leadership identification, development, and ministry deployment.[33]

10. Gladen, Steve. *Small Groups with Purpose: How to Create Healthy Communities*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011.

This book is a simple, biblical plan for creating and multiplying healthy small groups within the local church community. In the early chapters of the book, Gladen makes it clear that the base principles for his propositions are associated with the Saddleback Church's purpose-driven model of ministry. Gladen presents church leaders with ten principles that he contends, if followed, facilitate the connecting of people into life-changing small groups.[34]

11. Hull, Bill. *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006.

This book contains a wealth of discussion on constructs related to discipleship. This work is significantly important to this research project as Hull outlines the biblical framework for discipleship. Hull presents antithetical illustrations of discipleship and outlines the stages of discipleship. The author's suggestions for how to distinguish a disciple of Christ provide exceptional guidelines for evaluating the success of church-based discipleship strategies. Hull's delineations for a disciple, disciple-making, discipleship, and spiritual formation can serve as the basis for evaluating current and emerging church leaders' perceptions of the spiritual maturation process.

12. Malphurs, Aubrey. *Advanced Strategic Planning: A 21st-Century Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013.

[33.] Gene A. Getz, *The Measure of a Man* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2004), 15, Kindle.

[34.] Steve Gladen, *Small Groups with Purpose*: *How to Create Healthy Communities* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 17–36.

Many practicing Pentecostal pastors still embrace theological and ideological opinions that position them on the fringes of the American academic community. Such leaders have cultivated deep relationships with God and consider higher education to conflict with the pursuit of greater spiritual empowerment.[35] This book offers church administrators a detailed paradigm for church strategic planning and implementation. Malphurs' presents his nine-step strategic planning process as a solution to the multicultural shift and postmodern worldview, he perceives, to be prevalent in contemporary American society. Malphurs' believes the North American church to be in a state of decline and facing significant growth challenges. The author insists that the genesis of new life cycles for many churches can be realized through preparation, process, and strategic planning.[36]

13. McIntosh, Gary L. *Biblical Church Growth*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003.

The author's goal for this book is to present readers with a biblical foundation for church growth that he perceives to be lacking in most contemporary church growth models. McIntosh explains that recognition of positive numerical growth does not necessarily mean the vitality and well-being of a local church is being positively impacted by this growth. The author proposes that church growth cannot be based on sociology, marketing, or demographics, but rather church growth is to be considered effective evangelism, the winning of converts to Christ, and the mentoring of fledgling converts toward Christian maturity.[37]

14. Northouse, Peter G. *Leadership: Theory and Practice*. 7th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2016.

[35.] Jonathan Olsen, "The Quest for Legitimacy: American Pentecostal Scholars and the Quandaries of Academic Pursuit," *Intermountain West Journal of Religious Studies* 4, no. 1 (2013): 95, accessed August 14, 2016, http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1023&context=imwjournal.

[36.] Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A 21st-Century Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 8–24.

[37.] McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth*, 8–9.

Church leadership is a complex multidimensional process, and senior pastors apply diverse personal approaches to leadership and church administration. This book explores twelve contemporary leadership approaches, including six which are common to Pentecostal ecclesial praxis: transformational leadership, authentic leadership, servant leadership, adaptive leadership, team leadership, and psychodynamic leadership.

15. Oswald, Roy M., and Otto Kroeger. *Personality Type and Religious Leadership*. New York: Alban Institute, 1988.

Oswald and Kroeger discuss the implications personality blends can have on church environs as administrators psychosocially and spiritually interact with others and fulfill their diverse leadership roles. The authors uniquely apply the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® (MBTI®) assessment to clerical vocations and present a viable theory on how sixteen personality types can directly influence strategic planning, liturgics, approach to leadership, and interpersonal communication with other leaders and membership.

16. Rainer, Thom S. *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles*. Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1993.

An exemplar text for defining church growth, this book provides a comprehensive discussion of the historical, theological, and philosophies of practice associated with church growth. Rainer's growth delineations make a clear and concise distinction between biological, transfer, and conversion growth. The author's evangelism evaluation categories can serve as benchmarks for assessing church evangelism endeavors and to ascertain the degree to which ministry undertakings have crossed linguistic, religious, and cultural evangelism and discipleship barriers.[38]

[38.] Thom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1993), 172-254, Kindle.

17. Schwarz, Christian. *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches*. 6th ed. St. Charles, IL: Church Smart Resources, 2006.

Church administrators and church planters are the intended audiences for Schwarz's book. The author's goal is to identify and discuss the essential qualities of a healthy church. Schwarz outlines a principle-oriented church growth paradigm that rejects superficial pragmatic and manipulative marketing and growth schemes. Schwarz suggests to church administrators that eight quality characteristics and six biotic principles are, in essence, what God utilized to grow his church. He then presents ten steps to stimulate and maintain growth automatisms in churches regardless of cultural or denominational affiliation.[39]

18. Stephenson, Christopher A. *Types of Pentecostal Theology: Method, System, Spirit*. Academy series. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Stephenson's work is possibly the first critical study of dominant theological perspectives guiding contemporary Pentecostalism. Stephenson presents a typological evaluation of the methods employed by theologians in the process of developing systematic Pentecostal theology. The author's goal is to identify and describe the distinctive characteristics associated with the methodological approaches employed by key Pentecostal theologians. Stephenson believes that current Pentecostal systematic theology can be interpreted and categorized into four analytical categories, and that the theological methods of major past and present Pentecostal systematic theologians have employed four basic patterns.[40]

19. Warren, Rick. *The Purpose Driven Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995.

Rick Warren recounts the historical initiation and growth of the Saddleback Church,

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[39.] Christian Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches*, 6th ed. (St. Charles, IL: Church Smart Resources, 2006), 6-14.

[40.] Christopher A. Stephenson, *Types of Pentecostal Theology: Method, System, Spirit*, Academy series (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 5.

located in Lake Forest, California. Warren reveals what he considers to be the prevalent myths about growing churches and proposes seven purpose profiles that he believes should serve as the driving force for contemporary churches. Warren's five purposes of the church can be utilized to assess the impact and outcomes of church-based discipleship paradigms, and the author's delineation of church types is an excellent tool for evaluating the primary focus of general administrative roles being played by current church leaders. Warren presents contemporary church paradigms in categories that can serve as outstanding guidelines for determining the role of membership, the central values of the church, the chief tools employed for achieving the church's universal ministry purpose, and the source of legitimacy recognized by a church for ministry praxes.[41]

20. Welch, Robert H. *Church Administration: Creating Efficiency for Effective Ministry*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2005.

Welch argues that the roles and responsibilities of church administrators become significantly easier when the tenets of general administration and techniques of ministerial management are understood and practiced. The goal of this text is to familiarize church leaders with the dynamics of administration associated with ecclesiastical and nonprofit organizations.[42]

21. Wilkes, C. Gene. *Jesus on Leadership*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1998.

This book is a systematic theoretical summary of the servant leadership model utilized by Jesus to complete his divinely-assigned mission. Wilkes has extrapolated seven leadership principles from New Testament Scripture that he believes are distinctive to Jesus' approach to leading others. Wilkes argues that Jesus' servant leadership paradigm should be considered the

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[41] Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 25–136.

[42] Robert H. Welch, *Church Administration: Creating Efficiency for Effective Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2005), xiii.

archetype for contemporary models of servant leadership and be universally applicable to all ministry contexts.[43]

22. Werning, Waldo J. *12 Pillars of a Healthy Church*. St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2001.

Waldo Werning proposes that God, through the Holy Spirit, has imparted life and the spiritual dynamic to grow into every local church. He argues that every church has the potential to mature and grow into viable healthy organisms. Werning believes God is at work in contemporary America seeking bodies of believers willing to be obedient to Christ's Great Commission. However, the author contends that the institutional technocratic churches that prevail in modern American society lack the vigor and vitality required to "salt" the earth, and to be the conduit through which the Holy Spirit can reach the world at large.[44] Werning addresses these concerns by extending Christian Swartz's eight church growth distinctives to include four additional indicators of church growth. In addition, he suggests practical methods through which God can rejuvenate a local church. [45]

Journal Articles

1. Ang, Soon, Linn Van Dyne, and Christine Koh. "Personality Correlates of the Four-Factor Model of Cultural Intelligence." *Group & Organization Management* 31, no. 1 (February 2006): 100–23.

The goal of this research was to examine the relationships between the five factors of the Big Five model of personality and the four-factor model of cultural intelligence (CQ). The authors define CQ as the participants' capability to effectively fulfil their roles and responsibilities in situations characterized by cultural diversity. This article assists in defining the

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[43.] C. Gene Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1998), 23-27.

[44.] Waldo J. Werning, *12 Pillars of a Healthy Church* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2001), 13, 17.

[45.] Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 22–48.

factors of CQ (metacognitive CQ, cognitive CQ, motivational CQ, and behavioral CQ), within the parameters of church administration. This work delineates the five-character dynamics associated with the Big Five personality model: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience. Working in multicultural ministry scenarios can be difficult for some pastors. Such difficulties can generate misunderstandings and create barriers to church growth.[46]

Dissertations and Theses

1. Green, Carl C. "Pastoral Leadership, Congregational Size, Life Cycle Stage, and Church Culture: A Grounded Theory Analysis." PhD diss., Gonzaga University, 2005.

Green's dissertation provides readers with conceptual definitions of organizational size, life-cycles, and cultures within church milieus. He presents the study results of 29 theoretical propositions on the correlations that exist between pastoral leadership roles through three transitional stages of church growth. The dissertation's research methodology provides a superlative description of the qualitative grounded theory research process.

2. Luckel, Henry H. "Pastoral Leadership Styles: Their Effect on the Growth of Southern Baptist Churches in the Western United State." PhD diss., Colorado State University, 2013.

Luckel's dissertation addresses pastoral leadership styles and the implications pastoral leadership practice has for church growth. His research results are important to this research project because the researcher is scrutinizing how a senior pastor's approach to leadership can cause or limit church growth.

3. Scuderi, Noelle F. "Servant Leadership and Transformational Leadership in Church Organizations." PhD diss., George Washington University, 2010.

[46.] Soon Ang, Linn Van Dyne, and Christine Koh, "Personality Correlates of the Four-Factor Model of Cultural Intelligence," *Group & Organization Management* 31, no. 1 (February 2006): 100-9.

Scuderi explores the relative effectiveness of servant leadership and transformational leadership within organized church parameters. The researcher's goal was to evaluate the reliability and validity of both leadership paradigms. The significance of this dissertation to this thesis project is that each approach positively contributed to leadership outcomes. Transformational leadership impacted church health perceptions, organizational trust, and follower faith and maturity. Scuderi's findings suggest that servant leadership has significant positive influence on leader effectiveness, leadership trust, and normative commitment to leadership standards.

Theoretical and Biblical Frameworks

In preliminary research on this thesis's topic, the author derived the following truth statements from rigorously scrutinizing Scripture. The following statements serve as the biblical underpinning for all aspects of this thesis project:

1. God is the impetus of church growth and definitive model of holy, righteous, and efficacious leadership. Christ initiated all clerical roles (Eph 4:11) with the intent that these leadership positions be occupied by qualified (1 Tim 1:1-13, 2:2), Spirit-filled (Luke 4:1; Acts 4:8, 4:63-65, 9:17, 11:1-24, 13:45, 13:52) individuals.
2. A leader's background informs ministry praxis.
3. The numerical growth of the church was important to the early church.
4. A local church is an organism; therefore, it has a lifecycle.
5. A leader's theological perspective and spiritual maturity informs praxis.
6. Christ assigned the church a universal mission (Mat 28:18-20).

There are several foundational Scriptures that supply the core values and serve as biblical framework for this project. This thesis project investigates the factors of leadership that influence church growth. Blackaby and Blackaby maintain that only spiritual leadership marked by humility, integrity, intimacy with God, and promotion of God over one's self, has the influential

power to motivate others to follow a leader in pursuit of God's agenda.[47] Both the Old and New Testament writers provide the foundational leadership characteristics required for ministry success. The Old Testament wisdom writers insist that successful leadership is contingent on recognizing God as the ultimate leader and source for vision, influence, anointing, empowerment, wisdom, and knowledge. In Proverbs 9: 9-10, the writer states, "Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight (Prov. 9:9-10)." Jesus explained to his disciples that he was to be the wellspring for their lives and ministry and that ministry endeavors made apart from him would be fruitless (John 15:5). The anthropomorphic verse of Psalm 18 shows God to be the sovereign, absolute, omnipotent leader, protector, and equipper of leaders in a relative world.[48] Blackaby and Blackaby contend that church leaders often entertain misguided goals and attempt to lead from illegitimate sources of influence. Successful ministry and church growth are not reflected in church size, flawless ministry paradigms, and goal achievement. A successful leader recognizes his or her first calling is to honor God by revealing his nature to the church and the world at large.

Gene Getz proposes that the Apostle Paul's first letter to Timothy and one letter to Titus contain twenty dynamic qualities for measuring maturity. Getz opposes restricting the necessity of these spiritual qualities to pastors and teachers; however, Paul explicitly explains to his apprentice that he considers these qualifications essential for church leaders and teachers (1 Tim. 1:1-13, 2:2).[49] Considering the Apostle Paul's emphasis on general spiritual maturity for church administrators, a comprehensive fleshing out of the correlations that exist between pastoral

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[47.] Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 119–179.

[48.] John C. Maxwell, *The Maxwell Leadership Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 676.

[49.] Getz, *Measure of a Man*, 161-267.

leadership and church growth must include the personal qualities of research participants.

The researcher's initial hypothesis regarding participants' maturity profiles is that the magnitude of a senior pastor's overall maturity, moral purity, interpersonal aptitudes, self-management skills, emotional intelligence, and stewardship directly impact the growth and vitality of a local church. The objective of this qualitative grounded theory analysis is to attain a holistic perception of the leadership dynamics that have significant implications for church growth. Therefore, the researcher scrutinizes the personal backgrounds and circumstances of participants in senior administrative roles for significate influencing factors.

The upbringing, education, and ministry experiences of an individual significantly influence their approach to leadership. Luke chapter two provides readers with a historical glimpse of Jesus' upbringing and theological training. Jesus' parents were religiously faithful to the spiritual customs of the era (Luke 2: 21-25, 2:39, 2:41-42), and subjected their son to the laws and religious customs of ancient Judaism (Luke 2:42). This New Testament writer records Jesus as one who was willing to listen and learn from experienced instructors (Luke 2:46). His training and experiences afforded him the opportunity to increase in wisdom, social prominence, and favor with God and others (Luke 2:52). Jesus' upbringing prepared him for his ministry role. Nicodemus states in Jesus' adult life, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God (John 3:2, ESV)."

In Acts 7: 22-44, Luke also presents the background of the leadership role Moses had to play in the exodus of the Hebrews from Egyptian slavery. God envisions a position of leadership for Moses (Acts 7:34). However, to successfully complete the roles and responsibilities associated with the role, God subjects Moses to forty years of academic training and immersion in Egyptian culture (Acts 7: 22-23), followed by forty years of on-the-job training as a shepherd

leading sheep in the sandy and dry wilderness of the desert (Acts 7:29-30).

The Scripture references offered above demonstrate how one's background, particularly upbringing, nurturing, family religious practices, academic training, and apprenticeships, impact the dispositions and behaviors of a leader. In the data collection and analysis processes of this project, the researcher did not overlook any of the positive, negative, implicit, and explicit learning that participants go through as they work out their ministry calling.

The central premise of this project is that significant correlations exist between the leadership actions and behaviors of a local church and the growth and wellbeing of that church. Therefore, the central question that must be answered before data collection, analysis, and the presenting of results can begin is: what guidance can the Bible offer on the subject of church growth?

Scripture provides insight into the factors that influence church growth. First, the early church considered numerical growth an important growth indicator (Acts 2:41, 2:47, 11:24). Second, the New Testament offers contemporary church administrators with a healthy church growth paradigm. The Lukan historical account of the early developmental stages of the church highlight seven spiritual dynamics that induce church growth. In selecting men to oversee church business, the Apostles intentionally handpicked men who had good standing with the community, who demonstrated the ability to lead with wisdom, and who were full of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:1-4). The early church fathers were dedicated to fulfilling Christ's commission for the church (Acts 2:41, 6:38-41). New converts and church members committed themselves to learning sound doctrinal truths, fellowshipping together, and praying corporately. These early worshippers perpetually set aside time to remember the salvific work of Christ (Acts 2:42, 2:46).

The early church's exponential growth was also predicated on the lifestyle choices made

by leaders and the disciples that followed the Apostles. The leaders and worshippers of the initial Christian movement chose to model a lifestyle of aversion to pride, lust, evil, and human arrogance. They demonstrated attitudes and behaviors that their forefathers would have deemed as morally reverent of God (Job 1:8; Prov. 8:13). The Apostle Paul explains this moral lifestyle as walking in the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-4; Gal. 5:16-25).

For evaluation purposes, this thesis project utilizes a church life cycle (growth, plateau, decline, and death). This life cycle is quintessentially the physical, spiritual, and emotional state of a local body of believers. Using metaphoric language that would have been familiar to his audience, Jesus once stated, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me (John 10:27, ESV)." In the apocalyptic writings of Revelation, Christ reveals to John that he knows the present condition of his seven churches operating at that time in the Roman providence of Asia (Rev. 2:1-3:22). Christ, as the head of the church (Eph. 1:22), knew where every church was spiritually, physically, and emotionally positioned in its life cycle. Christ attributed the declining state of one specific church as the consequence of a misconception. He explains how they have forgotten the location of the wellspring of life and ministry: "For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17, ESV).

The Apostle Peter explains that the pastor of a local church is to be recognized as a shepherd who is serving God's people under the scrutiny and example of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 5:1-11). If this is truly the case, then the vitality and well-being of any local body of believers is contingent on its senior administrators perpetually knowing where the church is positioned in its life cycle. Strategic planning, vision casting, and the tailoring of curriculum, programs, and church ministry cannot take place unless the leaders have an initial

point of reference for establishing overarching teleological goals and objectives.

Paul clearly and concisely explains the roles and responsibilities of church administrators in his letter to the Ephesians. Paul explains that Christ has called, gifted, and appointed apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (1 Cor. 12: 27-31) for the purpose of equipping the Christian believers for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:11-12). This project focuses on the correlations that exist between positive church growth and the traits, perceptions, leadership principles, and strategic practices of pastors. According to the Apostle Paul, theological spiritual development cannot be overlooked when appraising the vitality and well-being of a local church. Paul would argue that the outcomes and impacts of a church's discipleship paradigm are significantly more trustworthy indicators of believers' spiritual, physical, and emotional progression than numerical growth markers (Eph. 4:12-14).

The attitudes, behaviors, and theoretical factors associated with servant and transformational leadership were important for defining each research participant's approach to leading staff, laity, and membership. Therefore, during personal interviews, the researcher prompted project participants to describe their personal approach to leadership. Servant leaders have a leader's need to serve others first. Leadership theorists describe a servant leader as one who provides learning opportunities for the development of followers. Servant leaders are said to be collaborators and visionaries who share decision-making power, status, and privilege across all organizational echelons. The need to build strong relationships, display authenticity, and value diversity are also considered to be behavioral factors of this leadership approach.[50]

Jesus practiced servant leadership. Jesus explains the fundamental value of his approach

[50.] Sharon Drury, "The Handbook of Leadership Theory for Church Leaders," (PhD diss., Regent University, 2003), 21.

to leadership and ministry to two of his followers vying for esteemed eternal positions of authority. Jesus says to these two future pillars of the Christian faith that he came to minister and serve others, and that his ultimate role as a leader is to sacrifice all of himself to save humanity (Mark 10:45). In John 13: 3-12, Jesus demonstrates to his apprentices a practical application of his leadership philosophy when he humbly gets down on his knees and washes their feet.

Jesus also practiced transformational leadership. According to Peter Northouse, the behavioral indicators of transformational leadership are charismatic influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.[51] Through his charisma, Jesus transmitted a sense of shared mission to his disciples (Luke 9:1-2, 10:1-2). True to the characteristics of this leadership style, he often expressed personal dedication to his followers (Matt. 28:20; John 15:13-15) and was quick to use his influence to ease their tension and anxiety during times of critical ministry change (John 14:1-3). Jesus inspirationally motivated his apprentices by convincing them that they each possessed the ability to reach a potential of ministry that would far exceed their expectations. Jesus often intellectually stimulated the disciples, prompting them to critically analyze problems and circumstances and to formulate diverse means for solving problems. In Luke chapter nine, Jesus challenges his disciples with feeding a multitude of hungry people (Luke 9:10-13). His hidden motive is to teach them to think outside of the physical realm to solve their problem (Luke 9:14-17).

As a transformational leader, Jesus looked at his followers from both a personal and a corporate perspective. He recognized the individual strengths of his devoted leaders (Luke 22:31-34) and demonstrated compassion to the multitude of individuals following him from afar (Mark 6:34). Jesus became the archetype for all other leaders to follow. His exemplar approach

[51.] Northouse, *Leadership*, 167-9.

to leadership functioned as the catalyst for transforming the disciples into competent leaders and administrators of the early church. [52]

Christ gave the early church a mission (Matt. 28:19-20) and criteria for addressing God and other human beings: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind … You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:37, 22:39)." Aubrey Malphurs argues that the mission Christ gave to the church is timeless and applicable to contemporary church paradigms.[53] Church mission should dictate ministry direction, guide strategic planning endeavors, serve as the framework for decision-making, facilitate church-wide ministry and personal evaluation, and establish the function and future of the church.[54]

Foundational to this research project is the premise that church growth is directly related to how well church administrators can determine God's will and agenda for their local church family. God determines the mission of a church, but church administrators are responsible for insuring that church ministries, discipleship vehicles, and leadership development incentives are in alignment with not only that mission, but also the criteria instituted by Christ. Pastors who develop a biblical mission and propagate that mission in the church will most likely experience the greatest magnitudes of growth.[55]

[52.] Noelle F. Scuderi, "Servant Leadership and Transformational Leadership in Church Organizations," (PhD diss., George Washington University, 2010), 40–42.

[53.] Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 113.

[54.] Ibid., 109.

[55.] Ibid., 125–26.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Historical Context

Most experts attribute the initial development of grounded theory methods to sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. Glaser and Strauss sought to offer a counter research method that would be equivalent in status to the respected quantitative approaches of their era. They held the belief that theory development did not have to have its impetus in quantitative foundations and studies, but that collected data had the potential to generate more than numerical information.[56]

Glaser and Strauss studied qualitative mathematics and quantitative research approaches at Colombia University in the mid-1950s. Under the influence of Professor Paul Lazarfield, he advocated clarifying concepts through the systematic analyzation of the logic of research operations. Glaser developed the constant comparison method as a viable alternative to Lazarfield's psychological index formation method, which quantitatively reflected aggregate survey responses but failed to preserve and reflect the hermeneutical aspects of collected data.[57] Strauss, who had attended the University of Chicago in the early 1940s, was proficient in qualitative research methodology and analysis. In particular, Strauss believed field work should be a prerequisite to grounding emerging theory. He posited the idea that behavioral process, behavioral change, and that relationships between study participant's perceived meaning and related behavior be given attention and scrutiny.[58]

Grounded theory methodology emerged from research studies Glaser and Strauss

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[56.] Anthony Bryant and Kathy Charmaz, eds., *The SAGE Handbook of Grounded Theory* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2007), 33.

[57.] Renee M. Rolle-Whatley, "Transforming Loyalty: A Classic Grounded Theory on Growth in Self-awareness, Detachment, and Presence, Through Parenting" (PhD diss., Saybrook University, 2014), 95-96.

[58.] Ibid.

conducted on terminally-ill hospital patients in the early 1960s. Glaser and Strauss implemented a research team to observe and collect data on the dying process across diverse hospital settings. The study explored how and when professionals and patients acquired the news that death was imminent, and how both parties handled the news.[59] In 1967, Glaser and Strauss jointly published *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, in which they articulated the defining components of general grounded theory process and praxis.[60] *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* was not only a cutting-edge challenge to respected methodological standards; it also offered researchers systematic strategies for conducting qualitative research. Glaser and Strauss postulated the idea that systematic qualitative analysis possessed its own lucidity and could generate theory.[61] The fundamental principle of their methodology is that qualitative researchers should *discover* theory that is grounded in collected data through an inductive examination of data. This should be done without posing a theory or hypothesis prior to data collection processes.[62]

In their book, Glaser and Strauss outline the following defining components of the grounded theory method:

- Data collection and analysis take place simultaneously throughout research processes.
- Researchers should construct analytical codes and categories from gathered data, rather than preconceived deductive reasoning.
- Researchers should constantly compare data across code divisions during each stage of analysis, with the intent of discovering commonalities and divergences.
- Researchers should employ purposeful sampling to ensure the population sampled is rich with the phenomenon being studied. The sampling objective is to generate theory rather than represent a population.
- Researchers should wait until after data analysis has been completed before they

[59] Kathy Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2006), 4.

[60] Barney Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (New York: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967).

[61] Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 2006, 5.

[62] Meredith D. Gall, Joyce P. Gall, and Walter R. Borg, *Applying Educational Research: How to Read, Do, and Use Research to Solve Problems of Practice*, 6th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2010), 350.

review the literature.[63]

Constructivist grounded theory is a contemporary approach to qualitative research derived from Glaser and Strauss' original formulation. It adopts the strategic methodologies of coding, categorizing, memo-writing, and purposeful sampling for theory generation.[64] Informed by pragmatism, advocates of constructivist grounded theory approach perceived reality as essentially social and processual. In other words, life is social and part of a dynamic process in which meaning, and action reciprocally affect and shape the other. Constructive grounded theory assumes a fluid reality, in which individuals cannot be recognized as separate from the routines and habits of daily living.[65]

The most prevalent approaches to reconstructing theory are derived from positivism. Such theorists perceive their theoretical concepts as variable for hypothesis testing. Kathleen Charmaz, author of *Constructing Grounded Theory* and co-editor of the four-volume set, *Grounded Theory and Situational Analysis*, explains:

> Positivist theory aims for parsimony, generality, and universality and simultaneously reduces empirical objects and events to that which can be subsumed by the concepts. Positivist theory seeks causes, favors deterministic explanations, and emphasizes generality and universality.[66]

Charmaz argues that positivists' theories, though direct in statement and elegant in form, tend to present nominal explanations with simplistic models of action. Positivist theorists assume that the social and natural sciences address the identical subject matter, therefore, the patterned relationships between social actors and how these relationships and interactions actively

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[63.] Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 2006, 5–6.

[64.] Kathy Charmaz, "The Power of Constructivist Grounded Theory for Critical Inquiry. Qualitative Inquiry," *Qualitative Inquiry* 23, no. 1 (2016): 34.

[65.] Ibid., 38.

[66.] Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory,* 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 2014), 126.

construct reality, can be quantitatively measured and hypotheses tested. This narrow focus leads theorists to pursue causes, favor deterministic explanations, and focus on universality.[67]

Constructivist grounded theory is most appropriate for this research endeavor, since the research goals of this method are to understand observed phenomenon. Advocating theorists reconstruct theory in an interpretive fashion, assuming emergent multiple realities, indeterminacy, correlations between facts and values, truth as provisional, and social life as a process.[68] Informed by the interpretive tradition of defining theory, constructivist grounded theory places priority on the phenomena being explored and reconstruct theory in an interpretive fashion.

The objective of the grounded theory method is to generate a practical theory from data collected in the field. The qualitative features of this research method afford the researcher the ability to gain insight into phenomenon. By collecting data from senior pastors leading churches within the parameters of Western North Carolina, the researcher gained rich descriptions of the complex interplay of leadership and church growth.[69] Grounded theory focuses on the systematic comparison and contrasting of collected data, which is a research method exceptionally suitable for this thesis project. What is more, the qualitative phenomenological nature of the method inductively derives meaning from human behavior. The application of this research process effectively assisted this researcher in discovering the underlying meanings of behavioral patterns and observed phenomena.[70]

[67.] Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 2006, 126–30.

[68.] Ibid.

[69.] Sherri Cain Irish, "Leadership Qualities Necessary for Educational Leaders to Become Effective Turnaround Principals: A Grounded Theory" (PhD diss,, Liberty University, 2014), 49.

[70.] Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 2006, 130.

Design

Constructivist grounded theory seemed most appropriate for this research project for several reasons. First, viable quantitative instruments proved to be unattainable. Second, this approach afforded the researcher the ability to examine how and why participants construct meanings and actions in specific circumstances. In stark contrast to objective theorists, constructivists do not assume the researcher to be a neutral, passive, or value-free observer. Rather, they argue that subjectivities are embedded in data collection and analysis, and that objectivity is questionable. This method naturally facilitates rigorous scrutinizing and conceptualizing of collected data, without rendering the data objective. The researcher can consider prior knowledge and theoretical preconceptions, and subject them to data analysis.[71]

Finally, the data in this project is contextually situated in a time, place, culture, and milieu. This researcher recognized power of the constructivist approach to scrutinize the differences and distinctions of the perceptions and behaviors of participants within the parameters of their respective ministry environs. Application of the constructivist grounded theory process produced a substantive theory from collected data, by affording this researcher proximity to the exclusive experiences of participants. This qualitative approach facilitated the revelation of pastors' hidden positions, networks, relationships, strategies, personal traits, and perceptions concerning leadership and growth. Application of constructivist grounded theory to the interviews with senior administrators enabled the researcher to see the implications of differences, similarities, hierarchies of power, communication, theological perspective, and

[71.] Kathy Charmaz, "Constructionism and the Grounded Theory Method Constructionist Research," in *Handbook of Constructionists Research*, eds. James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium (New York: Guilford Press, 2008), 401–2.

leadership principles on church growth.[72]

Glaser and Strauss define substantive theory as theory developed for a practical or empirical area of sociological inquiry. Pastoral work encompassing, but not limited to, parishioner care, cultural and emotional intelligence, interpersonal relationships, leadership traits and styles, and the influencing effects of personal background, fit reasonably well within Glaser and Strauss' defined constraints for substantive theory.[73] The theory and model developed in this qualitative investigation deal with specific aspects of human perception and behavior, and the theory development approach for this research project is recognized as meso-level sociology. The analytical framework focuses on group interactions. Emphasis is given to observing the interactions between the senior pastor, staff, laity, and church members, with the goal of determining what factors of these interactions significantly correlate with church growth.[74] Glaser and Strauss classify formal and substantive theory as middle-range, falling "between the minor working hypotheses of everyday life, and all-inclusive *grand theories.*"[75]

To guide the scope and context of the research project, the researcher fleshed out the similarities, differences, incidents, and causal relationships between emerging categories through purposive sampling and foundational research questions.

Research Questions

The central research question that guided this study is: "What leadership factors significantly influence church growth for Churches of God located in Western North Carolina?"

[72.] Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory,* 2006, 129–31.

[73.] Green, "Pastoral Leadership," 104.

[74.] Amy Blackstone, *Principles of Sociological Inquiry–Qualitative and Quantitative Methods* (Saylor Academy, 2016), 14, accessed February 25, 2017, saylordotorg.github.io/text_principles-of-sociological-inquiry-qualitative-and-quantitative-methods/s05-01-micro-meso-and-macro-approache.html. eBook.

[75.] Glaser and Strauss, *Discovery of Grounded Theory,* 32–33.

The aim of this thesis project is to develop a substantive theory or "working theory" of action for initiating and maintaining healthy church growth from grounded data. In order to develop a viable theoretical model for Church of God pastors in the Western region of North Carolina, the researcher was required to identify the similarities and divergences in contextualized occurrences across and within demarcated research parameters.[76] As constant comparison of collected data is the hallmark of grounded theory, the researcher developed the following sub-questions to further guide the research process:

1. What personal factors do successful pastors think influence the growth of their local church?
2. What leadership principles and perceptions do pastors of growing churches identify as important to their roles and healthy church growth?
3. What common strategies, methods, and modes, do pastors of growing churches, employ when addressing recognized growth predictors?

Participants

The researcher selected the participants through purposeful sampling. This method of sampling requires the researcher to employ his or her judgment to ensure that the population sample is information-rich.[77] Selected participants had to meet specific criteria to be considered as a candidate for this investigation. All participants were senior pastors of a Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) operating in the Western counties of North Carolina.[78] The possible sample size for this criterion was approximately 250 pastors. To ensure the selected population sample would be rich with correlating leadership and church growth phenomena, the researcher

[76.] Clem Adelman, "Substantive Theory," in *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research*, eds. Albert J. Mills, Gabrielle Durepos, and Elden Wiebe (n.p.: SAGE Knowledge, 2010), 908, doi:10.4135/9781412957397.n335.

[77.] Gall, Gall, and Borg, *Applying Educational Research*, 348.

[78.] The senior pastors that agreed to participate in this research project were from one of the following counties in Western North Carolina: Cabarrus, Catawba, Clay, Gaston, Iredell, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Polk, Rockingham, Scotland, Stokes, Vance.

recruited only senior pastors reporting an average yearly increase in worship attendance of 1% or greater from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016.

The researcher solicited research participants by telephone and explained to them the purpose and scope of the project upon first contact, as well as the factors that made them candidates for participation. During the recruitment process, the researcher informed pastors that data collection would be in the form of a digitally-recorded interviews lasting approximately one hour. This researcher required a signed consent form before scheduling the interview. Participants were assured that alpha-numeric identifiers would be used in data analysis and written study results, and that personal names, church names, and church locations would remain anonymous to everyone except the researcher. Each participant received a $25 VISA gift card in appreciation of their support of the research endeavor.

The eighteen pastor participants represented churches located in fourteen counties across the Western region of North Carolina. Participants reported an average yearly increase in worship attendance of 1% or greater from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016 (see Figure 2).[79]

Procedures

The Researcher's Role

The researcher's role throughout this project was to collect, analyze, and interpret data. The researcher gathered data collected through recorded interviews with senior pastors in Western North Carolina until theoretical saturation was achieved. The goal for this thesis project was not generalizability or representativeness. The researcher collected and compared data from

[79.] Church of God State Executive Offices, *Western North Carolina Church of God Statistical Reports*.

interviews and transcripts until no new themes emerged and until he observed no gaps in data.

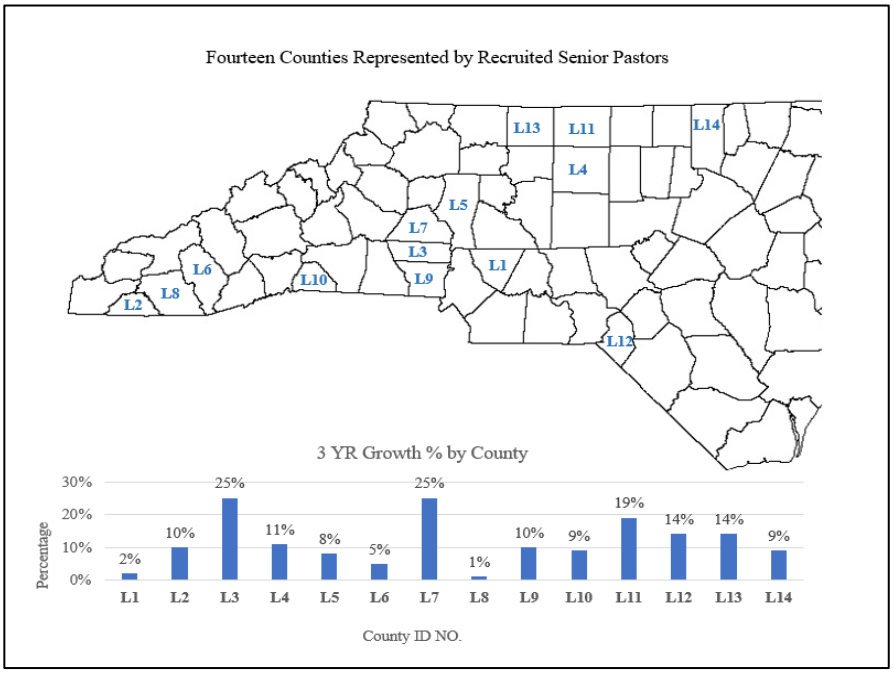

Figure 2. Participant sample consisted of pastors reporting an average yearly increase in worship attendance of 1% or greater, from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016 across fourteen counties in Western North Carolina. Data from Church of God State Executive Offices, *Western North Carolina Church of God Statistical Reports* (Charlotte, NC, 2016).

This study utilized a social constructivism paradigm, with the intent of providing Church of God pastors experiencing growth stagnation with a substantive theory reflecting leadership attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors common to their contemporaries, who are consistently stimulating and maintaining church growth in the Western region of North Carolina. [80]

The researcher is a proactive and innovative church administrator with specialized training and expertise in adolescent and adult education, church music, and curriculum design. Along with thirty-five years of ministry experience, he is a seasoned corporate operations director experienced in short-term and longstanding strategic planning, finance, administration, human and asset resource management, and leadership team building. This leadership background in education, business enterprise, and church administration is crucial to theory development under the guidelines of social constructivism. Charmaz insists that the researcher's reflexivity and relativity of perspectives, positions, and research situations afford the researcher

[80.] Irish, "Leadership Qualities," 56.

the advantage of moving from local domains to general conceptual levels.[81]

The researcher's understanding of ecclesial milieus, denominational dogma, and clerical practices enhanced his ability to establish relationships with research participants and enabled him to consider perceived or existent power imbalances. The status of the researcher as an ordained bishop in the Church of God created a sense of reciprocity between participants and the researcher that culminated in the co-construction of meaning and the development of a leadership theory grounded in the participants' and researcher's experiences.[82]

Data Collection

This study used personal interviews to collect pertinent data. To ensure consistency, participants responded to the same twelve open-ended questions related to ecclesial leadership and church growth. The researcher sought and attained approval to apply the open-ended questions as a qualitative measuring tool for this project from the Institutional Review Board at Liberty University (see Appendix A).

The purpose of the in-depth personal interviews was to gather data that would describe and explain the experiences of the participants and the meaning the senior administrators assigned to experiences regarding church growth. The interviewing process was not a mechanism for attaining answers to questions or testing hypotheses.[83] In other words, the researcher's goal was not to evaluate the merit or worth of participants' leadership traits, aptitudes, personal perceptions, values, and growth strategies, but rather to shed light on the similarities, differences, incidents, and causal relationships of phenomena that have significant

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[81.] Charmaz, "Constructionism and the Grounded Theory," 398.

[82.] Jane Mills, Ann Bonner, and Karen Francis, "Adopting a Constructivist Approach to Grounded Theory: Implications for Research Design," *International Journal of Nursing Practice* 12 (2006): 9, doi:10.1111/j.1440-172X.2006.00543.x.

[83.] Green, "Pastoral Leadership," 109.

implication for growth initiation and maintenance.[84]

Data Analysis

The researcher digitally recorded the personal interviews administered to each senior pastor and transcribed them using Express Scribe Transcription Software.[85] He applied reflective analysis to transcribed interview documents and coded collected data categorically. The researcher then subjected emergent codes to a process of constant comparison, utilizing ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis software, version 7.5.15., to establish as many categories of analysis as possible.[86] The constant comparative process of moving back and forth between data collection and data analysis continued until the researcher identified causal relationships and achieved theoretical saturation.[87]

The sociological protocol of Glaser and Strauss for qualitative data analysis guided the analytical phase of this study. Glaser and Strauss posit four rudimentary stages of constant comparison methodology:

1. Incidents are compared across categories. The analyst codes each incident into as many analytical categories as possible. Glaser and Strauss stipulate, "While coding an incident for a category, compare it with the previous incidents in the same and different groups coded in the same category."[88] The analysis objective is to identify, name, categorize, and describe phenomenon found in collected data.[89]
2. Categories are compared and integrated according to causal relationships. At this step in the comparative process the analyst looks for causal correlations associated with schema, context, behavior, action strategy and consequences, as well as, causative and intervening conditions.[90]

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84. Gall, Gall, and Borg, *Applying Educational Research*, 553.

85. NCH Software Pty Ltd, "Express Scribe Transcription Software."

86. Scientific Software Development GmbH, "ATLAS.ti Qualitative Analysis Software, Version 7.5.15."

87. Joynt and Dreyer, "Exodus of Clergy," 3.

88. Glaser and Strauss, *Discovery of Grounded Theory*, 106.

89. Steve Borgatti, "Introduction to Grounded Theory," *Pearson Education* (2010): 1, accessed March 8, 2017, http://wps.prenhall.com/chet_creswell_educational_ 3/70/ 18053/4621753.cw/-/4621776/index.html.

90. Ibid.

3. One category is delimited as the core category, with all other categories relating to that central category. Glaser and Strauss explain theory delimiting as a two-step process. At the first level of delimitation, the emergent theory will solidify as the analyst's modifications to coded incidents decrease to the point of merely facilitating logic clarification and the exclusion of non-relevant properties. Glaser and Strauss contend that at the second level of theory delimitation, a reduction in the original category list takes place. As the theory develops, categories that fall outside of theory parameters are purged.[91]
4. The analyst provides context behind the categories by writing reflective memos. These memos are collated on each category to develop a theoretical framework.[92]

Data coding is the first step in the analytical phase of research. Unlike quantitative coding, in which preconceived codes are applied to collected data, qualitative grounded theory codes are created or emerge as data, as transcribed interviews are scrutinized line-by-line. Charmaz describes this coding process as the pivotal link between collected data and the development of an emergent viable theory to explain this data.[93]

The researcher used ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis software for data analysis and imported all transcribed interviews into the ATLAS.ti software for coding and categorizing. The data analysis program assigned each document a primary document identification number.

Open coding

Open coding, or in vivo coding, is the part of analysis in which the researcher focuses on identifying, naming, categorizing, and describing phenomena recognized in the text of transcribed interviews.[94] First stage codes can represent theoretical concepts or be practical and descriptive in nature. Open coding is the researcher's initial attempt to systematically assimilate

[91.] Glaser and Strauss, *Discovery of Grounded Theory*, 110–11.

[92.] Ibid., 101–13.

[93.] Kathy Charmaz, "The Search for Meanings: Grounded Theory," in *Rethinking Methods in Psychology*, ed. Jonathan A. Smith, Rom Harre, and Luk Van Langenhove (London: Sage Publications, 1996), 37.

[94.] Borgatti, "Introduction to Grounded Theory," 1.

segments of data that represent instances of the aspects of interest relevant to the research.[95]

This researcher chose to code data incident-by-incident, as opposed to word-by-word or line-by-line. This coding practice was elected due to its ability to make comparisons between incidents and the inability of the other two coding options to reflect concrete, behavioristic descriptions of the senior pastors' routine actions. Incident-by-incident coding was appropriate for this project, because this initial coding process allowed the researcher to analytically explore the routine leadership choices of research participants within the parameters of their respective ministry settings.

After reading through data collected from personal interviews, the researcher began the process of creating tentative labels for segments of data that summarize and account for each piece of data (see Appendix B). Open coding reflects how the researcher organized, sorted, and separated collected data for analysis and theory development. For purposes of this research project, the researcher sought to summarize and account for participants' implicit and explicit perceptions and behaviors when recognized in transcribed interviews and when participants described

Examples of Open Coding

Open Code	Example of Participants Words
IFactor3: Apprenticeship/Mentoring Accounting for personal spiritual and leadership development Advocating mentoring Advocating academic training	P21 Time we spent with seasoned pastors, either as an intern or as an assistant pastor of some type. The second part of it though, has been, the combination of on the job training and education.
Failing to distinguish between biblical theology and modes of communication Describing a construct through COG denominational lenses	I'm never going to believe in painting the sanctuary black and using smoke and laser lights. That has nothing to do with coming to our God. Basic love. Basic traditional Pentecostal values are the main things that we should stick by.

Figure 3. Examples of Open Coding for Leadership Factors That Influence Church Growth for Western North Carolina Churches of God. Data created in Scientific Software Development GmbH. "ATLAS.ti Qualitative Analysis Software, Version 7.5.15."

[95.] Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 2014, 121.

relative incidents within their respective ethnographic settings (see Figure 3).[96]

The next step in the coding process of grounded theory, requires the researcher to identify relationships between the open codes. Correlations are established through axial coding.

Axial coding

Once the initial coding was complete, the researcher regrouped the data into code families with the intent of identifying relationships between open codes. Through constant comparison methodology, the researcher compared code-to-code and incident-by-incident, searching for similarities and differences. Axial coding brings the researcher further into the comparative process. This thesis project grouped together similar codes and merged them into higher order categories. At this stage of the analysis, the researcher deemed codes marginally assigned to data irrelevant and eliminated them.[97] The following questions served as the guiding framework for developing the higher order categories:

1. What patterns are revealed in the open codes?
2. Which open codes best account for the data?
3. What commonalities, divergences, and causal factors are revealed when open codes are juxtaposed?
    A. What implicit and explicit perceptions, values, and behaviors are revealed when open codes are compared?
    B. What circumstances or situations form the structure for coded incidents?
4. How are participants' actions, interactions, and responses to issues, events, and problems represented in the open codes?
5. Do the open codes reflect outcomes or consequences related to participants' perceptions, values, behaviors, and social relationships?[98]

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96. Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory,* 2014, 111.

97. Glaser and Strauss, *Discovery of Grounded Theory,* 111.

98. Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 140–48.

Example of Axial Coding	
Family (Axial) Code in ATLAS.ti	**Open Codes**
ChurchChange	Change1: Determining God's will and developing a vision Change2: Building a guiding coalition Communicating change at the corporate level Communicating change with key influencing stakeholders Describing church change strategy

Figure 4. Axial Coding Example for Leadership Factors That Influence Church Growth Local Western North Carolina Churches of God. Data created in Scientific Software Development GmbH. "ATLAS.ti Qualitative Analysis Software, *Version 7.5.15*."

The overarching purpose of axial coding is to sort, synthesize, and reorganize data after open coding analyses to give coherence to the emerging categories. The researcher reassembled the data into related categories and subcategories, thereby facilitating the application of an analytical framework and the emerging of a core category (see Figure 4). The final coding stage for the research project was selective coding. At this stage of coding, the researcher focused on identifying the core category and conceptualizing how the substantive codes relate to each other as hypotheses which can be developed into theory.[99]

Selective coding

Selective coding is a sophisticated level of coding in which the researcher revisits data and codes to search for themes, concepts, and relationships. This researcher utilized ATLAS.ti software to create chains of multiple codes and related quotations from the transcribed interviews to create networks to aid in conceptualizing how correlating codes fit hypotheses and could possibly be assimilated into a theory directed by the aspects of one core category (see Table 1).[100] Occurrences of related codes and the c-coefficient is like the correlation coefficient defined

[99] Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 2014, 148-150.

[100.] John K. Lewis, "Using ATLAS.ti to Facilitate Data Analysis for a Systematic Review of Leadership Competencies in the Completion of a Doctoral Dissertation" (PhD diss., Salve Regina University, 2016), 8.

in fundamental statistics for social behaviors. However, the researcher is not required to obtain a p-value to test for null hypotheses. Instead, the researcher determines the strength of the correlation by evaluating how close the value of the c-coefficient is to one. C-coefficients are reflected numerically between zero and one. The closer a number is to one, the stronger the relationship is determined to be between codes. This is the method this researcher utilized to perform quantitative analysis on qualitative data (see Table 2).

Theorists using grounded theory methodology seek to develop a theory through inductive analysis of collected data. The researcher's goal for this project was to develop a theory grounded in data to provide pastors with insight into the leadership factors that impact church growth. Therefore, sampling was *theoretically* oriented and directed towards the generation and development of conceptual theory, rather than the creation of a descriptive account. The core themes and emerging theory continually directed the sorting and categorizing of data.[101]

Memo writing

As categories and themes emerged from compared data, the researcher utilized memo-writing to capture contrasts, relationships, and causal correlations observed during analysis. These memos served as analytical notes to explicate and define categories. The researcher employed an informal style of writing for the memos associated with the data and categories of this research project, as the purpose of the language was for personal use. The researcher sought to record fleeting ideas related to the code, to sort themes, and to probe data.[102]

Memoing afforded the researcher the ability to engage code and compare the beliefs,

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[101.] Jenna Breckenridge and Derek Jones, "Demystifying Theoretical Sampling in Grounded Theory Research," *Grounded Theory Review: An International Journal* 8, no. 2 (June 2009): 115, accessed April 6, 2017, http://www.groundedtheoryreview.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/GT-Review-Vol8-no2.pdf#page=64.

[102.] Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 72–80.

situations, actions, and accounts of the participating pastors. The memoing process allowed the researcher to interpret what the pastors were saying within their respected ministry milieus and in turn flesh out the actions and statements that would otherwise be taken for granted during coding processes. The researcher utilized memos to note what familial factors, cultural contexts, leadership and growth perceptions, and spiritual structures served to support, maintain, impede, or change the actions and statements of participants.[103]

The researcher transcribed and analyzed the data for this study (i.e., personal interviews) using the systematic of open, axial, and selective coding. Coding progressions identified categories describing observed leadership and church growth phenomena (see Table 3). During the selective coding process, the researcher was searching for themes, concepts, and relationships. At this stage of coding, three overarching themes and a possible core category emerged as possible candidates for the impetus of a theoretical model that would explain the leadership and growth phenomena being studied. *Influencing Leadership Factors* emerged as a possible core category. *Personal Dynamics of the Senior Pastor*, *Ideology, and Perceptions of the Senior Pastor*, and the *Modes and Means Utilized by the Senior Pastor to Address Growth Predictors* surfaced as possible subcategories for integration into the upper stratums of the theoretical hierarchy. Through these four overarching categories, the researcher analyzed, prioritized, and integrated the gathered and coded data, as well as observed phenomena from interviews, into a substantive theory.[104]

Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The researcher selected the grounded theory method for this research because its

[103.] Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory*, 80–82.

[104.] Irish, "Leadership Qualities," 63–65.

systematic approach to data analysis has been proven to be advantageous in the generation of theory from data that is systematically obtained from social environs. The church milieu is an example of such a social environment. This qualitative method of research employs a structured set of procedures to develop and inductively derive a practical theory of observed phenomena. Application of the grounded theory method is not contingent on the use of broad principles which most often lead to difficulty in their application and interpretation. The researcher chose this method because its systematic approach would be beneficial in judging, generalizing, and comparing research results.[105]

Consequently, there are several disadvantages associated with approaching this investigation on the leadership factors that impact church growth using the grounded theory method. Proponents of grounded theory research have yet to form a consensus on when a thorough review of existing literature should be conducted by the researcher(s). Because they believed prior understanding of the phenomena under observation would contaminate research findings, Glaser and Strauss argue that the literature review should be presented after analysis processes have been completed. Other theorists posit the idea that insight and understanding equip the researcher to be sensitive to the content of the data. They contend that a thorough immersion in existing literature, coupled with the researcher's prior knowledge and experiences, heighten theoretical sensitivity. In other words, these insights and experiences prepare the researcher to comprehend and interpret data and does not contribute to their biases or presuppositions.[106]

[105.] Mohamed E. Hussein, Sandra Hirst, Vince Salyers, and Joseph Osuji, "Using Grounded Theory as a Method of Inquiry: Advantages and Disadvantages," *The Qualitative Report* 19, no. 27 (2014): 4, accessed April 7, 2017, http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/ vol19/iss27/3/.

[106.] Ibid., 6–7.

The researcher completed an extensive review of pertinent literature before completing the data analysis processes for this thesis project. The immersion in existing literature, the researcher's prior professional background, and academic training in the field of study most likely heightened his theoretical sensitivity and data interpreting proficiencies. However, this same scholarship and professional experience has the same potential to inform coding and theory development, as the notion of total objectivity throughout interpretive procedures is implausible.

Since the research methodology used to approach project data lies within the social constructivist paradigm, the researcher recognized that the accounts provided by the participating senior pastors were constructed within a unique research context. The relationship between the researcher and research participants can have significant implications for emerging categories, themes, and the developing theory. The researcher exercised due diligence to scrutinize the scope and magnitude of personal reflexivity throughout all stages of the research endeavor. However, it has been argued that all research is shaped by the ontological and epistemological assumptions and beliefs that the researcher brings to the research method. The similarities and differences between the researcher and research participants with regards to culture, race, ethnicity, intellect, gender, age, sexual orientation, and aptitude can significantly inform research findings.[107]

Maintaining the integrity of the data collected through verbatim transcription of interviews minimized biases or presuppositions. Moreover, the researcher utilized four questions as an instrument for diminishing the power of his ontological and epistemological positions to shape the relationship between himself and study participants. Utilization of these questions also helped to curtail the influence such values have on the researcher's ability to maintain a reflexive

[107.] Charlotte Burck, "Comparing Qualitative Research Methodologies for Systematic Research: The Use of Grounded Theory, Discourse Analysis, and Narrative Analysis," *Journal of Family Therapy* 27 (2005): 241–43, accessed April 7, 2017, http://www.dphu.org/uploads/attachements/books/books_3568_0.pdf.

stance during the interviewing process. This series of conscious-provoking questions facilitated a proper balance of power between researcher and participants, and prompted the researcher to maintain a commitment to participant-driven research. The following questions assisted the researcher in adopting a non-judgmental stance throughout each personal interview:

1. How is this senior pastor like me?
2. How is this senior pastor unlike me?
3. How are our similarities and differences being manifested throughout our interaction?
4. How is our interaction affecting the process and progress of the research study?
5. How is our interaction illuminating or obscuring the scrutinizing of the factors of leadership that impact church growth?[108]

Throughout the entirety of the research project, the researcher kept in mind the fundamental ethical rule of social research, which is, "that it brings no harm to research subjects."[109] Protocol was implemented to ensure the anonymity of research participants and the names of their respective churches. Participants did not include their names or the name and location of their respective churches during the digitally recorded interview. For transcribing and data analysis purposes, the researcher assigned participating pastors a letter and accompanying numeric identifier (e.g., P1). Churches were identified in the same manner (e.g., C1). Locations of participant churches were assigned a letter and numeric identifier to recognize the counties in which they are located across Western North Carolina (e.g., L1).

The researcher transferred regional statistics, recorded interviews, transcriptions, and data analyses to designated folders on a desktop computer and a formatted flash drive, interviews to a password protected folder (DminInterviews), and regional statistics, transcriptions, and data

[108.] Mills, Bonner, and Francis, "Adopting a Constructivist Approach to Grounded Theory," 9–10.

[109.] Green, "Pastoral Leadership," 119.

analyses to a discrete password protected folder (DminData). The researcher stored paper copies and digital versions of the personal interviews in a locked filing cabinet, along with the flash drive containing the two password protected data files. Data will be kept for three years (required) and then will be deleted.[110] The above outlined security protocol was executed to ensure the anonymity of the research participants and to safeguard the collected data, analyses, and related findings.

[110.] Harold Jordan, "School of Divinity IRB Application: Liberty University Institutional Review Board," Liberty University Institutional Review Board, May 9, 2016, 4, accessed April 8, 2017, http://www.liberty.edu/academics/graduate/irb/index.cfm? PID=12606.similar.

Chapter 3: Data Analysis and Findings

Regarding Factors That Determine Church Growth and Vitality

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative grounded theory research project is to acquire an understanding of the significant leadership factors that influence church growth for Churches of God in Western North Carolina. In addition, this research seeks to provide Church of God pastors, a substantive theory and leadership model to aid in the initiation and maintenance of healthy church growth. Data analysis revealed a plethora of leadership factors to have implications for church growth and vitality in Western North Carolina. Chapter three presents research findings on two categories, and their associated subcategories, that emerged during coding and comparative data analysis. Results of this research suggest that the pastors selected for this thesis project shared leadership dynamics and personal factors of influence that affected church growth outcomes.

The aim of this thesis project is to develop a substantive theory of action for initiating and maintaining healthy church growth from grounded data. The researcher used the following three-question framework to guide coding processes and to develop emerging categories and themes:

1. What personal factors do successful pastors think influence the growth of their local church?
2. What leadership principles and perceptions do pastors of growing churches identify as important to their roles and healthy church growth?
3. What common strategies, methods, and modes, do pastors of growing churches, employ when addressing recognized growth predictors?

The researcher conducted the project with the supposition that common leadership factors significantly influence church growth for Churches of God located in Western North Carolina.

Eighteen interviews with participating senior pastors form the phenomena-rich data for this research project. The researcher transcribed each interview and then loaded it into the

ATLAS.ti qualitative analysis software, outlined in chapter two, for systematic review. Data was then compared, contrasted, coded, and merged into ordered categories, utilizing ATLAS.ti to network correlating themes, concepts, and patterns that emerged from the constant juxtaposing of participant's backgrounds, ideology, theological perspectives, and methods of approaching church growth predictors.

Data analysis revealed that pastors of churches with consistent growth from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016 shared common personal factors that seemingly impacted the growth of their local church. As data collection, coding, and analysis processes progressed, three major categories, and several relevant sub-categories, began to emerge. The three major categories observed across analyzed incidents to have significant implications for church growth were: *the personal dynamics of the senior pastor*, *the ideology and perceptions of the senior pastor*, and *the means and modes utilized by the senior pastor to address church growth predictors*.

Chapter three reflects the researcher's findings regarding the emerging categories and themes in relation to question one of the guiding framework. This chapter summarizes analysis coding endeavors and explains the personal factors that the participating pastors believed influenced the growth of their local church.

The Leadership Dynamics of the Senior Pastor

Significant Background Influences on Administration

Robert Welch defines administration as the art and science of planning, organizing, leading, and directing the work of individuals, to achieve demarcated goals and objectives.[111] Welch maintains that church administration is pragmatic in its focus and marked by process, analysis, decision-making, evaluation, and report. Administrators provide not only leadership for

[111.] Welch, *Church Administration*, 13.

the church family but are also responsible for establishing the church's universal mission and goals. He explains that senior administrators are responsible for considering future circumstances when setting the course of action required to achieve delineated objectives. Administration is an art because it requires leaders to develop others through diverse modes of learning and personal mentoring. Welch considers an individual with high proficiencies for amalgamating human, physical, and fiscal resources, into a productive cohesive element, to be an exemplar church administrator. Successful church administration effectively integrates senior leaders, staff, laity, and volunteers. In other words, the church leaders place the right people in ministry vocational roles which, in turn, efficiently accomplishes the church's internal and external ministry tasks.[112]

Scrutiny of data collected for this research project showed that participants who reported consistent church growth also described mutual factors of influence that directed their administrative behaviors and ministry praxis. During the interview process, the researcher asked every participant, "What factors of your background do you think most prepared you to be an effective senior church administrator?" Several common influencing factors emerged from data analysis that seemed to significantly impact church growth. Participants agreed that key life events, past instances of personal development, and the ministry training vehicles offered by the Church of God, Cleveland Tennessee, had significant implications for past and present administrative roles and tasks. Every participating pastor attributed their current administrative competencies and strategies for initiating church growth to a synthesis of two or more of the following long-term life shaping factors: academic study, completed internships, and/or life lessons learned from positions of leadership and accountability roles held in past secular and ministry milieus.

[112.] Ibid.

Key life events

Findings of this thesis project revealed participant agreement on several key life events. When asked to reflect on the background factors that they deemed as most influential on their present leadership accomplishments, all the senior pastors attributed their personal success and church growth, foremost, to key life events. The participants shared a deep-rooted conviction that they had been called to ministry.

The Bible presents many examples of individuals who were specifically called by God to unique ministry vocations and contexts. The Old Testament outlines the divine call of Samuel (1 Sam. 3:1-10) and Jeremiah (Jer. 1:4-9) to prophetic activity. The historical account of the Apostle Peter's call to pastoral ministry by Jesus is recorded in New Testament Scripture text (John 21:13-19). God clearly reveals his plan and purpose for the Apostle Paul to Ananias, "This man is My chosen instrument to carry My name before the Gentiles and their kings, and before the people of Israel" (Acts 9:15), and Paul clearly recognized this vocational call and commission (Rom. 1:1, 11:13, 15:20).

Ben Patterson explains that a call to ministry does not equate to a career. The pivotal distinction, according to Patterson, is that a divine call to ministry has no itinerary or maps to guide the apostle, evangelist, teacher, pastor or prophet, or destination to envision. Patterson suggests that a career can be considered the road or highway one takes in life. Such a path has a destination, with all roads well marked for the traveler. Because of this certainty, an individual can pursue a career with a degree of personal detachment. A ministry call, however, depends on hearing a Voice, and a deep relationship between the listener, and the One who calls.[113]

[113.] Ben Patterson, "Call to Ministry" in *Leadership Handbook of Management and Administration: Practical Insight from a Cross Section of Ministry Leaders*, ed. James D. Berkley (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 14.

During data analysis, it became evident that the research participants did not consider their vocation and ministry position a chosen career. The successful pastors in this project recognized their call to ministry as the domain in which their gifts and talents (1 Cor. 12:27-29; Eph. 4:7-11) best functioned, and where their life's energy was poured out (Phil. 2:17; 2 Tim. 4:6, NIV) to address the convictions that God placed in their hearts.[114] One participant who pastored one of the smaller (0-100 members) churches in Western North Carolina shared his deep-rooted conviction regarding his call to ministry:

> I started out as an evangelist, full time evangelist for almost seventeen years. I served as the State evangelist for the state of North Carolina Church of God. I first felt the call to evangelize when I was called to preach. God laid that on my heart. One day I was coming to a revival in a town, a small town, where I had preached many revivals before. When I got there, a heavy burden began to fall on my heart, and I didn't understand what it was exactly. I was pulling up into trailer parks, just sitting there crying and weeping. I began to ask God, why am I feeling this? Just sitting there praying. I'd drive around through town praying for the merchants. I would drive around the streets, just praying for the people in their houses. I went back into another trailer park just crying and weeping, such a heavy burden. God, why do I feel like this? I've never felt like this. If I've ever heard God speak to me, I heard him speak. "I'm burdening your heart to pastor."[115]

A pastor of one of the larger (200-300 members) churches in Western North Carolina expressed this identical conviction. The participant described one of the crucial developmental influences that contributed to his pastoral success:

> One of the most important things that led me to it was the sense of calling. When I was twenty years old. I was pursuing a degree through Davidson College in chemistry. I was planning to be a medical doctor. I had one of those almost Damascus Road type of experiences one Sunday. It wasn't when anybody was preaching about calling, or ministry, or nothing like that. I was singing at my home church. The _____ singers were singing, and of all things, during the song about heaven, had nothing to do with the ministry, it was just one of those break in, confrontational moments when God said, "I'm

[114.] Patterson, "Call to Ministry," 23.

[115.] Participant 18, interviewed by author, January 15, 2017, Document 18 transcript, location (272:1226) Hampton, VA, 2017. All quotations derived from interview transcripts of the senior pastors included in this written presentation are identified by alpha numeric identifiers to ensure participants' anonymity.

> calling you into the ministry." I knew in the midst of that experience, that one of the main parts of that would be pastoral ministry. [116]

The coding of participants' interviews revealed these successful pastors to share a common recognition and understanding of God's call to their respective ministry positions and environs. In the words of Frederick Buechner, "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."[117] The consensus among participants was that a true divine call to ministry is discernible and accompanied by a significant purpose. In addition, this ministry must lead to a sense of delight in the one who is called. Their working theology of a call consisted of serving with gladness in the ministry milieu where they had been placed by God. Their call to ministry embraced meeting the spiritual, physical, and emotional needs of their church and its starving community.[118]

Academics

The researcher selected eighteen pastors for this thesis project, with the criterion that each had reported growth under their leadership tenure from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016. Forty-eight percent of the total growth during this time interval was reported by pastors who had completed some amount of course study at a seminary, college, or university, in conjunction with an internship or some type of *on-the-job* ministry leadership role.

In a five-year report on how new ministers learn in practice, Christian Scharen and Eileen Campbell-Reed argue that pastoral success in the twenty-first century is contingent on the individual's ability to holistically perceive spiritual and relational depths of ministry contexts and

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[116.] Participant 12, interviewed by author, October 18, 2016, Document 8, transcript, location (405:1153), Hampton, VA.

[117.] Frederick Buechner, "Wishful Thinking," in *Leadership Handbook of Management and Administration: Practical Insights from a Cross Section of Ministers,* ed. James D. Berkley (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 15.

[118.] Patterson, "Call to Ministry," 15–16.

respond with wise and appropriate judgement and action. This adaptive proficiency for leading wisely, by drawing from practical knowledge and discernment aptitudes derived from ministry practice over time, has been delineated by modern theologians as pastoral imagination.[119] Pastoral imagination encompasses an individual's integrative relational capacity for perceiving situations. It perceives situations and extrapolates knowledge regarding self, context, relationships of power, and ministry praxis, from diverse modes of learning. Pastoral imagination is understood to work in concert with the Holy Spirit and the individual's spiritual gifts.[120]

Like all contemporary church administrators, twenty-first century Pentecostal pastors are challenged with complex issues. The fastest-growing percentage of American society hold no affiliation with a faith community or institutionalized religion. The United States is experiencing a demographic revolution and ethnic populations will soon represent the majority of America. Social trends, identity groups, and the postmodern defining of religious tolerance have shaped the lives of individuals and present-day faith communities.[121]

Traditionally Pentecostals have remained on the fringes of the professional academic community in America. This aversion to personal intellectual development has been attributed to generationally-inherited theological orientations, ideological opinions, and the socio-economic factors unique to the beginnings of Pentecostalism. Because early Pentecostals anticipated the imminent return of Christ, they considered educational endeavors outside the parameters of evangelism, missions, and church planting by clergy and membership, to be investing in unprofitable worldly affairs. Accompanying this apocalyptic expectancy, was the proposition

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[119.] Christian A.B. Scharen and Eileen R. Campbell-Reed, "Learning Pastoral Imagination: A Five-Year Report on How New Ministers Learn in Practice," *Auburn Studies* 21 (Winter 2016): 5, accessed July 12, 2017, http://auburnseminary.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Learning-Pastoral-Imagination.pdf.

[120.] Ibid., 5.

[121.] Ibid., 4–8.

that heightened attention to intellectual development (human knowledge), would threaten the cultivation of spiritual formation and spiritual empowerment.[122] Contemporary Pentecostal scholars seem to be optimistic regarding the elimination of the anti-intellectual strain within Pentecostal ranks; however, recent studies, including fifteen from renowned Pentecostal theologians, showed these men and women are still wrestling with a perceived incompatibility between Pentecostalism and academia.[123]

All eighteen pastors interviewed for this project had reported significant church growth over a three-year time interval. Ten of these pastors had completed some degree of undergraduate studies at a university, college, or seminary. Three participating pastors had earned bachelor's degrees, one participant had earned a graduate degree in counselling, and two of the senior pastors held Doctor of Ministry degrees from theological seminaries.

Successful Church of God pastors in the Western region of North Carolina are beginning to recognize the value of higher education. When questioned about background influences, one of the more culturally informed participants stated:

> My degree is in education, with a secondary degree in secondary education. I can teach history, psychology, sociology, all of that, kindergarten through twelve…. my dad was an educator. My mom was an educator…. I always believed, and I believe this a lot, and you might think this is crazy, but I believe that my education teaching degree has helped me become a better communicator in the pulpit. It has let me become a better preacher. … the administration courses I had to take has helped me to become a better administrator, simply because the knowledge of my education coupled with the knowledge of being raised fourth generation Pentecostal, I think, make a great match. [124]

Institutions of higher learning equip pastors with the foundational theological, homiletic, hermeneutical, and interpersonal skills required to perform the daily tasks of leading a local

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[122.] Olsen, "The Quest for Legitimacy," 94–110.

[123.] Ibid., 104–6.

[124.] Participant 12, interviewed by author, October 18, 2016, Document 9, transcript, location (891:2160), Hampton, VA.

congregation. When reflecting on the developmental factors associated with their leadership, every participant communicated to the interviewer that as the senior leader of their church, they understood the expectation by membership and staff for them to perform with precision, a wide variety of leadership proficiencies across multiple functions and diverse contexts. [125]

Participants who did not complete seminary studies or earn a professional degree admitted during the personal interview that they lacked self-efficacy in three key clerical domains: church administration, conflict resolution, and leadership development. The participants who bypassed academic study and opted for quick placement into a pastoral role clearly recognized their ministry deficits. Participants opting to bypass pre-pastoral avenues of higher learning admitted they found staffing, leadership development, and implementing an effective age-appropriate discipleship paradigm challenging. These senior pastors also showed leadership deficiencies in the areas of church administration. One expressed:

> …church administration is my weakness. That's why I've scratched my head over the last three churches we've had, and had success, because God has blessed us. I am a horrible administrator. You can ask the people I've pastored, and they would tell you that. My strength is in the spiritual aspect of it.[126]

These senior pastors perceived their conflict resolution acumen and aptitudes to be substandard:

> I don't know how, a lot of times, how to address areas, because I'm not good with confrontation, and I always say, they'll get better, I'll pray for them. God will turn it around. To a fault, many times, I've let people stay in leadership longer than I should have. I own that, and I should not have done that. It has hurt the ministry in some ways, and it could have grown even more than it has.[127]

The wisdom writer of Proverbs 19:2 explains the consequences of acting out of desire

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[125.] Robert B. McKenna, Paul R. Yost, and Tanya N. Boyd, "Leadership Development and Clergy: Understanding the Events and Lessons That Shape Pastoral Leaders," *Journal of Psychology & Theology* 35, no. 3 (2007): 180–87.

[126.] Participant 2, interview by author, November 5, 2016, Document 17, location (1261:1642), Hampton, VA.

[127.] Participant 2, interview by author, November 5, 2016, Document 17, transcript, location (12807:13283), Hampton, VA.

without the undergirding of knowledge. The writer declares such a hasty decision to be faulty judgement, and that such a hasty disregard of the path of knowledge is a shortcut to one's personal longing and a departure from God's will and agenda. The Apostle Paul instructed his apprentice to study Scripture to attain proficiency as a leader of Christ's church (2 Tim. 2:15). Contemporary ecclesiastical educators contend that the Apostle Paul's notion of an accomplished and proficient administrator is more than a divine vocational call supplemented with a desire to share the gospel and the regenerating justifying power of believing in Christ. Academic administrators and seminary professors believe there is no substitute for the formal learning that takes place in college classrooms. The curriculum utilized in cutting edge seminaries, professional colleges, and universities is designed to prepare today's ministry candidates for the broad complexities of pastoral ministry. Randy Frame defines academia as a culture that exposes pastoral candidates to a wide variety of experiences and social encounters that mirror the daily realities, challenges, and relational interactions of real-time pastoral ministry. [128]

The senior pastors who lacked formal academic study tended to perceive the rhythms and patterns of God's activity and agenda for the church through denominational dogma inherited from past eras of ministry success and growth. Reflection on their personal leadership values exposed how prevalent this myopic sectarian ideology was among senior pastors who did not attend higher educational institutions:

> I am more conservative and traditional. I believe in a standard of holiness. That's what the Church of God was founded upon and I try to hold that standard up. I try to be more on the conservative side of what the Church of God doctrine believes as far as holiness

[128.] Randy Frame, "Is Seminary Education Always Necessary for Pastoral Ministry? How Formal Education Can Help Build the Church.," *Christianity Today*, 2017, 2, accessed July 15, 2017, http://www.seminarygradschool.com/ article/Is-Seminary-Education-Always-Necessary-for-Pastoral-Ministry%3F?page=2.

> and Pentecost. And the standard that they held up back in the olden days. I'm thirty-four, but I was raised under the hard core old time holiness, and that's all I know. [129]

Contemporary ecclesial educators believe a theological education helps to preserve Christ's vision and mission for His church. Findings of this study showed that even highly disciplined Church of God pastors who engaged in private biblical study apart from a formal theological education, perpetuated simplistic hermeneutics that can negatively impact church growth and vitality.[130] One pastor acknowledged the consequences of applying traditional modes of ministry, and a naïve hermeneutical approach to Scripture in contemporary ministry contexts:

> I'm conservative. I'm more of a conservative pastor. I don't like some of the things that have been accepted in the Church of God. I think we've taken on some things we're better off to leave alone. I've always stood with the old standards and teachings that we've had. Our church is a conservative church. We believe in the Church of God as it was many years ago. I haven't done a lot of changing. I know some things are probably good to change, but if it's not biblical, I don't change it. I've tried to stay the same all the time. Preach the same gospel, because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. I haven't compromised. I've lost people sometimes because of it. [131]

A theological education provides potential ministers with the fundamental resources to correct doctrinal errors and heresy, and to assist the minister in developing a working knowledge of the biblical basis that substantiates his or her theological orientations and Christian worldview. Academic administrators argue that a theological education serves to undergird pastoral leadership and ministry. Well-balanced curriculum provides church administrators with resources and insights that help to better address the complexities of human life and faith in the twenty-first century. Contemporary educators maintain that theological instruction not only facilitates the development of advanced hermeneutical, biblical, administrative, and interpersonal

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[129.] Participant 13, interview by author, December 14, 2016, Document 15, transcript, location (16880:17675), Hampton, VA.

[130.] Frame, "Is Seminary Education Always Necessary for Pastoral Ministry," 2.

[131.] Participant 6, interview by author, October 8, 2016, Document 2, transcript, location (6254:6909) Hampton, VA.

skills, but it serves as a model for emerging pastors to distinguish how the Bible and theology should permeate decision-making. It provides methods for them to develop their own theological positions, rather than adopting denominational dogma or inherited myths, which in turn affords the local body of believers a wellspring of developmental resources.[132] The Apostle Paul explains that Christ has divinely called, gifted, and appointed apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (1 Cor. 12: 27-31) to equip the local body of believers to work in ministry, and to assist believers in reaching Christian maturity (Eph. 4:11-12). Pastors and teachers are responsible for ensuring that those under their care theologically advance past the rudimentary truths of God's Word (Heb. 5:11-12).

Apprenticeships

A 2007 study by McKenna, Yost, and Boyd utilized a population sample of one hundred pastors to gain insight into the personal experiences and life events that facilitate leadership development and the consequential experiential learning associated with such events. The study showed education to be just one element in personal ministry development. The results also suggested that pastors learn many developmental lessons from key life events experienced outside of academia. Pastors in this study attributed *on-the-job* training, or *leading in the trenches,* as invaluable to their leadership and spiritual formation.[133]

The sizeable number of pastors interviewed by the authors were from diverse denominational affiliations. The mean age of the population sample was 50 years and the median church size was 350 members. The smallest church had 12 members, and the largest church had 8,500 members. All the pastors interviewed had held their current pastoral position for 9 years,

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[132.] Frame, "Is Seminary Education Always Necessary for Pastoral Ministry," 2-5.

[133.] McKenna, Yost, and Boyd, "Leadership Development and Clergy," 184-85.

and participants had served in as a senior pastor administrator an average of 17 years.[134] Participants agreed that challenging events faced while serving in ongoing ministry roles contributed most significantly to their maturation as senior church leaders. The pastors interviewed attributed 32% of their ministry formation to failures, leadership setbacks, resolving of conflict, and the miscalculations from scratch restarts, experienced while leading in their diverse ministry roles.

In McKenna, Yost, and Boyd's study, participating pastors ascribed significant importance to life events requiring social interaction. Most significant to these pastors were the lessons learned from interaction with positive and negative role models.[135] In addition, a great portion of the pastors interviewed believed the roles and responsibilities of early secular work experiences significantly impacted their self-efficacy and administrative competencies.

The successful pastors interviewed for this thesis project who did not receive professional academic training still completed denominational-based ministry training courses. The Church of God's Division of Education offers a Ministerial Internship Program (MIP) within denominational parameters. This ministry development tool consists of the following four undergraduate equivalent courses: surveys of the Old and New Testament, a survey of Christian doctrine, and a church leadership course that emphasizes the administrative aspects of conflict management, financial accountability, and the operational procedures encompassed in the pastoral role.[136] A supervised practicum with a seasoned pastor is also required for completion of the MIP program. This program presents ministers with diverse modes of learning, with the

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134. Ibid., 180.

135. Ibid., 184.

136. "Church of God School of Ministry Courses", Church of God School of Ministry, last modified 2017, accessed July 4, 2017, http://www.ministerialtraining.org/courses/.

intent of broadening their training experience. What is more, it offers local academic and practical training in the following leadership disciplines: assistant pastor ministry, chaplaincy, children's ministry, Christian education ministry, church planting, and youth ministry.[137]

Results of a five-year study at Auburn University on how new ministers learn in practice suggest a misalignment can exist between what the individual learns in the classroom and the events and challenges of daily ministry. Study findings show that new ministers entering ministry milieus sometimes experience a clash of abstracts, thereby initiating scenarios in which knowledge acquired in the classroom is often extremely difficult to integrate into ministry practice. Auburn's study reveals that when such misalignment occurs, fledgling pastors become overwhelmed and have difficulty choosing the right course of action in variable situations.[138]

Scharen and Campbell-Reed contend that the results of their five-year study indicate that pastoral imagination is learned and developed through routine ministry practice over time, especially when the individual encounters critical moments of crisis or mentoring that provide clarity. These two researchers explain that the role of academic study is to prepare ministers with a rich knowledge of history, tradition, interpretation, and a framework for higher level critical thinking. They conclude that academic study introduces pastors to the complexity of skills they will need to carry out the ministry tasks associated with their respective roles, such as preaching, teaching, pastoral care, and administration. A theological education can be understood as the conceptual knowledge encompassed in the notion of pastoral imagination. The vehicles that allow pastoral imagination to grow over time include apprenticeships, past leadership roles, the

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137. "Ministerial Internship Program," Church of God School of Ministry, last modified 2017, accessed July 5, 2017, http://www.cogdoe.org/ministries/ministerial-internship-program/.

138. Scharen and Campbell-Reed, "Learning Pastoral Imagination," 18–19.

positive and negative lessons learned by mentors, trial and error, and leading in the trenches.[139]

Apprenticeships provide pastoral candidates the opportunity to not only learn from a seasoned professional, but also to experience diverse ministry roles while borrowing the authority of his or her mentor. Mentors are afforded opportunities to assist pastoral prospects in finding means and methods to become socially, emotionally, and spiritually successful, within the parameters of Scripture and the core values of the Church of God.[140]

Conclusion

Church of God pastors in Western North Carolina are without a doubt facing new and complex ministry challenges, but such trials are rich with opportunity. One participant provided a personal example of the current challenges of Church of God leaders in this region of North Carolina:

> I was on the way to the hospital one day. I stopped at the stop sign right in front of my church. I looked over at the left and there was absolutely no traffic coming because there was a school bus stopped. It was letting off an enormous bunch of kids a block from my church. The next day, about that time, I walked out to that stop sign and I looked over there. When that school bus got there, I counted 47 children that got off of that school bus within a block of my church. The mothers were standing there at the school bus stop and walked them back down into the neighborhood…. I'm having trouble keeping my children's church with children. And here a block from my church 47 kids got off one bus. I asked my Hispanic minister to go with me. We walk down into that neighborhood and knocked on, say, 50 doors. There were not two doors opened to us. He explained it to me. "They think you're from ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement)." "They don't know you."[141]

Each of the senior pastors interviewed for this thesis project recognized, with deep conviction, that his ministry as a spiritual practice began with a divine call. Pastors who had completed some degree of academic study achieved 47% of the church growth reported during

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[139.] Scharen and Campbell-Reed, "Learning Pastoral Imagination," 29–30.

[140.] Ibid., 34.

[141.] Participant 9, interviewed by author, January 1, 2017, Document 14, transcript, location (30583:31724), Hampton, VA).

the time interval of this research project. Pastors who had completed some degree of academic study *and* had also completed an internship reported 48% of the total growth. Church of God pastors in the Western region of North Carolina are beginning to recognize that relying on a single mode or resource for personal ministry development will not suffice, if the goal is to lead a healthy growing church into the twenty-first century. A more educated, culturally, and emotionally intelligent pastor interviewed for this project, described his pastoral imagination as a consortium, emerging and developing from diverse modes and mechanisms of learning:

> The things that I think that have helped us the most are two factors. One would be time we spent with seasoned pastors, either as an intern, or as an assistant pastor of some type, and watching other people that have been successful. Churches that can afford to hire someone as a second man or a youth pastor, they've had some success, or they wouldn't be at that place. The second part of it though, has been, the combination of on the job training and education. [142]

This pastor argued that a senior administrator must provide excellent spiritual leadership to staff and membership, but the senior pastor must also serve as a rich resource of information to church stakeholders for growth to be recognized in present multicultural generationally diverse social cultures. This pastor maintained that pastors seasoned by real time experience, coupled with academic training, have the best chance to win the unchurched in the twenty-first century.

Personal Factors of Influence

Leadership Style

Leadership experts have developed a plethora of classification systems to define the diverse dimensions of leadership. Some definitions perceive leadership as a process in which the

[142.] Participant 12, interviewed by author, October 18, 2016, Document 8, transcript, location (4426:5485). Hampton, VA. Church name omitted to ensure participant's anonymity.

leader is the central element for initiating group change and activity. Other delineations of leadership conceptualize the expression from the perspective of personality, suggesting that leadership is an amalgamation of unique personal traits or characteristics which enable an individual to induce others toward the accomplishment of goals. Leadership has also been defined as the acts or behaviors individuals do to bring about group change.[143]

Pastoral leadership embodies the characteristics and definitions outlined above; however, Henry and Richard Blackaby insist that spiritual leadership is marked by distinctive features and principles not encompassed by secular and general delineations of leadership. Blackaby and Blackaby define spiritual leadership as more than an individual's ability to wield influence, position, power, or personality to achieve goals and objectives. They insist that spiritual leadership consists of more than a leader's ability to exercise prudent use of available institutional, political, psychological, and financial resources to satisfy organizational and community needs.[144] In contrast to a general leader, Blackaby and Blackaby define a spiritual leader as one who is divinely called to lead others to God's agenda through Christlike character and the demonstration of biblical leadership. The pastoral role consists of spiritually moving and influencing local membership, as well as the unchurched. Their research posits that because spiritual leaders are accountable to God, a pastor is required to put God's agenda first, a focus which requires the senior administrator to exercise spiritual discipline and cultivate a deep relationship of two-way communication with God.[145]

Bernard Bass presents five common themes of leadership, despite the diversity of leadership types. First, all leaders should establish and clarify goals and missions for individuals,

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[143.] Northouse, *Leadership*, 5.

[144.] Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 32–154.

[145.] Ibid., 32–42.

groups, and the organization as a whole. Second, the leader, no matter the context, should be the center of energy and direction which motivates others to reach objectives. Third, the leader should assist in providing structure, strategy, methodology, and instruments for measuring and achieving goals. Fourth, conflicting views regarding means and ends should be resolved by the leader. Finally, every leader should properly evaluate the contributions made by individuals, groups, and the organization toward reaching goals and objectives.[146]

Results of this thesis project suggest that the participating senior pastors utilized one, or an amalgamation, of three leadership styles and patterns of behavior to interact with others, provide organizational structure, establish goals, and mobilize parishioners to accomplish ministry and mission. The focus of this approach is the exchange that takes place between the pastor and subordinates that assists in the accomplishment of goals and objectives. Transactional leadership is marked by two main elements: contingent reward and management by exception. Leaders employing this approach believe successful goal accomplishment to be contingent on the rewarding and reinforcement of followers. Sharon Drury points out that the idea of contingent reward is deep-seated in Christian doctrine, as Christians hold to the truth that salvation is a gift of faith and that God a rewarder of those who serve him faithfully.[147]

Leaders employing this administrative approach manage by exception. When subordinates meet agreed-upon objectives, responsibilities, and tasks associated with vocational roles, the leader can more easily take a laissez-faire position of authority. The leader can grant subordinates decision-making autonomy and provide them less guidance. The influence in leader-follower exchanges are minimal until problems arise and/or goals and objects become

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[146.] Bass and Bass, *Bass Handbook of Leadership*, 44.

[147.] Drury, "Handbook of Leadership Theory for Church Leaders," 16-7.

compromised.[148] One participating pastor's reflection regarding his leadership style is the quintessential example of the transactional leadership approach:

> I like to give people their space. If I've put them over ministry, I let them be over that ministry. I don't like to micromanage. I've never liked to be micromanaged, so I don't like to micromanage. They do keep me involved as far as what's going on. For the most part, if they're in charge of a ministry, I'll let them be in charge of a ministry. I was working for a pastor one time and he told me that if I've got to do your job, or you've got to do my job, one of us is not necessary. I remember that and decided to let them do their job. So, I'm here to support you. I'm here if you need me. For anything support wise, or help wise, but if you don't, I'm standing over here applauding you as you do your job. It works for us.[149]

The transformational leadership approach is marked by four distinctive transactional characteristics. Leaders employing this approach seek to present themselves as charismatic or idealistic role models who motivate others to follow their vision. Transformational leaders communicate high expectation, generally using emotionally-appealing techniques. They will challenge subordinates to develop innovative problem-solving skills. Leaders employing this approach tend to be highly relational and are inclined to focus attention on the individual needs of others. The goal of the transformational pastor is to raise the bar on motivation and morality, across all organizational echelons.[150] Participant 2 demonstrated characteristics of the transformational leadership approach when the researcher asked him to reflect on how he perceived his leadership style:

> My focus is on what I've got to do. Then the sick. The shut ins. The helpless. The baby Christians just barely hanging on. The squeaky wheel gets the grease. I know that's a cliché, but whoever is hurting the most is where my attention seems to drift to.[151]

[148.] Ibid., 16.

[149.] Participant 11, interviewed by author, October 22, 2016, Document 7, transcript, location (10002:10747), Hampton, VA.

[150.] Drury, "Handbook of Leadership Theory for Church Leaders," 18.

[151.] Participant 2, interviewed by author, November 5. 2016, Document 17, transcript, location (10580:10841), Hampton, VA.

One participant utilizing this leadership approach shared his motivational and morality goals for those under his pastoral care:

> I don't just up and make changes, or make them up. Pastors get themselves in trouble because they want to be a dictator. I'm a leader, a shepherd, not a dictator. And the first thing I try to do is help people. That's number one. If they're in error, fine. But I want to get them out of that error. It's one thing to rebuke them. It's another thing to reprove. The Bible says to rebuke and reprove. When you rebuke a person, you tell them their error. You tell them the way out of that error. And the most important thing is to save people.[152]

Only 11% of the senior pastors participating in this research project demonstrated a transactional leadership approach to administrative and leadership processes.

Analysis of the research data revealed that 78% of the successful church growth pastors practiced servant leadership, or a blend of the transformational approach and servant leadership. This paradigm of leadership has been described as a paradoxical method of leadership that runs counter to common sense. In the leadership approaches outlined above, leaders are understood to be the impetus of influence, and it is inferred that subordinates follow the leader. Servant leadership challenges traditional paradigms of leadership, as the approach posits the unique perspective that a leader can both serve and influence simultaneously.[153]

Servant leaders innately desire to serve others over themselves. Individuals practicing this leadership approach take extreme care to ensure that the highest priority needs of those under their care are being met. Characteristically, servant leaders are dedicated to initiating and maintaining open two-way communication between the leader and follower. These leaders make conscious attempts to perceive the world from positions and circumstances of the subordinates. The servant leader is most concerned with the growth of individuals and their development into a

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[152.] Participant 6, interviewed by author, October 8. 2016, Document 3, transcript, location (10887:11666), Hampton, VA.

[153.] Northouse, *Leadership*, 225.

growing community.[154]

Though parallels exist between transformational and servant leaders, the latter differs in focus. The transformational leader's highest value is the development of commitment in followers to pursue the leader's overarching vision and goals. Organizational results are secondary in the servant leader's hierarchy of values. Peter Northouse most adequately articulates the teleological goal of servant leadership: "The central goal of servant leadership is to create healthy organizations that nurture individual growth, strengthen organizational performance, and in the end, produce a positive impact on society."[155]

Academics and practitioners have yet to agree on a definitive definition of servant leadership. However, a consensus has been established on how the approach contrasts to all other leadership models. Pastors exercising servant leadership influence parishioners, laity, and staff through persuasion and role modeling, rather than leveraging personal popularity and charisma. Senior church administrators practicing within the framework of servant leadership are concerned with ministry performance, team success, but most importantly, they are concerned with the individual wellbeing of every stakeholder in the local church.[156]

Fourteen of the participants interviewed for this thesis project shared the common characteristics outlined by scholars to describe servant leadership. Coding processes revealed the senior pastors adopting servant leadership, or elements of the transformational approach incorporated with the servant leadership paradigm, to represent 77.8% of the total growth for the population sample from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016.

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154. Ibid., 227–29.

155 Northouse, *Leadership*, 236.

156. James Lemoine, "What Is Servant Leadership?" *Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership Blog*, 2016, accessed July 22, 2017, https://www.greenleaf.org/what-is-servant-leadershipblog/.

The practical philosophy presented by the senior pastors interviewed for this project embodied servant leadership and its associated characteristics. A distinctive servant leadership philosophy shared by participants in this research project was that the needs of others must be met. Pastors believed that individual concerns could only be addressed through receptive listening and empathy. Participant 4 adequately demonstrated this school of thought:

> …but to handle resistance, how would I combat that, if you will. It would be from the aspect of empathy. It would be from the aspect of validation, and really letting people know, hey listen, I hear your concern. And this is what we're going to do to remedy this. So, parishioners really feel like you have their back, especially in our denomination, where the average pastor, doesn't stay anywhere, but just a couple of years, and is gone somewhere else. Really letting the parishioners know that you have their good in mind.[157]

Sharon Drury proposes that servant leaders seek to build community through strong relationships, by displaying integrity, trust, and openness, and by sharing authority and decision-making power at all organizational levels.[158] Participant 15 described his leadership philosophy regarding delegation of authority and decision-making:

> I don't have to be at every meeting. I don't have to be there every time the doors are open. I don't have to be at every birthday party. I don't have to be everywhere. That would be one thing that people may say that's a crazy style of leadership. If it works here, it may not work at your church. Your people may want you to be at every little thing, and they expect you to be at every little thing. My people know that I'm not going to be at every little toe ache. They understand that, because I've raised them that way. I taught them that way. For the past two years, I've showed them that that is not effective leadership.[159]

[157.] Participant 4, interviewed by author, August 26, 2016, transcript, Document 13, location (10021:10620), Hampton, VA.

[158.] Drury, "Handbook of Leadership Theory for Church Leaders," 21.

[159.] Participant 15, interviewed by author, November 28. 2016, Document 9, transcript, location (30971:31606), Hampton, VA.

Drury states that the displaying of authenticity is of high value to the servant leader. This leadership quality is captured in the following participant's reflection on what he considered to be leadership essentials for church growth. Participant 3 reflected on leadership authenticity:

> Yea, well, unfortunately, when you come into a declining situation you quickly have to know, or you quickly identify that there is a problem. So, in our case, it wasn't anything that was overly complicated to identify, because the church had been through a drastic situation, so we quickly identified it, and the way to implement change. The solution for us, was to talk about the situation with as many people one on one, but then also to get everyone in the same room, and upon getting them in the same room, be very transparent with them.[160]

Participant 4 also explained the value of authentic interactions:

> We want to be helpers. We want to see God do something wonderful in someone else's life. If we're not in it for people, we're really in the wrong profession. So, I emphasize relational aspects, I emphasize transparency, which goes back to relational, because people won't want to be real with you if they think you're not real with them.[161]

New Testament Scripture presents Jesus as a transformational leader. He employed personal charisma to establish the archetype for exemplar spiritual leadership, and to motivate his followers toward a shared vision and mission (Mark 1:16; John 13:13-15, 13:34-35, 17:12-16). He communicated high expectations for his apprentices and deployed his disciples into practical milieus of learning where intellect and character would naturally develop through pragmatic problem-solving (Luke 9:1-2, 10:1-2). Experts consider a high propensity for individualized consideration as characteristic of the transformational approach to leading others.[162] The New Testament writers often portray Jesus expressing personal dedication to his followers (Matt. 28:20; John 15:13-15). He was a leader who was sensitive to the emotional needs of his followers, and he prudently used his influence to ease their tension and anxiety

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[160.] Participant 3, interviewed by author, August 29, 2016, Document 11, transcript, location (4956:6260), Hampton, VA.

[161.] Participant 4, interviewed by author, August 26, 2016, Document 13, transcript, location (21394:23225), Hampton, VA.

[162.] Drury, "Handbook of Leadership Theory for Church Leaders," 18.

during times of critical ministry change (John 14:1-3).

Jesus personally advocated and practiced servant leadership, a philosophy of ministry he clearly articulated to his followers in his rebuttal to James and John at their request for eternal positions of authority and glory (Mark 10:35-45). New Testament writers record Jesus stating, "On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be a slave to all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life—a ransom for many" (Mark 10:43b-45, HCSB). True to the distinctive marks of servant leadership, Jesus recognized his social responsibility to show concern for the less privileged within (John 8:3-11), and outside of, cultural boundaries (Matt. 15:21-28; John 4). As a leader, Jesus believed his personal ministry objectives and organizational mission to be divinely purposed (Matt. 26:42; Luke 2:49; John 5:43) to impact the inequalities and injustices dominating his social environs (Luke 4:18-19).[163]

This research project found the highest percentage of the total church growth in churches in which the senior pastors approached their leadership roles and responsibilities from a servant leadership perspective. These men recognized the Holy Spirit as the impetus for personal anointing and charisma. The fourteen participants demonstrating the marks of this leadership model emulated the prototypical leadership behaviors and patterns exercised by Jesus during his earthly ministry.

Personality Traits

In *How to Solve the People Puzzle*, Dr. Mels Carbonell presents the DISC® model for recognizing and understanding human personality patterns. Carbonell proposes four basic temperaments of human behavior and a plethora of personality blends, which he utilized as a

[163.] Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership*, 25.

framework for line coding and explaining participants' behavioral patterns and personal leadership traits. Carbonell suggests that leadership personality types or traits can be described as dominating, determined, and decisive (a high "D" personality) or inspiring, influential, and highly interactive (a high "I" personality).[164] The dominant leaders seek to control their leadership environment and are inclined to be task-oriented. In contrast, the interacting/influencer's main concerns are social interaction and inspiring others toward shared goals. Leaders presenting high "I" personality traits are innately people-oriented.[165] Characteristically, leaders manifesting the marks of high D and I personalities are typically active, outgoing, extraverts whose source of motivation is challenge (D) and recognition (I).[166]

Carbonell delineates two other general personality temperaments, a high "C" personality and a high "S" personality. A leader with a definitive "C" personality would demonstrate a cautious and compliant style of leadership. These leaders clearly define goals and tasks and are motivated by the principles of quality and accuracy. Leaders presenting high "S" traits in their approach to leadership are motivated by the need to maintain organizational security and situational stability.[167] The cautious/compliant leader (C) is characteristically task-oriented and, by nature, compelled to *do things the right or correct way*.[168] The steady leader (S) values loyalty, cooperation, and established work patterns within consistent familiar environments.

[164.] Mels Carbonell, *How to Solve the People Puzzle: Understanding Personality Patterns* (Blue Ridge, GA: Uniquely You), 14.

[165.] Ken Voges and Mike Kempainen, *DISCovering the Leadership Styles of Jesus* (USA: In His Grace, Inc, 2001), 13, Kindle.

[166.] Carbonell, *How to Solve the People Puzzle*, 13–16.

[167.] Ibid., 13–18.

[168.] Voges and Kempainen, *DISCovering the Leadership Styles of Jesus*, 13.

First stage codes, in the grounded theory method of research, can represent theoretical concepts, or be practical and descriptive in nature. During the process of open coding, this researcher attempted to identify, name, categorize, and describe phenomena recognized in the text, quotations, and incidents recorded in transcribed interviews. The researcher's initial coding effort was a systematic assimilation of data segments that represent instances of the aspects relevant to the research. Carbonell's personality model is a circular continuum representing the temperaments of human behavior. The researcher consulted this continuum to describe and categorize the personality factors of the pastors interviewed for this thesis project, which he believed influenced the growth of their local church (see Figure 5).[169]

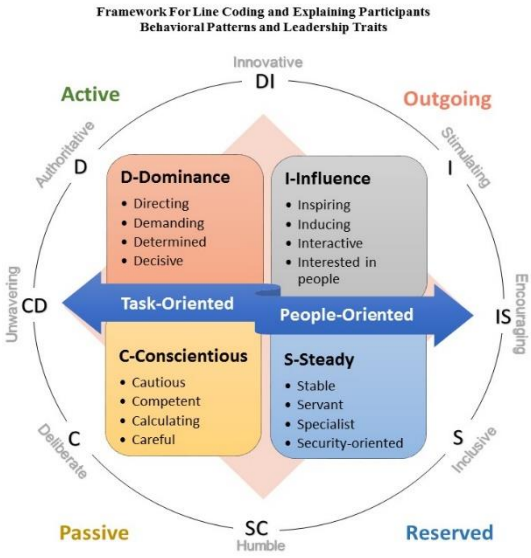

Figure 5 DISC Model of Human Behavior. Source: Adopted from The Four Temperament Model of Human Behavior, in How to Solve the People Puzzle: Understanding Personality Patterns, Mels Carbonell, Blue Ridge, GA, 2008.

When describing their respective personality traits, the answers of 36% of the pastors interviewed for this thesis project connotated extraverted patterns of behavior. Five of the senior pastors presented with dominant task-oriented (D) personality profiles, and five of the participants seemed to convey the marks of influential people-oriented (I) behavioral patterns and dispositions.

This research found 83% of participants descriptions regarding their personality attributes to embody traits of steady, reliable, security-oriented servanthood (S) and/or conscientious, competent, calculating, cautious compliancy (C). Coding and analysis revealed six of the

[169.] Carbonell, *How to Solve the People Puzzle*, 13–17.

eighteen successful pastors interviewed to share the personality traits distinctive to the "SC" profile. Thirteen of the eighteen participants presented behaviors and dispositions distinctive to Carbonell's "S" profile criteria. The coding processes did not discover highly dominant character traits and leadership behavior. However, two pastors possessed high propensities toward leading others through personal influence and persuasion (I). Three pastors showed tendencies to place a high value on ensuring church stability through passive non-threatening leadership. These same pastors showed signs of being easygoing and reluctant to implement organizational and ministry changes.

Only one participant demonstrated the behavioral qualities indicative of a high "C" personality profile. This effective pastor emphasized the value of ministry competency and the need for slow pace when dealing with existing ministry mechanisms, modes of discipleship, and church growth paradigms.[170] The pastors leading with the dominant "SC" profile represent almost 48% of the total church growth reported for the region and time perimeters delineated for this project. The pastors whose personality traits emerged from coding and analysis as best aligning with Carbonell's "SC" personality descriptions also approached their respective leadership roles from a servant leadership orientation. Five of the senior pastors fit the "DI" personality profile, which appeared to be the predominate temperament blend for pastors whose personas exuded assertive, bold, and inspiring qualities (see Table 5).

In recent years, analysts and practitioners in the field of psychology have come to agree that, at minimum, five factors must be taken into consideration when seeking to understand human personality.[171] Even though authors have used different labels for these five factors, the

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[170.] Carbonell, *How to Solve the People Puzzle*, 125–133.

[171.] Norman L Buckley and Rebekah J Williams, "Facet5: Introduction and Background," *facet5global.com*, 2014, accessed August 1, 2017, http://www.facet5global.com/_literature_ 102979/Facet5_ an_introduction, 3.

consensus is that most personality traits can be described within the broad taxonomies of the five-factor model (FFM) of personality. Also referred to as the "Big-Five," this model is a hierarchical five-dimensional organization of robust personality descriptors, most frequently labeled as neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. This researcher utilized the Big-Five model as a rubric to define and describe recognized patterns in research participants' phenotypical behavior on comparative continuums.[172]

Neuroticism is the polar opposite of emotional stability. The neurotic persona has been described as highly self-monitoring, excitable, anxious, and often extremely sensitive. Emotional stability is marked by calm and even-tempered dispositions and patterns of behavior. An abundance of contemporary research literature has established a correlation between the dominant, task-oriented, assertive, and self-assured temperament (D) and neuroticism.[173] Individuals demonstrating high "D' personality indicators are largely intolerant, oppositional, and confrontational with others when encountering social conflict.[174]

The ethos of one participant's strategy for resolving interpersonal and corporate conflict adequately reveals the neurotic tough-minded resolute nature of the "D" persona:

> I saw the need for structure, as far as leadership, because we had no finance committee, no Sunday school teachers, but one. We only had a clerk. Sitting down with them and going over the Church of God minutes. I think minutes are very crucial in our church. Something we're supposed to rely on. That's our guide, besides God. This is what we're governed by, and this is what I as an ordained pastor am governed by. Some don't like that. They don't like to be governed. They don't like to be told what to do.
>
> Just like sitting down with my clerk. I was sharing with her the importance of having a finance committee. She replied, "Well don't you trust me?" I told her it wasn't a trust issue; it's to cover you and me both. If we were ever audited by the IRS, they'd want to

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[172.] John P. Oliver, Richard W. Robins, and Lawrence A. Pervin, *Handbook of Personality: Theory and Research*, ed. John P. Oliver, 3rd ed. (New York: The Guilford Press, 2008), 160, Kindle.

[173.] Cathleen S. Jones and Nell T. Hartley, "Comparing Correlations between Four-Quadrant and Five-Factor Personality Assessments," *American Journal of Business Education* 6, no. 4 (2013): 467–69, https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1054970.pdf.

[174.] Ang, Van Dyne, and Koh, "Personality Correlates," 105.

> see all of our records. This church was not organized through the years. I can't find records. I can't find a lot of things. All I could do when I came in, was start afresh and say this is what we're going to do. I need your help. I need you to be on board with me. I started the structure in that area. People took offense to it and thought it wasn't necessary. This is what I'm bound by and I pulled out the minutes. As a clerk, this is what you're bound by. If you're going to hold this position, this is your job title, and this is what is required of you. She didn't like it.[175]

Clearly, this participant demonstrated highly task-oriented personality traits throughout the interview process. His temperament was direct and authoritative (D), and his guiding passion was to institute policy and procedure, as opposed to building lasting relationships (C). His need to be in charge and unbending passion for not cutting corners when addressing issues or circumstances seated in the domains of denominational polity, spiritual practice, and/or dogma, tend to be received as a confrontational attack by church stakeholders.[176]

In stark contrast, current research associates the "SC" persona with high magnitudes of agreeable, non-hostile, courteous, friendly, and flexible temperaments and behaviors. This personality blend has proved to be more open to experience. In other words, these individuals possess an affinity for trying to figure out new constructs and social scenarios. However, inhibited, submissive, low self-control, and timidity can be embodied in this personality profile if conscientiousness (high C) dominates the way the individual copes with daily life. [177]

Ang, Van Dyne, and Koh identify the "I" persona or highly extraverted individual as sociable, active, bold, and adventuresome. These individuals exude confidence, loquacity, gregariousness, and spontaneity.[178] In a recent study conducted by Cathleen Jones and Nell Hartley, which attempts to establish correlations between the Four Temperament Model of

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[175.] Participant 18, interviewed by author, January 15, 2017, Document 18, transcript, location (14229:15614), Hampton, VA.

[176] Carbonell, *How to Solve the People Puzzle*, 149-51.

[177.] Ang, Van Dyne, and Koh, "Personality Correlates," 104–8.

[178.] Ibid., 107.

Human Behavior and the Five-Factor personality assessments, a strong relationship emerged between "I" temperament descriptors and the FFM delineations for extraversion. The "I" persona can be described as influential, fun-loving, talkative, entertaining, gregarious, and companionable.[179] The "I" extraverted profile is personified in one pastor's reflection on his personal traits:

> Personal qualities or personality? I am extremely outgoing. On the E/I scale, extrovert or introvert, I am almost all extrovert. … I'm comfortable behind the pulpit. I speak with ease. I've been in front of the church since I was three, so I've never had the chance to think that it was scary. They consider me honest. They consider me trustworthy. Intelligent. Personal qualities, they enjoy my preaching style. I sing. They like to hear me sing. I don't know exactly where all you need to go there, but hopefully that gives you a little bit of a feel of how they would describe me. Affable, outgoing, caring, possessing integrity, and honesty. Church members recognize what gifts I have.[180]

Recent studies on the value of understanding personality types reveal self-awareness, thoughtfulness, humility, flexibility, and courage as rudimentary elements for successful relationships in any business culture. Finding of these studies showed that a significant correlation exists between a leader's mastery of interpersonal relationship building and the creation of functional teams. Results of these studies also supported the conclusion that the understanding of personality types facilitates better team communication, interaction, output, work effectiveness, and the reaching of common goals. Findings further suggest that when team members know their own personality characteristics they are able to better understand the behaviors and actions of other team members, which in turn, increases the overall quality of the workplace.[181]

[179.] Jones and Hartley, "Comparing Correlations," 467–69.

[180.] Participant 12, interviewed by author, October 18, 2016, Document 8, transcript, location (16122:17051), Hampton, VA.

[181] Marie Reid, "The Value of Understanding Personality Types for Building Successful Teams," (M.Phil. diss., University of Johannesburg, 2013), 16–67.

Emotional and Cultural Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EQ) has been defined as an individual's ability to recognize, measure, monitor, and utilize emotions and to use this understanding to adapt personal temperaments and behaviors in ways that enable the individual to handle interpersonal relationships with prudence and empathy.[182] Contemporary researchers recognize emotional intelligence as an invaluable personal and professional tool in the fields of communication and sociology. Recent studies suggest that the deployment of EQ skills can positively enhance a wide scope of social, emotional, and professional encounters. EQ proficiencies have shown to be especially beneficial in work cultures in which extreme trauma, stress, burnout, adaptive management, and challenging personal circumstances are the norm.[183] Travis Bradberry and Jean Graves conducted EQ research in conjunction with 33 other important leadership competencies, and insist their study findings revealed EQ to have more influence on daily life encounters than all other leadership skills included in their research study. These two researchers state that EQ subsumed even the critical skills of decision-making, time management, and communication. Bradley and Graves argue that EQ accounts for 58% of performance in all types of professions. They further argue that their research findings expose EQ as the foremost predictor of work culture performance and leadership excellence.[184]

Contemporary American society is multicultural, as are the communities surrounding most churches in the Western region of North Carolina. According to the 2015 census conducted

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[182.] Thomas Richards, *Emotional Intelligence: How to Increase EQ, Interpersonal Skills, Communication Skills, and Achieve Success* (n.p.: CreativeSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015), 328, Kindle.

[183.] Jill Anne Hendron, Pauline Irving, and Brian J. Taylor, "The Emotionally Intelligent Ministry: Why It Matters," *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 17, no. 5 (May 2014): 470, doi:10.1080/13674676.2013. 848424.

[184.] Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves, *The Emotional Intelligence Quick Book: Everything You Need to Know to Put Your EQ to Work* (San Diego, CA: TalentSmart, 2009), 19, Kindle.

by the U.S. Census Bureau, the Hispanic population for the fourteen counties encompassed in this thesis project grew by 50% over a five-year time interval. The same census shows a 33% increase of marginal ethnic groups, such as Native Americans, Hawaiians, Pacific Highlanders, Asians, and miscellaneous uncategorized racial subgroups, into this area of Western North Carolina. Sixteen percent of the population in this region identified themselves as Black or African American, with the predominate White American population decreasing 6.9% over the fourteen counties over the same five-year time interval. The population that makes up the Western region of North Carolina represents approximately 24% of the total state population.[185]

Cultural barriers often engender misunderstandings that can undermine missional goals, as social interaction and communication are rendered inefficient and ineffective. Participant nine described such a cultural barrier and the steps he took to overcome it:

> My Hispanic minister… explained it to me. "They think you're from ICE. They don't know you." "Here you are with a tie on and a sport coat. They don't know who you are." I was talking with another minister and he reminded me of something I'd done before. I have a clerical collar. You know, the white. Catholic bishop's collar. My Hispanic minister suggested, "You ought to wear that down there." Ninety percent of Hispanics outside of the United States are Catholic. I got one and I bought him one. We went down there the next day. You know people came up to me in the parking lot asking me for prayer. One man came up to me and asked me would I mind going to a friend of his. He said, "are you a priest?" I said, no, I'm a pastor. He didn't know the difference…. I put on that clerical collar.... There are some strategies you will find will work if you're willing to do it. [186]

This participant gained physical access and personal acceptance because he flexibly and intentionally changed his appearance to breach a cultural barrier to his ministry efforts. One inconsequential change afforded him an opportunity to pray for the sick in a community that had

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[185.] U.S. Census Bureau, "Community Facts American Fact Finder," last modified 2015, accessed August 5, 2017, http://factfinder.census.gov.

[186.] Participant 9, interviewed by author, January 1, 2017, Document 14, transcript, location (16122:17051), Hampton, VA.

resisted his advances many times before. In the same day he led an unchurched and lost man in the Sinner's prayer.

Ang, Van Dyne, and Koh define cultural intelligence (CQ) as an individual's capability to function effectively in situations of cultural diversity. CQ consists of metacognitive and cognitive processes in which individuals acquire, understand, and use cultural knowledge. CQ also encompasses the motivational magnitude and emphasis placed on learning about and functioning in cross-cultural scenarios. Its skills include an individual's capacity to adopt appropriate implicit and explicit behaviors when interacting with people from other cultures. Since it is a process through which someone acquires and understands cultural knowledge, CQ affords a leader the ability to function effectively in culturally diverse situations. Findings of Ang, Van Dyne, and Koh's research study demonstrated that personality is associated with CQ.[187] What is more, their research revealed conscientiousness to be positively related to metacognitive CQ. Individuals predisposed to value meticulous accuracy, strategic planning, and order (high "C" personality profile) are inclined to consciously question personal cultural assumptions. High metacognitive CQ individuals are keenly aware of others' cultural circumstances before and during interactions. The conscientious, high "C" persona exhibits the propensity to adjust mental modes during and after social interactions. Thus, those with this persona are proficient at discerning when and how to apply their cultural knowledge.[188]

Findings of the research study suggest that highly extraverted individuals (high "D" personality profile) have heightened proclivities toward cognitive CQ, motivational CQ, and

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[187.] Ang, Van Dyne, and Koh, "Personality Correlates" 101.

[188.] Doreen J. Gooden, Carole Ann Creque, and Claudette Chin-Loy, "The Impact of Metacognitive, Cognitive and Motivational Cultural Intelligence on Behavioral Cultural Intelligence," *International Business & Economics Research Journal (IBER)* 16, no. 3 (July 2017): 224, doi:10.190 30/iber.v16i3.10006.

behavioral CQ. Ang, Van Dyne, and Koh's investigation into personality and cultural intelligence reveals the dominant, determined, driving, extraverted persona as innately gifted with cognitive CQ. These individuals can quickly juxtapose cultural interactions against acquired cultural knowledge and, in turn, assess cultural differences and then respond with appropriate dispositions and behaviors.[189]

The dominant extraverted personality profile has been positively associated with high motivational CQ and behavioral CQ. These individuals show an intentional interest in understanding cultural variances and take direct steps toward gaining insight into such differences to operate efficiently in multicultural situations. Behavioral CQ is important to the extraverted leader, as it enhances social interactions. Individuals with a high "D" extraverted personality have proved to be highly adequate at adapting their verbal and non-verbal behaviors, such as gestures, word tones, and facial expressions, to appropriate cross-cultural social interactions.[190] This suggests that highly stable introverts (High "S" personality profile) tend to have difficulty regarding behavioral CQ. Ang, Van Dyne, and Koh explain that this personality blend is inclined to be innately less excitable with even tempered dispositions. This reliable, process-oriented, introverted persona is most often less implicitly and explicitly expressive. The culmination of these traits can culminate into a diminished repertoire of social behaviors to enact in multicultural situations.[191]

Perhaps the most interesting finding of Ang, Van Dyne, and Koh is the relationship between an openness to experience and cultural intelligence. Their research found an outgoing, sociable, gregarious, expressive high "I" personality to have a positive relationship to all four

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[189.] Ibid., 224.

[190.] Ibid., 224–25.

[191.] Ang, Van Dyne, and Koh, "Personality Correlates," 118.

facets of CQ. The researchers attribute this all-inclusive CQ correlation to the broadminded, curious, and imaginative characteristics of the extraverted "I" persona. This personality blend is characteristically friendly, enthusiastic, highly verbal, and open to experiencing and learning new things.[192]

Conclusion

The leadership style of church administrators has been proven to significantly impact the factors that direct natural church growth. Fifteen of the eighteen senior pastors participating in this thesis project exhibited personality traits indicative of servant leadership behaviors. Research on the correlations between servant leadership and the Big Five personality factors confirm that agreeableness ("I" persona), conscientiousness ("C" persona), and extraversion ("D" persona) are predictors of servant leadership behaviors.[193]

The participants who conveyed extraverted dispositions and behaviors for this research project placed great emphasis on accomplishing results. Pastors marked by dominating ("D") personality traits perceived overcoming spiritual and human antagonism to be crucial to church vitality and overall growth. None of the eighteen interviewed participants demonstrated highly dominating personal leadership traits; however, coding and categorizing of personality traits observed in transcribed interviews revealed the "DI" persona to be a commonly shared personality blend for pastors exhibiting dominant personality traits (see Table 5). The "I" personality is innately influencing, persuasive, and highly relational. The senior pastors manifesting a "DI" personality believed personal leadership development to be associated with

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[192.] Ibid., 118.

[193.] John Politis and Nicholas Politis, "The Relationship between Servant Leadership and Personality Characteristics: The 'Big Five'," in *Proceedings of the 8th European Conference on Management, Leadership and Governance* (n.p.: Academic Conferences International Limited, 2012), 337.

the growth of their respective churches. These senior pastors recognized the importance of acquiring trust and respect from all stakeholders in the local church and its surrounding community.

The senior pastors displaying a "DI" temperament also demonstrated a contemporary style of leadership. These pastors generally employed an amalgamation of transitional and servant leadership principles. They embraced ministry and organizational change and had developed aptitudes for recognizing the difference between ministry modes and the gospel message. These driving, assertive, persuasive leaders utilized modern modes and methods of ministry (social media, websites, video streaming) to communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ. In addition, participants presenting "DI" personality traits readily demonstrated intentional resolution strategies to address conflict among staff, laity, and church membership. These pastors were inclined to assume the role of negotiator or accommodator when describing examples of how they resolved church conflicts. In other words, the pastor might negotiate to resolve a conflict between parties by assisting them in reaching an agreement based on their mutual interest rather than the individual rights or positions of the struggling parties. The same pastor might instead take an accommodative stance and work with one of the parties to assist them in coming to terms with a conflict. A marginal number of pastors possessing higher dominating personality traits resolved conflict in a confrontational fashion.[194]

Every example of ministry resistance and/or conflict encountered by the "DI" persona participants were skirmishes over core values or sense of worth. Values direct daily living and corporate worship. People in the church community hold divergent values regarding race, ethnicity, gender, educational and socioeconomic status, and inherited religious worship

[194.] Barsky, *Conflict Resolution*, 11–77.

traditions and beliefs. These pastors encountered barriers of resistance when their vision for the future of the church failed to align with the antiquated unbiblical values of parishioners. Changes in ministry practice, worship style, and organizational restructuring were the impetuses of conflict for these pastors.[195]

In the areas of emotional (EQ) and cultural intelligence (CQ), the pastors presenting "DI" personality traits were highly self-aware of their emotions and the emotions of others. They demonstrated the ability to use emotions to facilitate cognitive activities and effectively communicate. Though the participants with this persona better understood the cause and effect of emotions, at times they struggled to manage their emotions, which can discourage interpersonal communication, understanding, and growth.[196] In addition, participants demonstrating traits associated with the "DI" personality profile proved to possess a rich mental orientation of the cultural divergences existing among parishioners and the surrounding community. Several of these pastors also presented significant behavioral indicators suggesting that they were trying to modify personal behaviors to induce effective communication and to present culturally acceptable behaviors during cross-cultural interactions and interpersonal exchanges (behavioral CQ). None of the pastors manifesting "DI" profile traits exhibited high metacognitive and motivational cultural intelligence proficiencies.

Most of the senior pastors participating in this thesis project demonstrating personality qualities indicative of servant leadership manifested characteristics of emotional stability, temperance, gentleness, and patience. This signifies that the introverted "S" dispositions and behaviors are, to some degree, embodied in their personality temperament. Coding and

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[195.] Everist, *Church Conflict*, 19–20.

[196.] Hendron, Irving, and Taylor, "Emotionally Intelligent Ministry," 472.

categorizing of personality traits observed in transcribed interviews revealed the "SC" persona to be a commonly shared personality blend for pastors exhibiting stable, steady, security-oriented personality traits (see Table 5).

The senior pastors interviewed for this project presenting the "SC" persona perceived prayer to be invaluable to church growth planning and implementation. The pastors with this persona showed signs of being highly skilled at transforming their vision for the church into a strategic plan, and could provide, communicate, and implement an intentional plan for growth and change. The pastors marked by "SC" temperament distinctives successfully communicated church change endeavors to key persuasive stakeholders, leaders, and membership. The senior pastors presenting "SC" personality traits also approached their roles and responsibilities through the leadership framework and principles of servant leadership. These administrators valued community development, empowering lay leaders to share leadership authority and ministry tasks, and the building of coalitions to guide strategic planning.

Like their extraverted contemporaries, this group of pastors recognized the value of displaying authenticity to the local church and its surrounding community. They readily admitted their personal leadership weaknesses during the interview process. However, the pastors presenting "SC" personality traits were seemingly not as self-aware of their emotions as their "DI" counterparts. Despite this finding, the pastors marked by "SC" personality traits tended to demonstrate the ability to comprehend the implicit and explicit emotional language of others. Findings indicate that they possessed high aptitudes for managing and adapting their emotions, even negative ones, to achieve goals and objectives.[197] The participants with this persona demonstrated the ability to understand the cause and effect of emotions.

[197.] Hendron, Irving, and Taylor, "Emotionally Intelligent Ministry," 472.

These administrators resolved church conflict through group facilitation or accommodation. The pastors marked by "SC" personality characteristics, generally resolved conflict by employing finely honed listening, questioning, and focusing skills to help conflicting parties establish better means and modes of communication.[198] Pastors whose persona consisted of higher magnitudes of cautiousness and perfectionistic ideology and behavior, tended to initiate church conflict related to issues of belief or purpose of ministry. Schisms arose for these pastors when someone challenged the purpose of the church, ministry praxis, and missional values. The high "C" temperament pastors perceived and described constructs through denominational descriptors and considered the didactic practices of propagating Church of God dogma and Pentecostal heritage and theology the highest purposes of the church.

Findings of this thesis project suggest that pastors exhibiting a balanced persona characterized by conscientious, cautious, reserved, people-oriented, emotionally-stable, and even-tempered dispositions and behaviors lacked several dimensions of cultural intelligence (CQ). Only one pastor who possessed the dominant personality temperament demonstrated significant capacities of CQ. This pastor reported the highest percentage of total church growth (11.7%) for the three-year time interval of this research project. This participant led through a servant leadership paradigm and demonstrated cultural knowledge of his ministry milieu. In other words, this pastor's reflection on what ministry changes he perceived as crucial to evangelism and church growth in the twenty-first century demonstrated a cognitive recognition of the racial and ethnic diversity that exists across the scope of his ministry and leadership. However, none of the pastors manifesting "SC" profile traits demonstrated high metacognitive, motivational, and behavioral cultural intelligence proficiencies.

[198.] Barsky, *Conflict Resolution*, 185.

Eight of the 14 participants employing the servant leadership model had attained some degree of higher learning from an accredited college or university. Correlation analysis for this project suggests that the greatest amount of church growth for Churches of God operating in Western North Carolina (39%) was experienced by pastors with an SC personality profile, who endorsed and apply servant leadership in their local church community. These pastors resolved church conflict through group facilitation, and possessed high magnitudes of EQ and CQ. These leaders demonstrated the ability to appropriately emotionally and culturally adapt their leadership dispositions and behaviors to maximize influence and communication with all ministry stakeholders.

Pastors reporting the lowest overall church growth were those marked by high "C" or a "CD" personality temperament. The extremely cautious, calculating, and competent leader is generally task-oriented and approaches decision-making by seeking out the most logical conclusion. These leaders demand excellence from subordinates, insist on structure, and seek personal and corporate perfection regarding church polity, written procedures, and denominational guidelines for daily living.[199] The "CD" or "DC" persona is also considered to be highly task-oriented. These pastors are generally confident and competent leaders. This personality blend shares many of the high "C" temperament characteristics. These leaders possess an innate aversion to subordinates who perform outside the parameters of corporate guidelines.

Pastors interviewed for this research endeavor presenting high "C" and "DC" personality traits proved to be highly legalistic, theologically naïve, and lacking the ability to perceive evangelistic outreach without denominational lenses. The high "C" persona represents 2% of the

[199.] Carbonell, *How to Solve the People Puzzle*, 132.

total church growth for the participant sample taken from Western North Carolina from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016, and the “DC” persona represent less than 1% of the total church growth for the same participant sample.

Chapter 4:

The Senior Pastor's Ideology and Perceptions of Healthy Church Growth

Chapter four discusses the researcher's findings regarding the emerging categories and themes in relation to question two of the guiding framework, "What leadership principles and perceptions do pastors of growing churches identify as important to their roles and healthy church growth?" This chapter summarizes analysis and coding endeavors that revealed the leadership principles and perceptions the participating pastors of growing Churches of God in Western region of North Carolina identify as important to their roles and healthy church growth.

Aubrey Malphurs contends that the Christian church is in a state of decline and facing significant challenges to growth due to the influence of postmodernism and cultural shifts in North American society. In *Advanced Strategic Planning: A 21st Century Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*, Malphurs presents an example of what he considers to be the life cycle of a local church. He adapts his church growth model from the *sigmoid S*-shaped curve utilized by biologists and social scientists to represent the natural development of biological systems, civilizations, organizations, and worldviews. The S-curve depicts how these systems, societies, worldviews, and biological entities begin life, grow, plateau, and ultimately die (see Figure 6). [200]

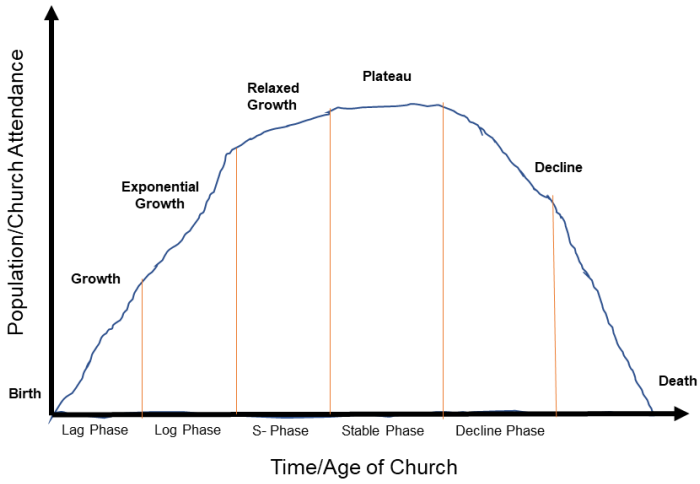

Figure 6 The Life Cycle of a Church. Source: Adopted from The Phases That Make Up a Sigmoid Growth Curve, in Changes in Population over Time. S-cool Youth Marketing Limited, Copyright, 2016. http://www.s-cool.co.uk/a-level/biology/ecological-concepts/revise-it/populations.

[200.] Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 8–9.

A local church has a life cycle which begins at birth (church plant) and progresses through several phases of growth. Attendance grows at a slow pace (the lag stage) until the church reaches optimal conditions for exponential growth (the log stage). As church resources become limited, the growth rate then begins to relax (the s-phase) and stabilize or plateau (the stable phase). When population carrying capacity has been maximized or a significant change in the environment occurs, rendering the church unable to support the population size, growth or attendance, it will crash (the decline stage).[201] Malphurs advises church leaders and pastors to start a new S-curve or life cycle as an alternative to allowing their respective churches to remain in continued decline and eventual death. He prescribes church planting, proactive and strategic growth planning, and organizational and ministry changes that stimulate church revitalization.[202]

Using birth, growth, plateau, decline, and death as the descriptors for the growth cycle of a local church, the researcher asked each senior pastor participating in this thesis project to designate the position of their church at the initial stages of their administration. Participants were also prompted to describe the strategic steps they implemented to advance the church toward a healthier position of growth and vitality. Thirteen (71%) of the eighteen participating pastors described their church as being positioned in decline or approaching death at the beginning of their administrative role as senior pastor. Two of the churches included in the research sample were church plants and described by their pastors as in the birth stage of growth. Eleven of the pastors who recognized church health indicators had taken intentional steps to develop and implement a strategic growth plan to stimulate and maintain church growth and vitality. The discernment aptitudes and intentional planning of these administrators represented

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[201.] S-cool Youth Marketing Limited, "Changes in Populations Over Time," 2016, accessed September 14, 2017, http://www.s-cool.co.uk/a-level/biology/ecological-concepts/revise-it/populations.

[202.] Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 11–14.

54% of the total church growth for the churches included in this research project from April 2014 to April 2016. Pastors who recognized the position of their church on the growth paradigm, but failed to develop a plan of goals, objectives, and evaluation methods to guide church leaders, laity, and membership toward good health and effective ministry represented 25% of the total church growth (see Table 9). Three of the interviewed pastors (21%) lacked a clear perception of the position of their churches on the growth cycle when they were assigned the senior administrative role. These leaders did not show evidence of developing and implementing a strategic plan for growth and vitality (see Table 9).

Findings of this research endeavor showed pastors developing and implementing growth strategies for their church were inclined to take a more holistic approach to stimulating, maintaining, and measuring church growth. Senior administrators who placed emphasis on developing modes and means for the church to accomplish its mission and vision experienced the greatest percentage of total growth over the delineated time parameters. Fifteen of the eighteen pastors included in this project (83%) commonly implemented goals and objectives for communicating the overarching mission and vision across all church stratums, thereby minimizing misunderstandings regarding the purpose for church ministries. These administrators stressed the importance of strategic marketing schemes devised to rebrand the church and build excitement, and the proper investment of God's resources.[203] Thirteen pastors reported to be leading declining churches or churches nearing death, and two pastors stated they had recently planted their church. These leaders sought to kindle church growth by focusing on four crucial growth areas. Not only did they strategically develop mechanisms of discipleship that would provide leaders, laity, and membership opportunities to deepen their personal and corporate

[203.] Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 167–71.

relationships with God (an upward refocusing); they also utilized interpersonal groups to strengthen relationships within the local church body (an inward refocusing). The development of innovative ways to communicate vision and mission increased the level of passion leadership and membership possessed for the unchurched in the surrounding community (an outward focusing). Finally, team development and multiplication of trained leaders became a high priority to church leaders (a forward focusing).

The senior administrators exhibiting low proficiencies for strategic planning tended to demonstrate a narrow approach to church growth planning, focusing only on the inward aspects of church vitality. One pastor demonstrated this atomistic attitude when asked to reflect on the strategies he employed to move the church to a healthier position of vitality:

> …lots of breakfast appointments, lunch appointments, dinner appointments. A lot of one-on-one interaction with the people. They had to be close enough to know me, to trust me, to lead them through the change that we had to go through. So, I was definitely, very relational, of course the pulpit comes in to play, but outside the pulpit is very important. Equally important, having friendships and relationships with people.[204]

George Barna explains that church leaders must utilize unprecedented modes of ministry and evangelism to penetrate the unchurched population of contemporary American society. He further explains that the strategies and experiences that encouraged current leaders and parishioners to become involved in church life may have no relevance to the needs, expectations, aspirations, and lifestyles of the unchurched in communities and cities surrounding churches today.[205] Inward directed strategies centered around communal dining, revival meetings, and entertaining social events, are highly antiquated modes for attracting the unchurch. As demonstrated in the example above, several of the pastors interviewed for this project still

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[204.] Participant 4, interviewed by author, August 26, 2016, transcript, Document 13, location (3126:3663), Hampton, VA.

[205] Barna, *Grow Your Church*, 13.

utilized these less than holistic methods as their primary means of evangelism.

Definitions of Church Growth

Contemporary authors, such as Charles Colson and Jim Cymbala, insist that church growth is more than church administrators and organizations reacting to religious consumer demand, or finding the appropriate marketing strategy that will entice and finesse people into coming to church. Cymbala proposes that current approaches to growth and vitality misrepresent the true nature of church growth and are based on unbiblical principles that emphasize the numerical facets of growth processes.[206]

Thom Rainer believes that church growth is a discipline with distinct characteristics encompassed in the definition provided by the North American Society for Church Growth:

> Church growth is that discipline which investigates the nature, expansion, planting, multiplication, function, and health of Christian churches as they relate to the effective implementation of God's commission to "make disciples of all peoples" (Matt. 28:18-20). Students of church growth strive to integrate the external theological principles of God's Word concerning the expansion of the church with the best insights of contemporary social and behavioral sciences, employing as the initial framework of reference the foundational work done by Donald McGavran.[207]

Church growth professionals focus on evangelism and the development of disciple-making mechanisms that facilitate effective spiritual formation for new converts. Even though the study of church growth integrates the social and behavioral sciences, biblical concepts, recognized as initiating and flowing from God's life-giving nature, ground the formal discipline.[208]

Church growth authorities recognize biological, transfer, and conversion growth as the primary sources from which churches grow. Biological growth represents the progenies of

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[206.] McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth*, 17.

[207.] Rainer, *Book of Church Growth*, 20-21.

[208.] McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth*, 9.

church members. However, a church can also grow at the expense of another church. For a multitude of reasons, individuals often relinquish their affiliation with a local church and decide to commit financial resources and engage in regular attendance at another church. This type of growth stimulation represents transfer growth. Rainer acknowledges that biological growth does not reproduce immediate fruit-bearing disciples of Christ and that transfer growth rarely culminates with these church swappers developing greater commitment and deeper relationships with Christ.[209] Scholars in the field of church growth delineate conversion growth as stimulated by individuals joining a local body of believers in direct response to the person's commitment to Jesus Christ. Conversion growth is the focus of most church growth endeavors because it produces immediate candidates for assimilation into church discipleship paradigms.[210]

Church growth has also been classified into four distinct types of growth: internal growth, expansion growth, extension growth, and bridging growth. Internal growth is the magnitude of spiritual maturity of the church members. Church administrators seek to measure the progress of parishioners' spiritual formation and maturity from Bible study, prayer, service, corporate worship, and the influence and manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Expansion growth is conversion growth attained through evangelistic efforts. Growth associated with the planting of new churches represents extension growth, and bridging growth is the planting of churches with the new congregants being of a culture other than the evangelizing organization.[211]

The successful pastors participating in this thesis project agreed on the impetus for church growth and how it should be measured and defined. They all saw growth as directly related to the persuasive work of the Holy Spirit on the hearts and circumstances of the

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[209.] Rainer, *Book of Church Growth*, 22.

[210.] Ibid.

[211.] Ibid., 23.

unchurched and sinners within the parameters of their ministry. Participants posited the idea that the greatest potential for healthy church growth occurs when senior administrators and lay leaders work contently in the positions of ministry in which God has placed them.[212]

All the senior pastors defined church growth as a multidimensional process. None of the participants believed church growth could be measured solely through quantitative methods, which generally consider only the financial and attendance aspects of church vitality. Spiritual formation emerged as the universal way to evaluate church growth. Coding and data analysis for this project discovered a consensus among the senior pastors that tithes and attendance are important church growth indicators. However, the senior administrators adamantly stipulated spiritual formation as the exemplar indicator of healthy church growth. In other words, these pastors believe healthy growth takes place when leaders and membership are being discipled, coached, and mentored toward Christlike maturity at all personal levels of spiritual formation. The participants maintained that positive spiritual growth is easily recognized. It emerges when leaders and parishioners are passionately reading and reacting to God's Word. Maturing Christians show signs that they are learning the value of fervent prayer, beginning to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and are intentionally taking steps to move outside of themselves to engage the community at large.[213]

The eighteen efficacious pastors argued that the measurement of church growth must take into consideration the impact a church has on its surrounding cities and communities. The participants recognized that the magnitude of church stakeholders' investment into the

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[212.] Participant 10, interviewed by author, August 24, 2016, Document 1, transcript, location (22972:23464; 24957: 25880), Hampton, VA.

[213.] Participant 10, interviewed by author, August 24, 2016, Document 1, transcript, location (22972:23464; 24957: 25880), Hampton, VA.; Participant 13, interviewed by author, December 14, 2016, Document 15, transcript, location (16880:17675) Hampton, VA.; Participant 9, interviewed by author, January 1, 2017, Document 14, transcript, location (11573:13320; 13405:14102), Hampton, VA.

community and the degree to which church membership has mobilized to meet community and global needs of the unchurched should be encompassed in the variable for healthy church growth. While participating pastors agreed that numerical growth was important, the senior leaders considered only two quantitative factors to be indicators of healthy church growth. The pastors proposed reproduction and new conversions to be benchmarks of healthy church growth. Reproduction included multiplication of leaders, planting of new churches, and advancing of ministry networks. The pastors recognized conversion growth as a growth indicator, which included the future maturity and ministry potentials for these converts.[214]

Theological Perspectives

Church growth is a discipline that seeks to gain insight into why churches grow or decline. Experts have conducted biblical, social, historical, and behavioral studies on the phenomena associated with growth and decline observed during the life span of a local church, and across similar church lifecycles. Rainer explains that such studies are to be considered tools rather than sources of authority for church growth. First and foremost, church growth is a movement initiated (Matt. 16:18) and commissioned (Matt. 28:19) by Jesus Christ.[215]

Contemporary church growth strategies and paradigms are often fueled by pragmatism and empowered by the charismatic influence of church leaders. Gary McIntosh insists that biblical church growth begins when church administrators, laity, and membership demonstrate a robust commitment to the authority of God's Word. He further maintains that when church leaders and members are intentional in passionately articulating the core values and beliefs of the

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[214.] Participant 11, interviewed by author, October 22, 2016, Document 7, transcript, location (17274:17976), Hampton, VA.; Participant 6, interviewed by author, October 8. 2016, Document 3, transcript, location (11016:11539), Hampton, VA; Participant 9, interviewed by author, January 1, 2017, Document 14, transcript, location (22758:23193; 23599:24057; 24058:24520), Hampton, VA

[215.] Rainer, *Book of Church Growth*, 22, 88–101.

Christian faith, the Holy Spirit augments the great potential for biblical church growth through the power of Scripture (Acts 1:8; Heb. 4:12), and the spiritual gifts residing in the individuals (Rom. 12:6–8; 1 Cor.12:8–10; 1 Pet. 4:11) work together to carry out the mission of the church.[216] C. Peter Wagner proposes that any church growth framework failing to affirm and capture the tension of believers being *in the world,* but not *part of the world,* is to be considered hermeneutically biased. He further states that approaches to church growth that isolate the Scriptures from society at large can never be expected to speak to the world: "a hermeneutic constantly seeking the favor of culture, even if numerical church growth results, may gain relevancy while losing true disciples."[217] Therefore, balance must be maintained between the cost of discipleship and the presenting of a culturally-relevant message.

Results of data analysis showed 28% of the pastors selected for this research project had difficulty maintaining their Pentecostal identity and adapting to the cultural shifts taking place in their respective cities and communities. Their stringent dedication to denominational doctrine and Pentecostal distinctives had culminated in a hermeneutic that could not accommodate outreach methodologies that employed contextualization of the gospel to breach cultural and evangelistic barriers. These pastors practiced ministry within doctrinal and pragmatic constraints developed by first-generation Pentecostal scholars, who formulated and propagated a Pentecostal hermeneutic in an environment that had yet to embrace an interaction between their faith and critical theological scholarship.[218].

The foundation for faith and praxis for the Church of God pastor is, and has always been,

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[216.] McIntosh, *Biblical Church Growth*, 44–45.

[217.] C. Peter Wagner, "The Hermeneutics of Church Growth," in *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles*, ed. Thom S. Rainer (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1993), 91.

[218.] Martin William Mittelstadt, *Reading Luke-Acts in the Pentecostal Tradition: Reflections on the History and Status of Research* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010), 11, Kindle.

Scripture text. Because traditional Church of God pastors recognize Scripture as given by the Holy Spirit, the Bible must be mediated interpretively by the Holy Spirit. These leaders believe a lost soul comes to God, and an understanding of his Word, through the Holy Spirit. For the Church of God pastor, objectivity and subjectivity are two sides of the same coin, and both are recognized as viable elements in the scope of faith, ignited by the Holy Spirit. Pastors oriented toward classical Pentecostal values tend to allow praxis to inform what they find in Scripture. [219]

To defend their rationale for belief, traditional Pentecostal pastors have often fought dogmatically to enshrine the Pentecostal experience. For this group of leaders, corporate worship within the sacred walls of the church sanctuary is the fundamental context for theological reflection, and the propagation of a pneumatic theological hermeneutic is the primary emphasis for ministry, mission, and evangelism. [220] Five out of the eighteen pastors represented in this study maintained a classical Pentecostal theological orientation. These leaders exhibited the predispositions to interpret Scripture in a literalistic fashion and to exalt holiness to the position of legalism and cultural disengagement.[221] When reflecting on the culturally relevant and age appropriate models their contemporaries used to disseminate the gospel, the highly traditional senior pastors exhibited a fear of identity loss and/or the proliferation of an unorthodox gospel. One comment by Participant 13 demonstrates the apprehension that these senior ministers had toward contemporary methods of gospel contextualization:

> They get a little too far out there in left field. It works for that church and that pastor. It wouldn't work for me. I want to keep it on a straight line. If that's traditional, that's fine. Let's keep it holy. Let's keep it sanctified and Godly. I've seen churches bring in clowns. Try to do youth ministries with clowns. That's something there I just don't believe ought

[219.] French L. Arrington, "The Use of the Bible by Pentecostals," *Pneuma* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 101–7.

[220.] David Daniel Kentie, "Kingdom Now: A Pentecostal Paradigm of Mission," (master's thesis, Tyndale Seminary, 2015), 103–8.

[221.] Ibid., 107–8.

> to be in the house of God. There's no holiness in that. Stuff like that I wouldn't do. I just need to get re-energized and revamped to reach my youth.[222]

This application of doctrine and praxis to human cultures and language assumes that somehow a pure *Message* exists that is free of cultural constraints. This ideology also assumes that when this theoretically pure gospel is affected in some way by cultural adaptations, the result is syncretism and loss of denominational identity.[223]

In *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church,* Mark Dever argues that healthy, vibrant, and growing churches are marked by leaders and membership that have a clear comprehension of and commitment to sharing the Gospel or Good News of Christ as outlined in God's Word. Dever explains that the Good News is not encompassed in the elementary notions that mankind is acceptable to God in a fallen sinful state, or that God is love. The Gospel message is also not embodied in the ideology that Jesus is the sinner's friend or that a man or woman can just simply start living a lifestyle of holiness and godliness. Rather, Dever highlights the biblical truths that all men and women are born unrighteous and in a state of enmity with God (Rom. 3:9-20, 6:23). He maintains that holiness is required to stand in the presence of the All-Loving Creator of the universe (Heb. 12:14). Friendship of Jesus is more than the mere cultivation of a relationship or model emulation, but rather Jesus sacrificed himself for his friends (John 15:14) to be the propitiation that would eliminate the hostility between fallen man and God (Rom. 5:9; Col. 1:19-20; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). [224]

Dever argues that successful evangelism, growth, and church vitality is also contingent

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[222.] Participant 13, interviewed by author, December 14, 2016, Document 15, transcript, location (17695:18231), Hampton, VA.

[223.] Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 237.

[224.] Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, new expanded ed. (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 76–87.

on believers in the church community recognizing true biblical conversion. According to Dever true conversion takes place when an individual recognizes the need for a spiritual and physical change. Biblical conversion includes both confession of sin and repentance, which means the individual decides to turn away from sinful behaviors and dispositions and seek after Christ. Dever maintains that conversion (confession and repentance) consists of not only a cognitive acceptance of Christ and his work on the cross, but also an intentional resolve to living a godly lifestyle, with the understanding that one must trust in God to initiate and maintain this sanctifying process.[225]

The Pentecostal-full gospel both includes Dever's concerns and delineations for regeneration of the individual and embraces a dynamic experience of holiness and baptism in the Holy Spirit for the regenerate believer. This Spirit baptism is understood by Church of God leaders and membership as divine empowerment for witness and enhanced charismatic spirituality. Baptism in the Holy Spirit is believed to afford the believer heightened propensities for praise and worship. Spirit baptism intensifies personal awareness of, and reaction to, God's divine presence.[226]

The pastors included in this research project believed repentance and conversion to be individual life transforming experiences, which can be magnified at significant points in a person's life to present the believer with new possibilities of experience and service. For the Church of God pastor, regeneration, sanctification, and Spirit baptism are ordered respectively, understood to be relational, and developed through service, discipleship, and the practice of the spiritual disciplines.[227]

[225.] Ibid., 102–9.

[226.] Burgess, *New International Dictionary*, 1129.

[227.] Ibid.

Several Church of God doctrinal distinctives are particularly important to this thesis project, as these core theological values directly inform the actions and behaviors of the included participants. Most Pentecostal pastors would postulate that significant differences exist between genuine Pentecostal worship, preaching, and leadership and the ordinary forms of corporate worship practiced in most contemporary churches. Pentecostals recognize their Spirit-guided form of worship as New Testament worship. Pentecostal pastors and scholars do not advocate the idea that Pentecostalism is a branch of Christianity, but rather maintain that Spirit-filled leaders, laity, and membership, working in conjunction with The Holy Spirit, under Jesus Christ as the Head of the church, make up the entire tree.[228] Participants in this project expressed deeply-held personal axioms regarding the communication, teaching, and daily practice of denominational doctrine and worldviews. Several interviewed pastors adamantly expressed the crucial importance of maintaining the practice and propagation of traditional New Testament Pentecostal standards. These pastors believed these values and worldviews to be the foremost essential elements to catalyze church growth. One expressed:

> I am true Church of God. I'm baptized in the Holy Ghost from the top of my head to the tip of my toe. I'm Pentecostal. I think it's important that we stick with the traditional beliefs. Saved, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Ghost. Those are the things that you have to focus on.… We still don't have a tremendous number of folks, but they are getting filled with the Holy Ghost, but we do have a great number, where the gifts of the spirit are active in our church.… I love the idea of small groups. We're going to start home groups based upon the traditional, Pentecostal beliefs. I've seen some churches get completely away from Pentecostal. How can you be a Pentecostal church without that? … I don't want to be a seeker friendly church. I want to be a spirit filled deliverance church. Do you know what I mean?[229]

Like other Evangelical churches and organizations, the Church of God recognizes the

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[228.] Thomas E. Trask, Wayde I. Goodall, and Zenas J. Bicket, eds., *The Pentecostal Pastor* (Springfield, MO): Gospel Pub. House, 1997), 543–46.

[229.] Participant 17, interviewed by author, November 5. 2016, Document 10, transcript, location (27646:28635), Hampton, VA.

doctrine of justification by faith, the priesthood of believers, the principle of private judgement, and the authority of the Bible. [230] Unlike other Evangelical churches and organizations, pneumatology is a critical component in pastoral understanding of church growth. The pastors included in this project recognized the Holy Spirit to be the third Person of the Trinity, whose knowledge encompasses the complete mind of God (1 Cor. 2:1-16).[231] Twelve of the eighteen senior pastors interviewed for this research project described church growth constructs through traditional Pentecostal pneumatological orientations or doctrinal distinctives.

These Pentecostals pastors' notion of traditional or "old-time" Pentecostal beliefs seemed to focus around three denominational distinctives. First and foremost is what has been delineated as the principle distinguishing characteristic of the Pentecostal Movement: baptism with the Holy Spirit, as evidenced by speaking with tongues. The baptism in the Holy Spirit is understood as the initial outpouring of the Spirit of God on the early church on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Church of God pastors also recognize baptism in the Holy Spirit as the gift promised and given to individual believers, by which they are endued with power to disseminate the gospel of Jesus Christ.[232] The pastors interviewed for this project believed speaking in tongues to be the initial evidence that an individual has been baptized with the Holy Spirit. This experience of baptism is not understood to simultaneously take place with conversion. The household of the Gentile Cornelius (Acts 11:15) and the Apostle Paul (Acts 9:17) are biblical examples of individuals who experienced the indwelling of the Holy Spirit subsequent to conversion.[233]

[230.] Hughes, *Church of God Distinctives*, 22–24.

[231.] Rainer, *Book of Church Growth*, 111–12.

[232.] Church of God Division of Education, "Doctrine," in *Church of God Study Guide for Ministerial Licensure: Ordained Bishop* (Cleveland, TN: Church of God Ministerial Development/School of Ministry, 2013), 331.

[233.] Hughes, *Church of God Distinctives*, 32–37.

Traditional Church of God pastors recognize the Holy Spirit as the guiding force of corporate worship. When they plan Pentecostal worship services and preaching, church ministers and lay leaders rely on the guidance and anointing of the Holy Spirit; however, the authority of the Holy Spirit to orchestrate the arrangement of worship and homiletical form and content is always given precedence, with the understanding that such divine direction will be conducted decorously and in perfect order.[234] The pneumatological perspectives of the participants in this thesis project regarding the Holy Spirit's work in corporate worship influenced their viewpoints, definition, and leadership behaviors regarding church growth and vitality. One participant strongly insisted that growth was the direct product of a Spirit-directed worship service, through which the Holy Spirit reconciled conflicts which hindered church growth processes:

> There were two families that were fussing and fighting and couldn't get along. When we had visiting families, it was a mess. Especially this one family. They knowingly set on the opposite side of the church to be separated from another family. It was just a mess. The Lord showed me the key that people needed to learn to forgive and love each other. So, for a month and a half, I preached on love. On a Wednesday night, we had so few people, it was basically the same people on Wednesday nights as Sunday. You had your core people that were fighting over the church. I was preaching, and the anointing was just moving. I was preaching on loving your neighbor with all of your strength, heart, and your neighbor as yourself, and the tension broke, without me instigating or asking for it. It was spontaneous. People just got up and went across and were hugging each other and other people. Walking up and down the aisle with raised hands. And from that service, God moved, and the conflict was no longer there. And it was never brought up again…. And then we started growing. We averaged 16 or 17 people. When we left, we were averaging in the 90s….That's the biggest the church has ever been. Before then or since. It's in the middle of nowhere.[235]

Dr. Ray H. Hughes, former General Overseer of the Church of God, contends that the Church of God as an organized church body should not be considered liturgical in nature. He maintains that Pentecostal worship provides fellowship, comfort, edification, exhortation, and

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234. Ibid., 73.

235. Participant 2, interviewed by author, November 5, 2016, Document 17, transcript, location (3894:5886), Hampton, VA.

opportunities for intercessory prayer. Hughes argues that this form of worship cannot be practiced in isolation, but rather requires the involvement of the total church body in the worship service. Hughes believes this corporate participation in praise and worship, prayer, spiritual singing, exercising of spiritual gifts, and exposure to Spirit-anointed and directed preaching leads to consistent church attendance.[236]

Rudimentary to what the participants in this research project would deem as traditional or "old-time" Pentecostal principles, are the denominational values regarding moral purity. Church of God practical theology stresses the need for all church stakeholders to demonstrate Christlike behaviors and dispositions in daily living. Douglas Jacobsen points out that early Pentecostals recognized clear boundary lines between Pentecostalism and other forms of the Christian faith. He further highlights that contemporary boundaries have become vague regarding who has truly received the Pentecostal experience.[237] The pastors interviewed for this study would argue that an inward and outward lifestyle of holy living predicates the Pentecostal experience.[238]

Church of God pastors holding traditional theological values recognize the believer's body, soul, and spirit as a complete vessel or temple belonging to its Creator (1 Cor. 3:16-17). Reception of the Pentecostal baptism is contingent on one possessing a pure heart that is autonomous from the intentional practice of unclean daily living (Acts 15:8-9; 1 Cor. 6:15-20; 1 Thess. 4:7-8). Church of God pastors oriented toward "old-time" denominational principles believe that for individuals to receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit they must repent (Acts 2:38), have their heart sanctified by faith (Acts 15:8-9), be obedient to God (Acts 15:9), and be

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[236.] Hughes, *Church of God Distinctives*, 75–88.

[237.] Douglas Jacobsen, *Thinking in the Spirit: Theologies of the Early Pentecostal Movement* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 286.

[238.] Hughes, *Church of God Distinctives*, 114.

committed to keeping Christ's commands (John 14:15). Dr. Hughes describes the ethos of this distinctive: "One cannot enter into the Upper Room of Pentecost without walking through the halls of holiness."[239] Church leaders have accentuated this theological distinctive from the inception of the denomination. Traditional pastors, laity, and membership believe holiness to be Christlikeness, seated in the believer's union with Christ (Gal 2:20), and commanded by God for every believer (Eph. 1:4, 1; Rom. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:16).[240]

Sixty-seven percent of the senior pastors included in this thesis project reflected on the importance of not overlooking the preaching and practice of holiness. One participant stated,

> I believe in a standard of holiness. That's what the Church of God was founded upon and I try to hold that standard up. I try to be more on the conservative side of what the Church of God doctrine believes as far as holiness and Pentecost. And the standard that they held up back in the olden days. I'm 34, but I was raised under the hard-core, old-time holiness and that's all I know. So, I would say I am more old-time holiness. But in a sense, you've got to bring some contemporary things into church ministry for the world we live in today. You want to keep that balance of what's allowed and what's not allowed. Even as far as the contemporary, some things I've seen I wouldn't be caught dead allowing it in my church. You understand?[241]

The standard and commitment of holiness declared above encompasses moral purity, personal integrity, behavioral temperance, and a pledge to demonstrate the biblical idea of modesty in dress and outward behavior. Traditional or "old-time" Church of God dogma regarding holy living is a stand against sex outside of marriage, homosexuality, and all other forms of sexual immorality. Traditional Church of God administrators and pastors expect church members to abstain from the use of vulgar language, alcohol, tobacco, and all other recreational drugs.[242]

Thirty-nine percent of the pastors interviewed for this project answered interview

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[239.] Ibid., 114.

[240.] Ibid., 115–16.

[241.] Participant 13, interviewed by author, December 14, 2016, Document 15, transcript, location (16880:17675), Hampton, VA.

[242.] Church of God Division of Education, *Church of God Study Guide*, 347–53.

questions and shared opinions on church growth that were highly informed by traditional Church of God denominational dogma. Interestingly, these pastors represented 58% of the total church growth recorded for the research time parameters from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016. Findings showed seven of the recruited senior pastors holding traditional Pentecostal values regarding corporate worship, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, speaking with other tongues, and holiness as a moral lifestyle reported the highest percentages of church growth. However, five of the participants advocating this traditional orientation found it challenging to distinguish between the dilution of theological core values and the implementation of culturally relevant modes of communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In this research project, the theological views of the pastors had no correlation with the worship style practiced in their respective churches. Research findings revealed that the seven participants demonstrating highly traditional denominational-directed pneumatological perspectives pastored churches with diverse worship styles. Four of the churches led by these senior pastors had quintessentially traditional worshippers. One church practiced a contemporary style of worship, and two churches had a blended worship style.

The primary differences between traditional and contemporary corporate worship in the Church of God is demarcated on the mantle of hymnody. Traditional churches consider the singing of hymns to be a vital element of corporate worship.[243] Church musicians may employ a plethora of musical instruments, including electronically amplified and common classical church instruments, to accompany soloists, ensembles, and choirs. Traditional music leaders sometimes accentuate the singing of hymns with selections from theologically enriched songs from

[243.] Jonathan Aigner, "Comparing Hymns and Contemporary Songs," *Patheos*, April 22, 2017, accessed September 27, 2017, http://www.patheos.com/blogs/ponderanew/2016/04/22/comparing-hymns-and-contemporary-songs/.

compilations made available by Church of God Publishing and distribution entities.[244] Traditional corporate worshippers find the self-contained poetic structure of hymns to be highly applicable for large group participation. The audience is most often made up of senior adults before the Baby Boomer generation. This audience appreciates the attempts to directly address the divine character and personality within the content of hymns from the past one hundred and forty years from a multiplicity of authors.[245]

Contemporary worship within the Pentecostal Church of God generally consists of a worship leader, or group of worship leaders, directing the congregation in the singing of consumer-driven songs that mimic current vernacular styles. These types of songs are often accompanied by commercial soundtracks and are exceptionally applicable to solo and small group worship milieus. Contemporary Christian songs tend to lack the theological depth of hymns. They tend to have more theological ambiguity and only shallowly address the character and divine nature of God. These songs are most often repetitive in composition and written with the purpose of stirring emotions and awakening the listener's affection for God. Perhaps writers compose songs in this way because they think that is what the contemporary audience wants.

To be sure, younger parishioners and Baby Boomers seem to have an affinity for contemporary worship music. These songs are infused with Christological bits that emphasize how Christ satisfies one's personal, physical, spiritual, and emotional needs. This focus highlights the worthiness of Christ, which in turn stimulates a response of adoration and worship from the audience. Contemporary song lyrics are generally displayed on a large screen and in a prominent position, to allow the entire congregation to reference lyrics during the singing portion

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[244.] Pathway Press, "Welcome to Pathway Press," 2017, accessed September 27, 2017, http://www.pathwaypress.org/index.html.

[245.] Aigner, "Comparing Hymns."

of the worship service. A song list for a contemporary church service will consist of composers from the most recent decades, with little diversity represented in lyrical and compositional origin.[246]

The theological perceptions of the senior pastors seemed to have no significant correlation with the type of church each participant led over the project's time parameters. The researcher used the church types outlined by Rick Warren in his book *The Purpose Driven Church* as the standard for categorizing the type of church pastored by participants recruited for this research project. Warren posits that, historically, American churches take one of five shapes depending on which ministry purpose the senior pastor considers most important to pursue. Warren argues that if the senior administrator perceives his primary role to be that of an evangelist, then the church develops into a soul winning church. The role of parishioners is primarily witnessing, and the corporate focus of the church is evangelism. Ministry success is measured by the number of decisions made for Christ, and visitations and altar calls are the principle modes and means for effective ministry. Churches that focus on fellowship, Warren delineates as family reunion churches. Highly relational senior pastors that consider themselves a chaplains of church membership lead these churches. Heritage is the source of legitimacy for these churches. Gathering is often their most important goal. The church fellowship buildings, communal potluck dinners, and showcased musical performances serve to deepen feelings of belonging, reinforce core values, and build community loyalty.[247]

When pastors perceive their leadership role to be that of a worship leader, the primary focus of the church becomes worship. Music and prayer guide parishioners toward a personal

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[246.] Aigner, "Comparing Hymns.

[247.] Warren, *Purpose Driven Church*, 122–26.

experience with the power and presence of God. Warren categorizes these type organizations as experiencing God churches. The Holy Spirit is the source of legitimacy for these Christian believers, feeling is important, and the immediate crowd is most often the primary target of ministry efforts. In contrast, Bible classroom churches focus on teaching the Word of God to parishioners. The pastoral role is that of an instructor, and members characteristically become students. The last type of church Warren outlines is a social conscience church. Pastors of these churches perceive their role to be that of a reformer. Church members are activists and the corporate focus is most often a unified goal to change recognized injustices in society. [248]

Warren goes on to present the five major endeavors that enable churches to be effective: evangelism, worship, fellowship, edification, and ministry. He further posits that healthy churches have senior pastors who perceive their role to be equipping lay leaders and membership for ministry. Warren designates these churches as purpose driven due to the balanced corporate focus on all purposes of ministry. The central value of such balanced churches is Christlike character attained through relational discipleship mechanisms.[249]

When prompted to describe the type, model, or overarching purpose of their respective churches, 56% (ten churches) of the participating pastors described their associated church as demonstrating the features and focus of a soul winning church. Thirty-three percent (six churches) of the eighteen pastors described their affiliated church using language indicating that they pastored a body of believers focused on familial and interchurch relationships. The themes extrapolated from the answers presented by these pastors displayed significant indications that their pastoral role was a chaplaincy, with most of the senior pastors' time spent caring for church

[248.] Ibid., 122–25.

[249.] Ibid., 124–25.

members.

Thirty-three percent of the pastors holding resolute traditional Pentecostal values pastored family reunion type churches and seemed to demonstrate lower magnitudes of cognitive cultural intelligence. These participants found it challenging to develop modes and means of contextualizing the gospel message to cross cultural barriers. Sixty-six percent of participants (six pastors) who reflected on leadership and growth through the framework of the Great Commission and Great Commandment described the purpose and nature of their respective churches with descriptors best aligning with that of a soul winning church. Only one pastor's description indicated that he focused his leadership goals and church ministry objectives across all five of Warren's purposes outlined, which qualified it as a purpose driven church (see Table 8).

Church growth for the six senior pastors committed to aligning church growth strategies with the Great Commission and Great Commandment ranged from 1% to 11% from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016. The growth of these pastors and churches represent 23% of the total growth for the time interval, as opposed to the 58% reported by their dogma-driven contemporaries. However, findings suggest that the pastors dedicated to developing intermediaries for culturally-relevant dissemination of the gospel of Jesus Christ possessed high magnitudes of cognitive cultural intelligence. Data analysis showed these church administrators to be intentional in seeking ways to address cultural barriers that initiate and facilitate misunderstandings that undermine effective and efficient multicultural communication and interactions within the church. These six participants demonstrated that they had acquired general knowledge about a culture targeted for evangelism efforts and were working toward developing the leadership acumen and aptitudes required to appropriately interact with

individuals from diverse cultures.[250]

These progressive pastors were committed to their Pentecostal heritage and were devoted to, and practiced, Church of God faith distinctives and polity. Unlike their traditional contemporaries, these pastors incorporated Blue Ocean ideas and methods into church growth initiatives. A business planning strategy used since the mid-1990s to stimulate energy and vitality in diverse marketing venues, Blue Ocean challenges the tenets of competitive marketing and strategic planning designed to better situate an organization under structural constraints in over exploited marketplaces. Proponents of this strategic paradigm argue that too many companies compete for the same market space. Such organizations focus on competing with similar business entities for the same customer demographic. The goal in this highly competitive market that exploits existing demand is to outperform all other competitors. Blue Ocean proponents define this retrograde strategy as the Red Ocean. Blue Ocean strategists encourage businesses to go beyond these existing boundaries and generate new uncontested markets. This creation of new product demand illuminates the competitive dynamic of marketing and production. Blue Ocean strategists break out of the stranglehold of trying to match or beat rival advantages and seek, rather, to invent new markets by embracing the specific needs of new target buyers.[251]

One innovative senior pastor shared some of the barriers and ministry potentials associated with the Blue Ocean evangelism and outreach strategies employed at his church:

> Some of the attrition rate has been due to immigration that did not sit well with some of the former members. Church attendance was in a gradual decline. If you looked at it in a graph, it would be obvious it was in decline. What I've done since I've been here is,

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250. Ang, Van Dyne, and Koh, "Personality Correlates," 100–1.

251. Peter Zemsky, "Blue Ocean Strategy: Creating New Market Space Where Competition Is Irrelevant," *INSEAD: Blue Ocean Strategy Institute* (Fall 2015): 3–7, accessed October 2, 2017, https://centres.insead.edu/blue-ocean-strategy/documents/e-ibosi2015.pdf.

> rather than allow that to happen, and continue the attrition rate, I've tried to embrace the personality of the church to more of an international multi-national, multi-racial multicultural church. And advertise it as such. We've had several mixed families in the church. Mixed marriages in the church. We have African Americans. We have Hispanics. We have Indonesians. And white folk here in the church. We have a great sense of unity here. We celebrate our diversity rather than look at it as a problem for us. We do a lot of outreach here in the community. We try to advertise ourselves as a multicultural church. We have a Hispanic service at 2 p.m. in the afternoon. On Sundays, we have a service that runs simultaneous with us as well as an African service in our gym that runs simultaneous with our sanctuary service. We embrace our diversity. That's helped us to maintain attendance and begin more of a growth tract.[252]

Research findings suggest the six theologically broadminded pastors to be significantly more cognitively aware of the culture vicissitudes across ministry environs. These senior pastors were more inclined to recognize diversity in parishioners and community milieus. They were more adept at accessing cultural distance and barriers to ministry and exhibited no reluctance to implement plans to adjust ministry modes, personal attitudes, and behavior to respond to the needs of targeted communities.[253]

Ideology Regarding Church Mission and Vision

Strategic planning is a widely utilized management tool in contemporary organizations and has been described as a series of logical steps that include the defining of mission and vision statements, the establishing of short and long-term goals and objectives, environmental analyses, strategy formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Formal strategic planning for both profit and non-profit enterprises is understood to be an explicit process designed to determine an organization's long-range objectives. This process encompasses the implementation of procedures for initiating and evaluating alternative strategies, as well as the development of

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[252.] Participant 9, interviewed by author, January 1, 2017, Document 14, transcript, location (2324:3521), Hampton, VA.

[253.] Gooden, Creque, and Chin-Loy, "Impact of Metacognitive," 224.

evaluation systems for monitoring implemented strategies.[254]

Aubrey Malphurs defines church strategic planning as a fourfold process that a point administrator, such as a senior pastor or executive pastor, consistently employs with a strategically selected team of innovative leaders to envision or re-envision and revitalize a declining church. The point leader and his or her innovative team accomplish this revitalization through the development of a biblical mission and a new compelling vision for the church that will stimulate and maintain church health and vitality. This team also seeks to discover the core values that determine ministry distinctives and delineate the church's identity and purpose for existence. Malphurs maintains that a ministry's mission, vision, core values, and overarching strategy serve as the compass for church administrators to navigate the challenging waters of church ministry. Malphurs insists that an effective church strategy will accomplish the mission that the church have been assigned by Christ (Matt 28:16-20). However, he further argues that an effective strategic plan is characterized by a church-wide emphasis on community outreach, the intentional development of reproductive discipleship vehicles, the building of effectual cohort leadership teams, the development, implementation, and revision of ministry evaluation systems, and exemplar financial management methods that generate the required resources for the church to pursue its mission and vision.[255]

During the interviews, the researcher prompted all participants to describe the vision and mission and purpose of their local church. Fourteen of the eighteen pastors (78%) contended that the church exists to minister to people. Twelve of these participants pastored either soul-winning or family reunion type churches, with most of these churches employing a blended format for

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[254.] Carola Wolf and Steven W. Floyd, "Strategic Planning Research: Toward a Theory-Driven Agenda," *Journal of Management* 43, no. 6 (July 2013): 4–5, doi:10.1177/0149206313478185.

[255.] Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 28-30.

corporate worship. Participants recognizing ministry and service exclusively as the defining principles for their church envisioned their church as a vehicle for meeting the needs of the surrounding community, as well as the needs of parishioners. Pastors adopting such restricted ministry distinctives represented 20% of the total growth for the churches selected for this project (see Table 12).

Eight of the senior pastors interviewed (44%) posited a highly comprehensive perspective regarding the purpose of the church. These participants, representing 55% of the total growth for the time interval delineated for this thesis project, shared an overarching vision that consists of ministry goals and objectives designed to create healthy viable environments for fellowship, worship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism. These administrators envisioned a body of believers commissioned by Christ to accomplish more than just meeting the needs of membership. The vision of these senior pastors encompassed the development of church and parachurch networking, evangelism designed to reach the lost and unchurched near the church, and global ministry and mission (see Table 12).

Correlation coefficient analysis revealed several interesting relations between the interviewed pastors' perceptions of church purpose and the leadership behaviors and attitudes that influence church growth. Findings suggest that the senior pastors who recognized worship as the primary purpose of the church were the most likely to possess a compelling church vision that encompassed engaging the social environs surrounding the church. These pastors demonstrated highly relational predispositions and exhibited the greatest propensity toward emphasizing the importance of developing and publishing a church mission statement. Pastors presenting this perception of church purpose possessed the highest tendency to reflect on church growth constructs through Pentecostal theological orientations or through the lenses of

denominational doctrine and praxis.

Correlation analysis showed pastors perceiving the fundamental purpose of the church to minister to people were more inclined to utilize the Great Commission as the basis for mission and vision development. The missiology of these pastors expressed a heightened concern for ministry efforts that incorporated community and church membership. Though these administrators valued fellowship, discipleship and intimate inter-church relational groups, pastors with this purpose orientation proved to be the least likely to demonstrate contemporary leadership behaviors. Pastors believing the church exists to communicate God's Word exhibited the highest proclivity to utilize the Great Commission as their framework for mission and vision development. Participants holding this view of church purpose also ascribed an accentuated value to evangelism and demonstrated a heartfelt concern for sinners and unchurched individuals.

Several participants contended that the church exists to provide fellowship for believers. Correlation analysis showed this group of pastors to be the least likely to employ the Great Commission as the basis for mission and vision development. Pastors presenting this ideology of church purpose emphasized the necessity of meeting community needs to initiate and maintain church growth; however, findings suggest these pastors are the least likely of the population sample to focus on creating healthy milieus for worship, instruction, and evangelism. In similar fashion to their contemporaries who recognize worship as foundational to church ministry, these pastors struggled to recognize the implication church mobilization has for church growth and vitality. A limited number of participants either held that the foremost purpose of his church was to edify and educate believers within the confines of the church family, or failed to provide a reason for the existence of their church (see Table 12).

Malphurs argues that a church can never maximize its potential and execute effective ministry without a defined mission. The mission of a church dictates ministry direction and guides all decision-making. Moreover, it delineates all church functions and future goals. For this reason, strategic church planning professionals recommend the writing and promulgation of broad mission statements, with the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15) as the framework for biblical mission development. Because evangelism and discipleship are the foundational constructs of Christ's last command to his church, the perception and development of a biblical mission must embody these fundamental elements.[256]

The researcher utilized constant line-by-line comparisons of the interview transcripts to flesh out each pastor's unique explicit ideology regarding the mission of his church. Four major missional themes became apparent from data analyses: (1) engage and meet community needs (EMCN); (2) deepen internal church and family relationships and disciple membership (DIDM); (3) perpetuate Church of God dogma (COGD); (4) and reach the lost and unchurched in surrounding cities and communities (RLUC). The researcher categorized emerging data and recorded mission orientation as blended themes for each pastor (see Table 13).

The highest magnitude of sustained growth reported for the region and time constraints was in senior pastors who believed the church exists to reach lost and unchurched individuals (62% of total growth). These leaders contended that church evangelism efforts are to be designed to target people living in the cities and communities near their respective churches. Data results showed pastors in Western North Carolina who recognized the general mission of the church to be to engage its surrounding community, with the intent of meeting individuals' physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, recorded the second highest percentage (56%) of sustained

[256.] Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 106–17.

growth (see Table 13).

Project findings suggest that participants holding outward reaching perceptions of the purpose and mission of their church experienced more church growth from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016 than participants who were oriented toward an inward missiology. Forty percent of the senior pastors interviewed presented a holistic church mission that finely balanced community engagement, evangelism, sharing of the gospel, discipleship, and the passing of the Pentecostal tradition to future generations. Data results revealed that at the other end of the growth spectrum, participants recognizing the deepening of relationships among parishioners as the chief purpose of church ministry, and those who advocated the teaching and preaching of denominational dogma to the point of legalism, experienced the least amount of sustained growth (0.6% of total growth).

Conclusion

The Church of God pastors selected and interviewed from Western North Carolina reporting the highest significant and consistent growth from April 1 of 2014 to April 30 of 2016 shared common ideologies and philosophies regarding church growth. The researcher found that mutual theological orientations had a direct impact on strategic growth planning and the ability of senior pastors to adapt to rapid community cultural shifts. Most of the participating pastors were keenly aware of their church's position in its life cycle and were intentional in initiating the development and implementation of a strategic growth plan to move their church toward healthy and constant vitality. Participants failing to recognize the spiritual, physical, and emotional condition of their respective churches showed a reluctance or even an inability to initiate growth strategy protocol.

The successful pastors selected all reported growth for the three-year time constraint

delineated for the thesis project. In addition, these pastors shared a common definition of church growth. Participants agreed that the marks of true healthy growth must include new conversions, church discipleship that guides people toward spiritual maturity, the church's significant impact on its surrounding community, and, finally, a steady managed increase in resources and attendance.

As themes emerged from data analysis processes, two divergent theological perspectives became evident among participants. Some of the senior pastors held staunch traditional Pentecostal values that seemed to advocate a highly literal hermeneutical approach to Scripture which, in turn, informed their church mission and growth strategies. These participants found it challenging to adapt to the rapid cultural shift taking place within the geographical scope of their ministry. This group of administrators were less likely to employ modes and means of disseminating the gospel of Christ that breached existing cultural and evangelistic barriers.

Participants demonstrating progressive balanced theological orientations did not report as much overall growth for the period as their traditionalistic contemporaries. However, this group of participants showed to have higher propensities toward intentionally seeking modes and means to disseminate a culturally relevant gospel. They possessed high magnitudes of cognitive cultural intelligence, tended to employ the Great Commission as the foundation for mission and vision development, and demonstrated a desire to develop ways to address cultural and ethical barriers. Findings suggest that this group of senior leaders are apt to seek intentional ways to minimize cultural misunderstandings that undermine effective and efficient communication. These participants exhibited a desire to target Blue Ocean audiences, rather than compete with other churches in existing over exploited Red Ocean arenas, recognizing the present attrition and long-term payoff of their labor and approach to growth.

Participants reporting the highest percentages of total growth from April 1 of 2014 to April 30 of 2016 recognized the purpose of the church to be encompassed in the ministry dimension of fellowship, worship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism. Pastors holding the view that the church exists to reach the lost, engage its community, and to meet the physical, spiritual, and emotional needs of individuals within church ministry parameters, reported the highest magnitude of sustained growth for project time constraints. Correlation data revealed the mission and vision associated with these pastors' perceptions to be generally outward focused, without presenting deficits in the inward relational and instructional ministry dimensions. Participants emphasizing highly pronounced and restricted outward mission and vision objectives reported the lowest sustained growth for project time constraints. Correlation analysis showed these pastors to have predispositions toward legalism and an inability to recognize the difference between contextualization of Scripture and textual deconstruction.

Correlation analysis revealed no significant relationships between participants' theological orientation and practiced worship style or church typology. However, there was a consensus among participants that church growth is facilitated through Spirit-directed corporate worship, parishioners, the leadership of gifted and Spirit-filled administrators, and the dedication of leaders to be transparent and live a holy lifestyle.

Chapter 5:

Modes and Means Utilized to Address Church Growth Predictors

Introduction

Contemporary church growth professionals have recently introduced church leaders to the concept of "healthy Great Commission churches." In these ecclesial communities, Christocentric believers have learned to meticulously and consistently balance congregational passions for winning the lost, discipling fledgling converts, and multiplying spiritually gifted apprentices.[257] Mac Brunson and Ergun Caner have explored the reasons why less successful churches plateau and die. They recognize a church community as an organic entity susceptible to spiritual debilitating psychoses, pathologies, and lethal toxins. Spiritual atrophy is one example Brunson and Caner present as a life-threatening malady to a healthy body of believers. Spiritual and physical growth stagnates due to a church-wide acceptance that the greatest days of ministry, and the miraculous works of the Holy Spirit, cannot be realized in the present era of the church's ministry and mission. The spiritual life of the church begins to wither when membership is dominated by believers that limit great potentials of spiritual formation, numerical growth, effective evangelistic efforts, and efficacious community outreach to some glorious past generation or era.[258]

Brunson and Caner argue that senior administrators, laity, or influential congregational members afflicted with spiritual myopia threaten church growth and vitality. Due to their traditionalism, cynicism, and resistance to chance, these individuals endanger the life of a church

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[257.] Kenneth Gangel, "Marks of a Healthy Church," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158, no. 632 (October-December 2001): 467.

[258.] Mac Brunson and Ergun Caner, *Why Churches Die: Diagnosing Lethal Poisons in the Body of Christ* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2005), 26-35.

by lacking the dispositions and aptitudes needed to perceive the overarching vision of a strategic growth plan. Unable to see beyond costs and other limitations, these leaders and parishioners never realize ministry opportunities.[259] Brunson and Caner explain that senior pastors can often develop diverse phobias that limit their capacity to trust God, regardless of how disciplined or committed they might be to their Christian walk. Such phobias can be debilitating. Fears, phobias, and neuroses, often the symptoms of stress, depression, anxiety, obsessive and/or compulsive behavior, render pastors unable to effectively accomplish goals and fulfill ministry roles. The authors explain that such paralysis of faith places spiritual leaders in arenas beyond God's umbrella of security and safety, as these excessive irrational reactions to fear assign limits to God's Word, Spirit, and life-changing power. Spiritual disorders of this nature do not enable senior pastors to effectively make the immediate critical decisions associated with their role.[260]

Church growth expert Thom Rainer argues that church vitality slowly erodes when a church ceases to have a passion for those residing in its surrounding communities. The church becomes a fortress for protecting religious praxis, and pastors focus finances and resources inward to sustain and protect the interest of parishioners. Eventually the Great Commission becomes the church's greatest omission. Rainer contends that churches lacking consistent and intentional corporate prayer and a clearly communicated biblical purpose tend to harbor leaders and church members who are opposed to change. These churches become unhealthy, stagnate, and eventually die because they lack the ability to discern God's vision for the church. According to Rainer, churches die when property acquisition or facility enhancement become a church's central principle for existence. These failing churches replace a Bible-centered focus on

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[259.] Brunson and Caner, *Why Churches Die*, 63-77.

[260.] Ibid., 159-63.

disseminating the gospel and disciple-making with materialism that narrowly serves an apathetic congregation bent on preserving redundant internal ministries.[261]

Christian A. Schwarz proposes that church leaders and parishioners are stricken with the above spiritual phobias, pathologies, psychoses, and orientations of ministry purpose because of one, or an amalgamation of, the following:

1. Senior administrators, lay leaders, and/or members of the church do not desire growth in their own congregation.
2. Senior administrators, lay leaders, and/or members of the church resent strategic planning methods designed to analyze church ministry efforts and reveal existing weaknesses that hinder effective ministry.
3. Senior administrators, lay leaders, and/or members of the church are trying to stimulate growth through insufficient technocratic modes and means, rather than allowing God to grow His church through natural growth automatisms.
4. Fulfilling the Great Commission is not the number one priority for all members of the local body of believers.[262]

Schwarz, along with most contemporary church growth professionals, believes growing churches have distinctive characteristics or indicators of health and vitality, including a combination of both quantitative growth and a high magnitude of quality leadership and ministry.[263] He established what is currently recognized as the Natural Church Development model of growth by conducting a worldwide empirical study of 1,000 churches. The research sample encompassed churches of diverse size, positions on the life cycle, and denominational affiliation. Schwarz conducted both comparative and relational analysis between qualitative growth and the quality of church ministries and found ministry quality to have a direct relationship with quantity.

[261.] Thom S. Rainer, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church: 12 Ways to Keep Yours Alive* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 25–39, 63-82.

[262.] Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 6–11.

[263.] Ibid., 15-23.

However, his research also reveals that quantity can be autonomously produced without the help of high-quality effective ministry. Schwarz argues that a healthy viable church is characterized by attendance growth, leadership multiplication, quality disciple-making, effective evangelism, and successful mission outreach. This church growth expert further argues that the emphasis church leaders and parishioners attribute to eight key health modifiers—empowering leadership, gift-oriented lay ministry, passionate spirituality, functional structures, inspiring worship, holistic small groups, need-oriented evangelism, and loving relationships—directly impacts the health and ministry quality of a church.[264]

The Institute for Church Growth in Korea (ICGK) conducted research on 175 healthy and growing churches of diverse denominational affiliations, congregational sizes, and theological persuasion over nine years (1993-2002) and discovered that growing churches manifested ten common health indicators:

1. Excellent pastoral leadership
2. Mobilization of laymen
3. Effective organizational systems
4. Systematic evangelism
5. Vitalized nurturing systems
6. Specialized ministry
7. Meaningful experiences with God
8. Provision of social services for the local community
9. Mission-oriented church schemata
10. Multiplication through church planting[265]

In order to assess how the interviewed participants addressed crucial church health indicators (see Table 14), this thesis project synthesized the approaches of the biblical purposes

[264.] Young-Gi Hong, "Models of the Church Growth Movement," *Transformation* 21, no. 2 (April 2004): 106, accessed January 15, 2018, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43053123.

[265.] Ibid., 107.

of ministry delineated by Rick Warren and Steve Gladen (worship, ministry, evangelism, fellowship, discipleship), elements of the Natural Church Development Model, and the common health indicators revealed in the ICGK research findings.[266]

Church Health Modifiers

As stated above, grounded theory enables themes and categories to emerge through constant comparison of collected data. Chapter five is a presentation of the themes and categories that emerged during coding and analysis processes relative to this project's third and final research question. Chapter discussion includes the common strategies, methods, and modes the senior pastors of growing Churches of God in Western North Carolina employed when addressing recognized growth predictors.

Worship

Inspiring worship

The pastors participating in this research project were strong worship leaders and placed considerable emphasis on creating inspiring corporate worship that glorifies God. Participants agreed that worship ignites natural church development when it engages the seeker's heart, mind, and emotions through prayer, praise, giving, and the preaching of God's Word.[267] Every project participant held the fundamental belief that worship is multidimensional, biblical (Acts 2:44; Heb. 10:25), and an inestimable source of strength, courage, and edification for believers. Project data results suggest that most of the churches included in the research sample were in no immediate danger of experiencing spiritual stagnation or loss of vitality, as they successfully

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[266.] Gladen, *Small Groups with Purpose*, 27.

[267.] Werning, *12 Pillars*, 42.

communicated the importance of interdependence, fraternal affection, and unity in the Spirit.[268]

The way pastors lead and participate in corporate worship reveals their understanding of God and contributes to the spiritual formation of lay leaders and parishioners. Pastors and the churches they shepherd are oriented to the Christian faith and daily living in the Spirit through corporate worship. It is through Spirit-filled worship that senior leaders and the church families they oversee establish authentic and meaningful relationships with God and each other.[269] For the senior pastors included in this research endeavor, worship had several distinctions. They expressed Pentecostal worship through corporate praise and adoration poured out to God. This form of worship is charismatic and marked by church leaders and parishioners praying in concert and "in the Holy Spirit." Prayer in the Spirit is most often accompanied by glossolalia for Spirit-filled believers. This type of prayer can serve to assist individuals in determining God's agenda and vision for the church. Prayer in the Spirit is at times highly intimate, as the individual's prayer is intermingled with that of the Holy Spirit and offered as an intercessory petition to God (Rom. 8:26).[270]

The Church of God does emphasize speaking in tongues (John 15:26; Acts 2:4, 10:44-46, 19:1-7) and other manifestations of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:4-11).[271] The majority of the participants in this research project rejected the idea that the miraculous works of the Holy Spirit concluded with some glorious generation of the past. They commonly posited the opinion that fostering an attitude of openness to the Holy Spirit in worship glorifies God and attains genuine

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[268.] Hughes, *Church of God Distinctives,* 74-75.

[269.] Johnathan E. Alvarado, "Worship in the Spirit: Pentecostal Perspectives on Liturgical Theology and Praxis," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 21, no. 1 (2012): 135–36, doi:10.1163/17455 2512?633330.

[270.] Hughes, *Church of God Distinctives,* 74-77.

[271.] Church of God International Offices, "Doctrinal Commitments," accessed January 31, 2018, http://www.churchofgod.org/beliefs/doctrinal-commitments.

spirituality, growth, and church vitality. One participant stated, "The first thing I did when I came in here, instead of changing everything, was to focus on the vital signs of the church. I immediately focused on the fellowship and worship of the church."[272] The challenge for these pastors was in discerning how to achieve the proper worship tension between order and free-flowing charismatic enthusiasm.[273]

Christian Schwarz describes inspired worship as a product of the Holy Spirit's work which affects the conduct of an entire worship service. He insists that, when the Holy Spirit is truly at work, the atmosphere of a gathering is stimulating and engaging, and individuals attending such inspired services indicate "that going to church is fun."[274] The research participants rooted their theological orientation in Wesleyan holiness, a spiritual tradition marked by decidedly pneumatological liturgical practices. The successful pastors included in this thesis project recognized the tenets of Pentecostal worship as encompassing the expression of unscripted passionate praise and emotional release, as Spirit-filled believers react to a transformative encounter with the divine. All participants selected for this project understood corporate worship to be a celebration of free worship and spontaneity. For them, worship meant experiencing the Holy Spirit in fellowship with the church families they oversaw.[275]

All the participants shared the belief that Spirit-filled worship directly impacted the growth and vitality of their churches over the time interval delineated for this research project. Participant 6, with a 12% overall attendance increase from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016, reflected on the relationship between growth and commitment to corporate worship:

[272.] Participant 16, interviewed by author, January 16. 2017, Document 19, transcript, location (6130:6370), Hampton, VA.

[273.] Alvarado, "Worship in the Spirit," 136.

[274.] Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 31.

[275.] Alvarado, "Worship in the Spirit," 139-40.

> I got them praying. I got the people praying and seeking God. I got them fasting. I got them doing spiritual things. I got them to be faithful to church services. You're not going to have growth if members don't care. If members just hang around, just come and go as they please. That's not growth. There's got to be commitment.[276]

Every participant emphasized commitment to promoting corporate worship and postulated, to some degree, the idea that the church exists to glorify God. Participants shared the perspective that Spirit-filled worship embodies spiritual connectedness, spiritual transcendence, and Spirit-filled liturgical leadership, all of which they considered to have implications for church growth, consistent attendance, and overall vitality.[277]

The successful Church of God pastors included in this research project believed that a healthy worship environment is one in which all ministry activities, prayers, praise, and hymnody are interactive and engaging acts which connect worshippers to each other and to God. It is a milieu of worship marked by a vivid awareness of God's presence, in which worshippers engage God intellectually and emotionally. It is an ecclesial atmosphere intentionally focused on catechizing membership in the tenets of the Christian faith. The interviewed pastors recognized worship as didactic as any other formal ministry application in the church. One innovative pastor's reflection on worship and purpose for his church ministries illustrates this shared philosophy of liturgy:

> Our statement of purpose is: we exist to glorify God. By creating a healthy environment, worship, instruction, fellowship, and evangelism, using the Word of God as our foundation. If it doesn't fit into those areas of worship, instruction, fellowship, and evangelism, then we pretty much feel like it's not for us.[278]

Pentecostals affirm that a genuine understanding of God cannot be attained apart from the

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[276.] Participant 6, interviewed by author, October 5, 2016, Document 2, transcript, location (18817:19156), Hampton, VA.

[277.] Alvarado, "Worship in the Spirit," 140–45.

[278.] Participant 9, interviewed by author, January 1, 2017, Document 14, transcript, location (3618:4281), Hampton, VA.

Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10-13), who teaches, nurtures, and transforms the believer into the likeness of Jesus Christ. In fact, it is the believer's life in, and walk with, the Holy Spirit that informs Scripture reading, acts of praise, response to Pentecostal preaching, and worship participation.[279]

Personal and corporate prayer

Strategic planning expert Aubrey Malphurs states, "Show me a church whose people in general and leaders in particular pray regularly and positively for the church, and I will show you a church that is being blessed by God."[280] The more innovative and culturally intelligent participants included in this thesis project acknowledged a correlation between corporate prayer and church. Some of these leaders recognized corporate prayer as the genesis of the growth they had realized within the project time constraints. Participant 8 stated,

> The greatest thing that I saw there is that we had a Monday night prayer meeting with 3 people. It went from 3 to 6, to 9, to 97 with people coming out and praying on Monday night. Through that prayer meeting on Monday night, people were excited, and they told other people. It was a phenomenal growth.[281]

Participant 16, who incorporated prayer in his church growth strategies, reflected on the correlation between corporate prayer and church growth:

> Our leadership strategy is to call the church to prayer and communicate from there. Our goal is to get the church praying and work around that. Not shock everybody and blast humankind like we do in a revival.[282]

Data findings suggest that the participating pastors who ascribed significant value to corporate prayer, and intentionally included systematic prayer in implemented growth strategies, also perceived a relationship between the consistent practice of the inward spiritual disciplines of

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[279.] Alvarado, "Worship in the Spirit," 148–49.

[280.] Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 84.

[281.] Participant 8, interviewed by author, August 27, 2016, Document 14, transcript, location (499:796), Hampton, VA.

[282.] Participant 16, interviewed by author, January 16, 2017, Document 19, transcript, location (14925:15123), Hampton, VA.

prayer, fasting, meditation, and the reading of God's Word.[283] When practiced intentionally, consistently, and passionately through a schema of worship, these disciplines create or enhance the avenues of communication God utilizes to transform the individual into the likeness of Christ (Rom. 12:1-2). Participants generally ascribed the intentional practice of the inner disciplines as the best plan for abating or eradicating the emotional fears, phobias, and neuroses brought on by stress, depression, anxiety, and obsessive behaviors (2 Cor. 4:1-16; 2 Tim. 3:1-7). The sacrificial act of fasting maintains a balance in personal behavior, and a perpetual two-way communication in a person's heart through the disciplines of prayer and meditation (Jam. 4:6-10) create a sanctuary of peace and a deepening friendship with Jesus.[284]

Meaningful relationships with God (passionate spirituality)

Christian Schwarz argues that the mere teaching and preaching of Christian doctrine, regardless of orthodoxy and perception of Scripture, will not initiate sustainable church growth. Rather, growth begins to diminish and gradually cease, as an inward-reaching desire to *defend the doctrine* replaces the contagious enthusiasm experienced by fledgling Christians. Schwarz also insists that passion alone, no matter the magnitude or sincerity of expression, may not demonstrate an individual's loyalty to the truth. Even though the Natural Church Development paradigm recognizes passionate spirituality as essential to catalyzing and maintaining healthy church growth, the renowned growth expert defines passionate spirituality as faith daily lived and expressed through a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ, rather than prompted spiritual expressions or legalistic religious praxis.[285]

[283.] Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 20th anniversary ed., 3rd ed., rev. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 14–61.

[284.] Ibid.

[285] Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 26-27.

The project participants recognized passionate spirituality as an indicator of growth and critically essential for God to initiate natural growth automatisms. Regarding growth, participant 5 stated, "If you can sense the presence of God, love amongst the people, and friendliness, I think that's a good measure of growth. I think it's a good spiritual barometer.[286] One of the more traditional pastors explained his perception of how genuine relationships with Christ influenced church growth:

> I'm not a great organizational minister. I'm more of a spiritual leader to the extent that if you get people in the spirit, get them on fire for God, and get them to obeying God's Word, then God will develop the growth of the church.[287]

The successful growth leaders included in this research endeavor demonstrated an understanding of spirituality that encompassed more than theological doctrine, ritualistic worship, or corporate performance within preferred worship environs. These pastors shared an aversion to arid, formal, and unemotional approaches to religious life and collectively recognized church vitality as directly related to the Holy Spirit's empowering of the church. Pentecostals live in apocalyptic anticipation of the return of Christ, and a need to evangelize the world fuels their spirituality. Worshippers in the churches led by these administrators respond to the Holy Spirit's presence and activity in a plethora of ways (upraised hands, exuberant praise, singing, shouting, dancing); however, the goal is for worshippers to have life-transforming encounters with God.[288]

Born from the experience of the baptism with the Holy Spirit, Pentecostal soteriology is fundamentally Arminian and has a Wesleyan-holiness evangelical hermeneutic. Data analysis

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[286.] Participant 5, interviewed by author, November 30, 2016, Document 1, transcript, location (23317:23465), Hampton, VA.

[287.] Participant 6, interviewed by author, October 8, 2016, Document 14, transcript, location (18062:18498), Hampton, VA.

[288.] Marius Nel, "An Attempt to Define the Constitutive Elements of a Pentecostal Spirituality," *In die Skriflig* 49, no. 1 (2015): 2–6, doi:10.4102/ids.v49i1.1864.

revealed that eleven of the eighteen participating pastors (67% of the total growth) intentionally communicated the tenets of Pentecostal spirituality and soteriology. These growth leaders emphasized the importance of every believer being baptized with the Spirit and establishing a direct daily experience with God's presence.[289]

Ministry

Biblical ministry has been defined as volitional service(s) rendered to God or to people, initiated with the intent of utilizing mentoring, edification, empowerment, and instruction to influence and motivate individuals toward corporate maturity in Christ (Eph. 4:7-16). Because church ministry is a continuance of the servant ministry demonstrated by Jesus Christ, its purpose far exceeds the boundaries of local church entities. Entrenched in the Great Commission, effective ministry is an outreach-focused expression of the spiritual gifts and natural talents that God has bestowed upon his people.[290]

The participants selected for this project agreed that effectual ministry is the product of superlative pastoral leadership. Describing the church in organic terms, these senior administrators perceived leaders and parishioners to be diverse and integral parts of one wide-reaching body of gifted clerics (1 Pet. 2:5). Every participant, to varying degrees, emphasized the importance of strategically planning ministry efforts, empowering and developing candidates for leadership, and establishing highly functional organizational structures. Participants shared the belief that these three facets of pastoral leadership had direct implications for twenty-first-century church growth and achieving maximum evangelism results.

[289.] Nel, "Attempt to Define," 2.

[290.] Walter A. Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2nd ed. (Carlisle, Cumbria, U.K: Paternoster Press, 2001), 777–78.

Ministry analysis, strategic planning, strategy implementation, and evaluation

Fifty percent of the project participants acknowledged the administrative aspects and responsibilities associated with the senior pastor role. These participants clearly articulated a common understanding that their role consisted of more than presenting the church with superlative homiletics, innovative religious pedagogy, and liturgical leadership. These ministers shared the belief that for a church to thrive and be effective in the twenty-first century, senior leaders will have to develop and implement biblically-informed strategies that ensure the facilitation of high impact ministry, leadership reproduction, membership mobilization, the empowering of laity and leaders, and the development of strong systems designed specifically for discipleship and evangelism.

During the interviewing stage of this qualitative research project, the researcher prompted participants to describe how they identified the need for organizational and ministry changes. Data analysis showed sixteen of the eighteen interviewed pastors to be highly proficient at determining the physical, spiritual, and emotional state of their respective church cultures. These participants skillfully recognized the need for change, the type of change required, and the magnitude of change necessary to move their respective church families toward better emotional and physical health, increased growth, and the rekindling of corporate spiritual formation. Even though discussion with these sixteen pastors revealed them to be unafraid of embracing change, these leaders shared the common leadership principle that change should occur for a specific reason, it must have a purpose, and ultimately it must benefit the church without producing unnecessary problems and conflict.[291]

These participants utilized divergent types of change and made changes to organizational

[291.] Ramsey Coutta, *A Practical Guide for Successful Church Change* (New York: iUniverse, 2008), 53.

structure and church ministries for numerous reasons. One pastor effected remedial changes to church evangelism ministries after he recognized signs of atrophy among church leaders and membership. His proactive approach to remedy their spiritual malady was to promptly mobilize church leaders and members through globalizing church service efforts and setting goals to build new churches in South America. Two other participants made radical changes and restructured the administrative hierarchy with the intent of bringing reform. While some pastors gauged the efficacy of ministry applications, others evaluated ministry leaders for leadership competencies and the character qualities outlined in Scripture for Christian spiritual leadership (1 Tim. 3:2-7; Tit. 1:6-7). In either case, if they found either applications or leaders lacking or ineffective, the pastors made changes to the church's organizational structure.[292]

Five participants made major church-wide changes. This decision had implications for church ministries, staff, and membership. At the time of the interview, two participants were in the process of making physical changes, after an evaluation of church facilities deemed them incompatible with current growth percentages. Three participants made extensive modifications to meeting schedules, marketing brands, and modes of evangelism in response to rapid demographic and socioeconomic shifts in their church milieus. One pastor explained that, upon taking the position as the lead pastor of his church, he recognized some congregants had been fostering longstanding and destructive forms of emotional and spiritual conflict. These clashes were sapping the church of its energy and diverting ministry focus to personal agendas. With only a negligible framework for governing and leading ministry, factions and mistrust in the church body multiplied.[293] This pastor brought reformation by incrementally restructuring church

[292.] Ibid., 53-59.

[293.] Coutta, *A Practical Guide*, 53-59.

administration, ministries, and leadership roles to function under the guidelines of the Church of God Book of Discipline, Church Order, and Governance. He dedicated special emphasis and instruction to the guidelines applicable to local church government.[294]

The importance of strategic planning. Statistics presented in recent research publications on church revitalization suggest that as many as 340,000 churches need revitalization presently in America. Over 80% of American churches are in decline, or in a state of plateau, with 95% of these churches averaging less than one hundred in attendance. Every year approximately 3,500 churches close across America.[295] In *Advanced Strategic Planning,* Aubrey Malphurs explains that church revitalization and the engendering of new growth cycles depends on how well senior church leaders understand the importance of strategic planning. Malphurs contends that churches that break out of the plateau-and-decline pattern utilize long-range planning.[296] Church revitalization expert Kirk Hadaway has found that 85% of 500 metropolitan churches that initiated growth after plateau, had reevaluated their programs and ministry priorities five years prior to the onset of the recorded increase in attendance.[297]

Chapter two of this thesis discusses the findings regarding participants' mission and vision ideology. Sixteen of the eighteen participants disclosed the central motivating factor or overarching goal that was driving the ministry and mission of their respective churches. Two primary goals emerged from data analysis. Eighteen senior pastors and their respective congregations shared the corporate goal of reaching lost souls and unchurched individuals in the

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[294.] Black, *Minutes 2014*, 137–68.

[295.] Tom Cheyney, *The Nuts & Bolts of Church Revitalization* (Orlando, FL: Renovate Publishing Group, 2015), 12–13.

[296.] Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 26.

[297.] Ibid.

surrounding communities and cities. In addition, these successful participants and their growing churches had the second goal of purposefully engaging the community, with the intent of meeting its spiritual and socioeconomic needs (See Table 13). Most of the senior pastors perceived their church's mission and vision to be focused around one or an amalgamation of these two themes.

Eleven of the 18 participants had implemented a strategic plan of change that did more than merely communicate universal goals and objectives. Participants who had a clear perception of their church's position in its life cycle and had implemented a strategic plan to move the church to a healthier state of wellbeing experienced 54% of the total overall growth for the three-year time interval of this research project.

The importance of ministry analysis. Most of the pastors included in this research project advocated evaluation of ministry activities, organizational structure, and the outcomes of implemented reform strategies. Nearly all the participants utilized a team of gifted, spiritually mature, Spirit-filled, highly committed leaders during the strategic planning process. Some of the pastors formed a strategic leadership team, while others developed and implemented strategies with the assistance of denominational guidelines in the *Pastor's Council*. In both team applications, the pastors described team members as not only possessing impeccable character and ministry competence, but also as being emotionally aligned with each other and marked by personal traits that accentuated the church's culture and the harmony of the leadership team.[298]

Many of these pastors conducted an internal church audit to assess ministry and organizational strengths and weaknesses. These senior administrators administered churchwide surveys, polled influential stakeholders, and brainstormed with their leadership teams to flesh out

[298.] Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 217–22.

their church's weakest ministry factors. For some participants, this scrutiny revealed inefficiencies in how they approached and treated church guests. One pastor stated that, to date, his guest retention rate was twelve out of one hundred people. The internal assessment showed some participants needed to establish more egalitarian modes of communication which diminished relational boundaries between leaders and guests. In addition, the church audit enabled some participants to recognize voids in the type of relational groups offered by their church, and for other participants, personality testing of active leaders (e.g. DISC, Myers Briggs) revealed the need to make significant changes in the church's organizational structure to generate higher magnitudes of quality leadership and ministry.

Only one participant presented a church growth strategy that included an analysis of the surrounding community. This pastor, who adhered to the Blue Ocean philosophy for church mission and evangelism, demonstrated more cultural and emotional intelligence than his contemporaries. Moreover, this participant utilized collected demographic and psychographic information to identify target audiences surrounding the church, as well as culturally-relevant opportunities to disseminate the gospel. Interpretation of collected data afforded the church the opportunity to modify its ministries and services to meet the socioeconomic needs of the public entities (e.g. schools, fire and police departments, non-profit public services) and multicultural communities in proximity to the church. Knowledge of the community allowed this participant the ability to tailor the church's paradigms of evangelism and discipleship to meet the needs of a highly diverse audience even before they enter the doors of the church.[299]

Addressing church change. Participants shared the common understanding that church change is a spiritual effort and acknowledged prayer, Scripture, corporate worship, and the Holy Spirit as

[299.] Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 180–83.

legitimate resources for developing effectual change strategies.[300] One participant explained these shared principles quite eloquently:

> I really believe that if we can get His voice in ours when we preach. Not our words, our strategy, or us trying to do our thing. When we are in tune with the Lord and we're saying His words, it will awaken something in the church. They will follow you. If you're following the Lord, how can you not grow? Follow me as I follow Christ. They begin to follow as they hear His voice.[301]

Participants commonly perceived the church as an organic entity with emotional, social, and physical development life processes. These pastors proactively contested the maladies of church atrophy and lethargy by communicating a mantra of change until leaders, laity, and membership embraced the axiom that *church wellbeing equals continuous change*. The following participant responses demonstrate this perception of growth as the norm for a healthy church body:

> God's always moving. God's always doing things. If God is not speaking to you the same way he did fifty years ago, then somebody isn't doing something right. So, we try to communicate that. We try to communicate it seriously. We tell our people to not necessarily get comfortable at any level. There's always more to do. There's always more to grow. We communicate that. We do that continuously.[302]

> With a church plant, it seems to be different. When I talk to other guys they say it doesn't go that way here. Our church is very open to change. We've experienced change a lot as we grow. We planted, you know we moved. We started in one place. Literally moved two weeks later. Moved another. Moved six weeks after that. Moved again another year after that. So, our church is kind of conditioned. The people that have been there are conditioned to change, and things are going to happen. Almost feel like things are odd if they're not changing. We are conditioned to do that. So, I pretty much voice the change. If there is anything that's going to be changed I voice it from the pulpit a lot of times.[303]

[300.] Werning, *12 Pillars*, 47–48.

[301.] Participant 2 interviewed by author, November 5. 2016, Document 17, transcript, location (21484:22766), Hampton, VA.

[302.] Participant 10, interviewed by author, August 24, 2016, Document 1, transcript, location (22972:23464; 24957: 25880), Hampton, VA.

[303.] Participant 4, interviewed by author, August 26, 2016, transcript, Document 13, location (7061:7801), Hampton, VA.

The inevitability of conflict and the importance of resolution roles and approaches. Participants equally posited that church change should be planned, communicated, and implemented with great care, as even the slightest modification to physical, organizational, or ministry dynamics can have devastating consequences for the health and vitality of a church. During the interview, participant 4 stated, "I do realize that change can make or break a church. We've all read scenarios where that's happened. Where it could be a small change that could break a church, or it could be a big change and make the church, so to speak."[304]

Data results suggest that the different ways individuals attribute value to actions, behaviors, possessions, and positions create conflict. Resistance and conflict related to the modes and means of reaching ministry goals were the foremost types of conflict encountered by the pastors included in this research project. One participant met resistance from parishioners when he proposed upgrading the church's outdoor changeable copy sign to a highly visible electronic LED display. Not understanding the pastor's forward-thinking vision, the consensus of the membership was that the present mode of communication adequately advertised church ministries and events.

Pastors challenged by conflict about how to accomplish ministry goals and objectives were generally leaders who took a confrontational approach to resolving conflict. These participants practiced an authoritarian style of leadership and demonstrated the assertive skills required to share hard truths and the fortitude to hear the retorts of leaders, laity, and membership.[305] However, findings revealed these dominating personas generally lacked the ability to build guiding coalitions, effectively communicate a plan of change, and serve as a

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304. Participant 4, interviewed by author, August 26, 2016, transcript, Document 13, location (10021:10620), Hampton, VA.

305. Everist, *Church Conflict*, 82.

group facilitator or negotiator between parties.

One staff member requested that a senior pastor provide more compensation for the added responsibilities a change implementation would bring to their employment role. This represents one example of the direct relationship between resistance to change and how individuals attributed value to actions, behaviors, and church assets.[306] When challenged with this conflict type, pastor participants employed an accommodating approach to resolve issues. In the change process, these participants seemed to hold low levels of concern for their own needs and possessed high magnitudes of concern for those under their spiritual care and leadership. These administrators were more inclined to use their authority to help conflicting parties focus on shared interests rather than personal rights or positions.[307]

Another cause of change resistance for participants was interpersonal conflict between themselves and staff members because of incompatible personality traits. Skirmishes occurred over reformative changes, modifications in operational structure, or when the pastor made significant changes to selected job qualifications. Findings of this research revealed that these pastors encountered conflict and resistance to change when staff perceived them to be advocating a specific policy, person, ministry, or identity group, especially within the context of negotiating toward a resolution between two or more conflicting parties.[308]

Ramsey Coutta explains that resistance to change manifests differently in each individual. Members of the church body often become physically or verbally confrontational, seek ways to undermine initiated changes, or form resistant coalitions of likeminded supporters. Some parishioners withhold needed resources and others take a "wait-and-watch position," preferring

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306. Ibid., 19–20.

307. Barsky, *Conflict Resolution*, 47–79.

308. Ibid., 5–7.

to remain uncommitted to the change until the strategies achieve positive outcomes. Because resistance to change cannot always be eliminated, pastors seeking growth must devise ways to manage resistance. [309]

Change strategies have been proven to fail when change saturation occurs. Change saturation happens when the magnitude of change is so great that it negatively impacts membership and the church as an organization.[310] In other words, change saturation is experienced when the degree of change in a church is greater than the church's resiliency and capability to absorb the new change(s). Change saturation typically occurs when change point leaders fail to consider the number and magnitude of past changes, individual perceptions of the need for change, and the magnitude, quantity, and scope of the current changes.[311] A church's capacity for change is a function of its culture, history, structure, perceived need for change, and change management competency.[312]

Participants employed a plethora of stratagems to increase change capacity and curtail the degree of disruption of implemented change plans. Except for one pastor, every participant developed an effectual cohort of gifted and wise leaders to assist them in strategic planning. All the pastors believed that the chief leader of church change cannot exhibit opaque dispositions and behaviors when communicating mission, vision, and approaches to change to leaders, laity, and membership. When prompted to reflect on relationships in the context of change, participants articulated their thoughts utilizing the word *transparent* (seventeen times) and

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309. Coutta, *A Practical Guide*, 36–39.

310. Tim Creasey, "Enough Is Enough! - Tips for Avoiding Change Saturation," Prosci blog, accessed March 6, 2018, http://blog.prosci.com/tips-for-avoiding-change-saturation.

311. Selwyn Swe, "Degree of Change > Resiliency to Change = Change Saturation Organizational Change: Degree of Change > Resiliency to Change = Change Saturation," http://www.selwyn.org, 2012, accessed March 6, 2018, http://www.selwyn.org/selwyn/node/24.

312 Creasey, "Enough Is Enough!"

transparency (ten times). One pastor explained how personal transparency facilitated reciprocal trust building between pastor and church, as he was in the throes of trying to transform his vision into a plan and communicate it to the church:

> You want to establish trust first, and then institute change… because of the relational aspect and transparency, more specifically the transparency, the change went very well.[313]

Abating change saturation is contingent on the cognitive flexibility of church leaders and membership. Cognitive flexibility refers to an individual's recognition of existing options and alternatives in any given situation and his or her willingness to adapt to the situation. In other words, church members who are cognitively flexible can determine ways to adapt personal thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to changes in organizational structure or ministry efforts through knowledge attained and processed during social interactions. To successfully implement church change strategies, participants selected for this research project had to address three dimensions of resistance: effective resistance (positive or negative feelings), cognitive resistance (perceived need for change), and behavioral resistance (actions due to change).[314]

Participants agreed that high magnitudes of change or rapid reformation vicissitudes would initiate churchwide fear and anxiety. The pastors were of the consensus that changes to structure and ministry are to be enacted slowly and at an incremental pace that affords leaders and parishioners the opportunity to acknowledge the positive outcomes of the modification. Some of the pastors even posited the idea that overall growth should take place at a gradual pace, thereby allowing the church time to develop the infrastructure and leadership paradigms required

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[313.] Participant 4, interviewed by author, August 26, 2016, transcript, Document 13, location (6240:6791), Hampton, VA.

[314.] Shao-Hsi Chung, Ying-Fang Su, and Shao-Wen Su, "The Impact of Cognitive Flexibility on Resistance to Organizational Change," *Social Behavior and Personality* 40, no. 5 (2012): 736–37, doi:10.2224/sbp.2012.40.5.735.

to accommodate the influx of new converts and families. One participant increased overall cognitive flexibility by implementing modifications for delineated time intervals, affording leaders and membership the option to terminate change approaches and mechanisms that proved to have significant negative implications for the church.

Key influencers who possess the aptitudes and attitudes required to assist others in perceiving the need for a change or implemented strategy diminish negative emotional and behavioral responses to modification(s). For this reason, the senior pastors believed the success or failure of a change or change strategy depended on how well the senior pastor communicated the reason for the change to leaders, laity, and membership. Every participant took intentional steps to address the emotional barriers that often restrict church growth and communicated the reason for organizational and ministry changes to a select group of influential leaders and parishioners, who they described as open to new experiences, highly flexible, and given to self-evaluation. Church stakeholders with these qualities readily adapted to change and possessed the social power and influence required to persuade others to *buy into* the vision and mission.[315]

Empowering Leadership

The Apostle Paul admonished his spiritual son and apprentice regarding the importance of identifying, mentoring, empowering, and deploying potential church ministry and leadership candidates. He explained to Timothy in 2 Timothy, "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 people who will also be qualified to teach others (2 Tim. 2:1-2, NIV)." Waldo Werning contends that the empowerment of leaders and laity is not only the responsibility of senior administration, but it is to be considered a foundational element in the life and health of

[315.] Chung, Su, and Su, "Impact of Cognitive Flexibility," 736–43.

every local church.[316] Christian Schwarz posits that senior leaders empower themselves as they intentionally equip, support, motivate, and mentor gifted individuals to maximize their ministry potentials. Schwarz argues that when a leader invests time into discipleship and delegation, the energy expended is multiplied exponentially, as God releases the natural automatisms of reproduction and development.[317]

Contemporary leaders understand that empowerment occurs when they redistribute authority and power by delegating decision making to lower level organizational managers and employees. Empowerment is more than the practice of delegating power, roles, and leadership tasks; it can be structural and accrued from position. It affords church leaders and laity access to information, resources, support, and opportunities for advanced personal development. Empowerment can be psychological and accrued as apprentices or developing leaders gain a sense of self-confidence, artistry, or enjoyment from completing their job tasks.[318] Psychological empowerment is associated with intrinsic motivation. Leaders coach and mentor apprentices toward workplace autonomy, competency, team building, and meaningful purpose.[319]

Findings revealed a significant correlation between participants' leadership style and how they selected apprentices and individuals for decision making teams. Two major themes emerged from constant comparison and data analysis of how participants identified potential leadership candidates. One theme was quality of character and ability to influence others; the other was personal attitude and spiritual giftedness.

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316. Werning, *12 Pillars*, 25.

317. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 22–23.

318. Bass and Bass, *Bass Handbook of Leadership*, 304–5.

319. Louis W. Fry, "Toward a Theory of Spiritual Leadership," *The Leadership Quarterly* 14 (September 2003): 698–99.

Ten of the eighteen pastors recognized quality of character and the ability to influence others as the chief markers of leadership potential. The leadership style of these senior pastors was quintessentially transformational. The goal of transformational leaders is to create a reciprocal connection that elevates personal effort and moral aspiration levels. These highly steady and influencing pastors sought ways to intrinsically motivate followers. Seventy percent of these leaders had academic training and half of them held degrees from a college or university. These participants recognized charisma as an important personal characteristic and a prerequisite for communicating vision in a way that causes others to believe changes in organizational structure and ministry are worth the investment.[320] Findings suggest that the overarching goal of this group of pastors was to be strong role models for lower level leaders and laity. They sought to communicate high expectations to their developing apprentices and seize opportunities to empower leaders across the decision-making matrix by paying attention to their personal needs and delegating responsibilities based on their potential to stimulate personal growth. [321]

These leaders demonstrated an aversion to building leadership structures focused on administrative control and micromanagement and instead shared an affection for cohort decision making and team problem solving. Several comments from these transformational and charismatic leaders reflected their empowerment philosophy. When describing his leadership style, participant 12 explained how much he valued group consensus:

> I am strong, but I do like consensus. Therefore, if I can bend and get consensus, I'm okay with that. But when necessary, I do exert stronger leadership. In meetings, I do give a chance for everyone to say what is on their mind. At the end, someone will always say, well what do you think pastor? I will share it openly and honestly and kindly…It's kind of like the Knights of the Roundtable that talked about being first among equals. It's sort

[320.] Fry, "Toward a Theory of Spiritual Leadership," 702.

[321.] Drury, "Handbook of Leadership Theory for Church Leaders," 18.

> of like that. It's a first among equals thing. I give them the opportunity to have a voice and then at the end, they give me an opportunity to share my voice…I give them a lot of opportunities to share their feelings, to share their opinions, and in the end, they trust me enough to follow me in almost anything that we discuss.[322]

Fifty percent of participants who had identified candidates for leadership by scrutinizing their personal character and power of influence had developed and implemented strong church-based leadership development programs.

Seven of the eighteen pastors believed an individual's attitude and personal gifts and talents should determine leadership potential. These pastors practiced servant leadership and had steady and conscientious personality traits. These leaders lacked the academic background of their transformational charismatic counterparts. Only three participants in this group held a degree from a college or university. Findings suggests that these participants placed less emphasis on developing vehicles for training emergent ministry leaders. Only 43% of the churches led by these pastors had implemented strong leadership development paradigms.

Servant leaders emphasize improving the well-being of their followers, building community, and developing people by modeling Christlike behavior. A positive attitude coupled with a faithful commitment to serve others is fundamental to this leadership model. These pastors believe that a ministry candidate grows stronger, healthier, and more autonomous as they focus on serving others. Like other leadership models, servant leaders seek to empower their followers by giving them the freedom to make decisions and be self-sufficient. However, the overarching goal for this leadership model is to create healthy church environs that can enhance follower and organizational performance, stimulate growth, and make a significant impact on the communities and cities in proximity to the church.[323]

[322.] Participant 12, interviewed by author, October 18, 2016, Document 8, transcript, location (17109:18581), Hampton, VA.

[323.] Northouse, *Leadership*, 225–36.

Seven behaviors mark the core of the servant leader process, and one of these is conceptualization. Servant leaders are inclined to think through multifaceted problems, complexities, and missions associated with the church as an organization and an organism. This ecclesial understanding affords them the ability to readily recognize emerging problems and ministry deficits within the church body.[324] Findings suggest that this group of leaders placed more emphasis on gift-oriented ministry. These pastors acknowledged a relationship between the leaders and laity serving others in their area of giftedness and church vitality. They believed that assisting believers in identifying and developing their personal gifts and talents directly impacted church growth and vitality.

When these pastors reflected on the utilization of spiritual gifts and specific personal talents as criteria for leadership candidacy, they did not appear to have ulterior motives that would infer any biases in their selection of apprentices. When prompted to disclose their methodology for identifying, developing, and deploying leaders, they expressed a heartfelt desire to place individuals in divinely-established positions which utilized their gifts in the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit. This seemed to be their overarching goal; the attainment of maximum ministry potentials was merely a product of this transformative individual process. Possessing a comprehensive understanding of the complexities, gaps in ministry, and mission of the church afforded these leaders the ability to groom emerging leaders to fill ministry roles and positions that made full advantage of their personal and spiritual gifts.

Discipleship and Evangelism

In *Transforming Discipleship*, Greg Ogden describes the four developmental stages of discipleship. Ogden derives his model from the parental approach the Apostle Paul (1 Tim. 1:2)

[324.] Ibid., 232.

utilized to cultivate Christlike character in his fledgling Christian apprentices. The ethos of this method of spiritual formation is follower multiplication through modeling (1 Cor. 11:1, NIV), instruction (2 Tim. 2:2, NIV), and collaborative ministry (Acts 16:3, NIV).[325] Infancy is stage one of Ogden's discipleship paradigm. At this phase of Christian maturity, the new convert requires modeling and direction from the mentor. The disciple's role at this level of spiritual formation is to emulate the religious mentality and behaviors of their spiritual parent. After infancy the young believer enters a stage of childhood, which also requires the mentor's unconditional love and protection. At this stage of discipleship, the apprentice begins to identify with his or her mentor as they experience the successes and failures of collaborative ministry.[326]

During stage three of the discipleship process, the spiritual parent takes on a coaching role as the apprentice transitions into adolescence. The mentor provides the disciple with opportunities to lead in ministry and service and continues to observe and critique spiritual growth and ministry outcomes. Adulthood, stage four in Ogden's discipleship paradigm, occurs when the Christian believer has attained Christlike maturity, proven to be vocationally competent, and is deployed into ministry. The mentor takes the position of a ministry colleague, and the disciple becomes a spiritual parent to a newborn believer.[327]

Holistic relational groups

Most of the participants recognized Ogden's four stages of the discipleship process and had developed and implemented robust modes and means to engage and instruct believers at each phase of leadership development and spiritual formation. The preferred discipleship vehicle

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[325.] Greg Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship: About Greg* (Downers Grove, IL: Greg Ogden, 2003), 99–105.

[326.] Ibid., 105–12.

[327.] Ogden, *Transforming Discipleship,* 114–17.

by these successful pastors proved to be holistic small groups. Thirteen of the eighteen pastors had intentionally introduced small relational groups to stimulate church growth and facilitate effectual Christian maturation. These participants represent 72% of the total growth for the three-year time interval delineated for this research project.

The term *holistic* implies that these groups did more than discuss Scripture and its application to daily living. These thirteen participants described a relational group milieu in which Christians learn to serve others by utilizing their spiritual gifts. Growth is the natural product of group life.[328] Group leaders accelerate conversion growth by encouraging members to fervently pray for the lost and unchurched and by modeling and encouraging relational evangelism. Assimilation into the church family is crucial to church growth, and small groups facilitate assimilation. When group members care for guests and new converts, especially in times of need or personal crisis, they foster trust and relational intimacy. Multiplication is a by-product of the leadership identification, development, empowerment, and deployment practices employed by a well-trained small group leader.[329]

Development and implementation of new innovative discipleship paradigms

Every participant in this research endeavor recognized the relationship between discipleship and church growth. Participants shared the belief that church discipleship paradigms should, in essence, guide individuals toward spiritual growth and Christlikeness, help believers discover their gifts and talents, and ultimately maximize the individual's ministry potentials as they fulfil their divine calling or purpose.[330] Every senior pastor recognized the family as the

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328. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 32.

329. Jim Egli and Dwight Marable, *Small Groups, Big Impact* (n.p.: CCS Publishing, 2014), 149–91, Kindle.

330. Rod Dempsey, "Discipleship: What Is God's Will for My Church? Discipleship!," in *Innovate Church*, ed. Jonathan Falwell (Nashville, TN: B & H Books, 2008), 112.

fundamental building block of ecclesial social life, and all posited the premise that the scope of Christian discipleship must encompass all spiritual and biological age stratums, preferably beginning when a child enters preschool.

Pastors recording consistent growth over the project's three-year parameter stringently advocated the inclusion of denominational theological distinctives, Pentecostal perspectives, and the tenets of the Christian faith in discipleship paradigms. However, these successful participants shared the common belief that to be effective at disseminating the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ in the twenty-first century, discipleship and evangelism strategies must encompass more than Pentecostal preaching, old school revivals aimed at church membership, the mundane overworked pedagogy of Sunday school, entertaining musical events, and internally-focused potluck dinners. The pastors reporting the greatest growth over the three-year time interval recognized the power that the gospel has to transform people with hopeless perspectives into hopeful anxiety-free individuals filled with peace, joy, and purpose (John 10:10). These senior leaders were not focused on maintenance of existing church cultures and conditions, but rather on creating innovative ways of boldly taking the gospel to all areas of society.[331]

Findings of this project showed this group of broadminded pastors to have intentionally developed and initiated innovative modes of discipleship that empowered believers to discover their ministry calling and God's purpose for their lives.[332] One participant, after recognizing the traditional orientation of his church and its cultural resistance to change, ingeniously combined the church's lengthy revivals and musical extravaganzas into a morning and night service in June. The pastor marketed this new amalgamation of two separate events as a mid-summer camp

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[331.] Jonathan Falwell, "Introduction," in *InnovateChurch,* ed. Jonathan Falwell (Nashville, TN: B & H Books, 2008), 7.

[332.] Dempsey, "Discipleship," 96.

meeting and broadcasted it across inter-church and social media networks. Another innovative project participant was in the throes of initiating a church-based audio-visual curriculum lab. The pastor's goal was to offer leaders, laity, and membership undergraduate and graduate-level biblical studies sponsored by Lee University. Located in Cleveland, Tennessee, Lee University is an evangelical Christian organization affiliated with the Church of God, Cleveland, Tennessee.[333] The participant's curriculum goals also included providing an educational portal to the Church of God School of Ministry website, which was created to serve ministers and laity who have a strong desire to minister within the church and larger community. This site affords future ministers the opportunity to earn a certificate in ministerial studies.[334]

Findings of this research project suggest that the innovative thinking and behavior of the senior leaders fueled church growth and vitality. These leaders began house churches, employed culturally-relevant pedagogy tailored to certain generations, and implemented discipleship classes that introduced new converts to the rudimental constructs of the Christian faith and Pentecostal distinctives. Some participants in this group of successful leaders emulated secular mentoring programs like Big Brother Big Sister, America's Promise, iMentor, and Communities in Schools.[335] These participants demonstrated an intentional desire to develop genuine followers of Christ who will love God and others.

Jesus once explained in a parable that the gospel can be seeded into good fertile soil and,

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[333] Lee University, "About Us Lee University: Celebrating a Century," 2012, accessed April 7, 2018, http://www.leeuniversity.edu/about/.

[334] Church of God School of Ministry, "Church of God School of Ministry: Courses," WordPress, 2017, accessed April 7, 2018, http://www.ministerialtraining.org/.

[335] Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, "Big Brothers Big Sisters of America: Program Partners," 2018, accessed April 7, 2018, http://www.bbbs.org/program-partners/; America's Promise Alliance, "The Five Promises," 2018, accessed April 7, 2018, http://www.americaspromise.org/; imentor.org, "Every Student Deserves a Champion," 2018, accessed April 7, 2018, https://imentor.org; Communities in Schools, "Our Model," 2018, accessed April 7, 2018, https://www.communitiesinschools.org/our-model/.

in turn, produce a magnificent harvest (Matt. 13:23). The *out-of-the-box* dispositions and discipleship schemes of the above participants were not motivated by numeric growth, but rather by a desire to assist believers in reaching Christian maturity and maximize ministry potentials. For these participants, their innovative modes of discipleship served to cultivate and fertilize the soil for seeding the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ. They perceived growth to be a byproduct of disciple-making or the fulfilling of the Great Commission.

A line-by-line comparison of interview transcripts revealed that selected participants shared a common belief in need-oriented evangelism. The senior pastors adamantly recognized a relationship between reported growth and the social services provided for individuals and families in the cities and surrounding communities during the three-year project period (see Table 16). These pastors intentionally initiated systematic modes and means to meet the physical needs of their community. Some participants established church-based food banks and soup kitchens to aid the homeless. Other participants adopted area police, fire, and emergency departments and mobilized church members to support the municipal services through food and monetary donations, fundraisers, and volunteering. Several of the participants had established relationships with school authorities and initiated annual church-based programs to provide school supplies for underprivileged children. One highly innovative pastor procured city permits and set up prayer stations across the city. His church also initiated a program to pay monthly bills for families experiencing job loss, personal losses, or, in one case, homelessness resulting from a house fire.

Aubrey Malphurs posits that every church must ask the question: "If our church was to suddenly disappear, how much of a hole would it leave in our community?"[336] Findings of this

[336.] Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 176.

research suggest that the magnitude of importance and intentionality that a church administration gives to need-oriented evangelism has significant implications for church growth. These senior pastors have creatively immersed the church into their communities and surrounding cities. Their churches are making a difference in community at large, and one consequence of these efforts is church growth.

Conclusion

For this project, the researcher utilized constructivist grounded theory methods of coding, constant comparison, and purposeful sampling to categorize data and generate a practical theory. Three research questions served as the guiding framework. Chapter five discusses the research findings associated with the third and final question, "What common strategies, methods, and modes do pastors of growing churches employ when addressing recognized growth predictors?"

The participants selected for this research project shared common perspectives and behaviors when addressing recognized growth indicators, especially the modifiers that significantly impact growth and morbidity. The present manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the world and the church informed the participants' church growth philosophies, stratagems, and methodologies. They all acknowledged the importance of personal prayer and understood the Holy Spirit to be the legitimate source for vision, numerical growth, genuine discipleship, and soul-penetrating evangelism. Participants worked hard to establish a healthy worship environment in their respective churches. Important to all eighteen pastors was the creation of a corporate worship milieu in which ministry, praise, worship, and prayer engaged all participants.

The successful pastors selected for this project had overcome their fears, phobias, and neuroses through the daily practicing of the inner spiritual disciplines. These Spirit-filled men exhibited a deep loving relationship with Jesus Christ and shared a distaste for dry, formal, and

dispassionate approaches to spiritual life. The churches led by these pastors did not seem to be suffering from spiritual myopia. Participants kept this malady at bay through strategic planning, ministry analysis, and vision development. Participants recognized the church as an organic organism and their personal role in church growth to be unbound by their set roles as orators, educators, or chaplains.

Participants recording the highest average growth for the delineated time interval were highly proficient at recognizing their church's location in its life cycle. They identified the need for change in ministries or organizational structure and made the required changes to move the church to a higher level of wellbeing. These successful pastors were not afraid to embrace change and address congregational resistance to change, no matter how radical the change might be. All participants believed that change is inevitable for a growing church and that it can be accomplished if leaders communicate the reasons for the change to church stakeholders and give them enough time to recognize its benefits.

Findings suggest that the most successful senior pastors selected for this research project chose leadership candidates according to personal character and potential to influence others. These pastors shared a loathing for micromanagement, dominating administration, and autonomous decision-making. These leaders achieved growth through personal charisma, vision casting, team building, and the psychological and positional empowerment of leaders. These senior administrators were inclined to be academics and, in turn, were passionate about developing vehicles for training emergent ministry leaders.

Every participant acknowledged the correlation between discipleship and church growth. Most of the pastors had developed and implemented comprehensive discipleship vehicles to engage and instruct believers at every echelon of spiritual maturity. The senior pastors of these

growing churches had devised a plethora of innovative discipleship paradigms, including the widespread use of holistic small groups to deepen relationships and instruct new converts. The participants described these creative means of training church members for ministry deployment as culturally and generationally appropriate for communicating the life transforming gospel of Jesus Christ in the twenty-first century. These leaders promoted neighborhood house churches and employed biblical curriculum tailored to reach new audiences. Adapting mentors plans from secular entities to communicate the gospel, some pastors utilized clowns, drama teams, block parties, and even gave away hot dogs to the community. These pastors recognized how the destruction of cultural, generational, gender, and identity barriers can increase the potential for growth. Like Jesus, they were unafraid to approach barriers associated with today's postmodern culture (John 4:1-43). Like the Apostle Paul, these leaders were willing to seek an understanding of other genders, cultures, and ethnicities, in order to win a multicultural world to Christ. These pastors experienced church growth because they were willing to try all methods possible to win some to Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 9:20-22). It must also be noted that these select leaders employed these innovative paradigms within the parameters of their theological distinctives, Pentecostal heritage, and the tenets of the Christian faith.

Conclusion:

A Leadership Growth Model for Church of God Pastors in Western North Carolina

The researcher conducted this qualitative research project to identify and describe the essential leadership factors required to stimulate and sustain attendance and conversion growth for Church of God churches in Western North Carolina. This was accomplished through interviews with eighteen senior pastors who had recorded three consecutive years of benchmark overall growth (=>10% per year) for their churches in the Western region of North Carolina. Specifically, this project evaluated the similarities and differences between the pastors' answers to twelve questions (See appendix A) regarding church growth. The researcher analyzed and compared collected data utilizing the following sub-questions:

1. What personal factors do successful pastors think influence the growth of their local church?
2. What leadership principles and perceptions do pastors of growing churches identify as important to their roles and healthy church growth?
3. What common strategies, methods, and modes do pastors of growing churches employ when addressing recognized growth predictors?

In order to code, analyze, and categorize data, the researcher employed ATLAS.ti data analysis software. This process continued until the researcher identified similarities, differences, incidents, and causal relationships between emerging categories. Upon achieving theoretical saturation, the researcher developed a substantive theory and leadership growth model from grounded data, identifying and describing the common leadership traits, aptitudes, and strategies utilized by participants to promote church growth. The theoretical leadership growth model developed by the researcher is discussed below.

Using the constant comparative method, the researcher independently coded interview

transcripts.[337] Several categories emerged from initial analysis, which were then defined to ensure mutual exclusivity. With ATLAS.ti Qualitative Analysis Software, Version 7.5.15, the researcher produced a visual representation of the frequency of occurrences of each category to reveal data particularly salient to the participants. Three overarching themes emerged from data analysis: (a) the personal dynamics of the senior pastor, (b) the ideology and perceptions of the senior pastor, and (c) the means and modes utilized by the senior pastor to address church growth predictors.[338] These three themes and their subcategories showed to be essential factors in stimulating, facilitating, and maintaining church growth and vitality for the Church of God pastors practicing ministry in Western North Carolina.

Core Category: The Personal Dynamics (PD) of The Senior Pastor

Although their local ministry context and educational backgrounds varied, all of the pastors were the senior administrators of their church, affiliated with the Church of God (Cleveland, TN), and practiced in the Western region of North Carolina.[339] Data analysis revealed that these pastors reported consistent church growth and shared common personal features that they believed explained the consistent growth experienced over the three-year time interval explored in this research project.

PD Sub-Category 1: Recognition of a Divine Call to Ministry

Many examples in Scripture highlight how God calls men and women to leadership roles. Jesus told his twelve apprentices, "You did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit (John 15:16, NIV). The historical writings of the New Testament

337. Gall, Gall, and Borg, *Applying Educational Research*, 351.

338. Ibid., 366.

339. The senior pastors who agreed to participate in this research project were from one of the following counties in Western North Carolina: Cabarrus, Catawba, Clay, Gaston, Iredell, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Polk, Rockingham, Scotland, Stokes, and Vance.

describe the divine call of the Apostle Paul (Acts 9:1-19). The Old Testament recounts the call of Moses to lead the Hebrews out of Egyptian slavery (Exo. 3:1-12:42), Jeremiah to his prophetic role (Jer. 1:4-10), and the call of Samuel to his roles of judge and priest (1 Sam. 3:1-19).

The pastors in this research project did not perceive their present ministry positions as a chosen career or vocational path they just happened to take. All the pastors described a personal experience of receiving a discernable call to ministry and a purpose for personal praxis. One pastor's reflection on some of the growth principles he would recommend to those struggling with decline and growth stagnation was the quintessential opinion of all participating pastors:

> I would challenge everyone to a sense of rejuvenation. Why are we in this? We're in this for the Lord. Yes. We're in this to see people blessed. Yes…. Let's just return to our first love. God's the one who gave us our calling. He's the one who positioned us for that. Let's love him with all of our heart.[340]

The overarching message is that recognition of calling and purpose is required to sustain a sense of delight for God and ministry. Participants in this research project posited that revisiting one's initial calling can facilitate personal renewal. Participants believed this renewal had the power to realign individual agendas and allow God to restore leadership vision and purpose.

Blackaby and Blackaby point out two important aspects of spiritual leadership. First, life is far too complex without God's revelation and guidance, and his plans are also impossible to achieve without him. Second, God's promises are absolute, and he never wavers or changes his mind. God keeps his promises. [341] Participants argued that pastors challenged with growth stagnation might try revisiting their initial call to ministry to provide the Holy Spirit the opportunity to remind them of God's personal promises, and to be refocused on the plan and

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[340.] Participant 4, interviewed by author, August 26, 2016, transcript, Document 13, location (27216:27945), Hampton, VA.

[341.] Blackaby and Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership*, 103-107.

purpose God has for their life and ministry (Jer. 29:11-14; Phil. 1:6).

PD Sub-Category 2: Education and Apprenticeships

Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, in his book *Future Faith*, outlines ten challenges that are reshaping Christianity in the twenty-first century. Churches across America are in desperate need of revitalization, as worship attendance declines and the median membership age for many churches is now in the fifties. Michaelson states, "ninety percent of US congregations have a demographic makeup that is older than the general population."[342] Consequently, without a revitalization plan these churches will experience demographic death. What is more, communities surrounding most churches have rapidly become culturally diverse, while racial biases intensify across church membership. Ethnic diversity is transforming the face of Pentecostal denominations across America. From 2004 to 2014 the Assembly of God's ethnic membership increased by 43.2%; at that time the nonwhite participants represented 42% of their U.S. congregations. The Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) and the International Pentecostal Holiness Church have experienced similar demographic growth trends.[343]

Granberg-Michaelson highlights that Christianity is experiencing the greatest magnitude of growth and vitality in cultures and venues that have not been framed by a Western Christian worldview and secular modernity. Many contemporary Christians have embraced a dramatically different paradigm for understanding reality, and the way in which they perceive and interact with the world contrasts with the worldview of Christians who still adhere to the orthodoxy of the past four hundred years.[344] Young generations born in the wake of postmodernism,

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[342.] Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, *Future Faith* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2018), 6, 11.

[343.] Ibid., 27.

[344.] Granberg-Michaelson, *Future Faith*, 47.

relativism, and deconstructionism are challenging the Pentecostal pastors of American churches today. Contemporary American culture is skeptical of the truth, cynical toward power, and religiously pluralistic.[345] Extreme shifts in media, philosophy, science, and religion have challenged traditional approaches to church leadership and ministry. Pastors lacking the technological savvy to update the communication modes of their churches will find it difficult to communicate with the digital generations of the twenty-first century. J.R. Woodward explains that technology and media are now extensions of the individual that shape the way people live and socially interact. The medium of the day creates new types of people and reshapes society surreptitiously.[346]

Shifting cultures, political attitudes, and social media have played a significant role in shaping patterns of biblical interpretation in contemporary society. American Christianity now promotes interpretations of Scripture that favor same-sex relationships and the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) individuals in ministry and church leadership roles.[347] Granberg-Michaelson reports that in 2001, 57% of Americans opposed same-sex marriages; in 2017, 62% of Americans supported homosexual marriages. Though this shift does not relate directly to church growth, it is extremely important to pastoral competency, as same-sex relationships and the role of LGBTQ individuals in the church are some of the most divisive issues facing pastors today.[348]

Today's pastors are encountering people who thirst for inclusion in a loving community.

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345. J.R. Woodward, C*reating a Missional Culture: Equipping the Church for the Sake of the World* (Downers Grove, IL: Praxis-IVP Books, 2012), 69.

346. Ibid., 65–67.

347. Steven Petrow, "Civilities: What Does the Acronym 'LGBTQ' Stand For?," *Washington Post*, May 23, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2014/05/23/civilities-what-does-the-acronym-lgbtq-stand-for/?utm_term=.92afb662366b.

348 Granberg-Michaelson, *Future Faith*, 163–90.

Both rich and poor are desperately seeking gracious, loving, and accepting places. However, evangelical and Pentecostal expressions of the faith tend to recognize an isolated Christian worldview and associate national pride with spiritual righteousness. This perspective sends the unbiblical message that God has a unique relationship with the United States of America. Television evangelists affiliated with Pentecostal or charismatic entities, along with extolled versions of the "prosperity gospel," have shaped the public's perception of several Pentecostal denominations, including the Church of God. Granberg-Michaelson points out that the world today recognizes the terms "Pentecostal" and "evangelical" as highly elastic.[349]

Modern society perceives the Pentecostal world as existing mostly within its own bubble, its inner dynamics inaccessible to sinners and saints from outside communities. This bubble is antiquated, and the racial changes presently occurring in American society, will soon bring about the end of a white Christian America. In other words, the bubble will burst.[350] Churches in Western North Carolina exist in a specific economic, social, and political context, and church ministries must understand this milieu in order to make a practical difference in the daily lives of the community. The church must create a dialogue between pastor, parishioners, and community, utilizing behaviors and modes of communicating the gospel specific to the culture.[351] Today's Church of God pastors must be evangelistically innovative, able to cultivate a missional church vision and culture, and be proficient at communicating across generational, personal, and cultural barriers. To be effective and initiate growth, senior pastors in the present century will have to possess the skills to identify, equip, and deploy local leaders into new and ethnically diverse ministry milieus.

[349.] Ibid., 87.

[350.] Ibid., 87–147.

[351.] Granberg-Michaelson, *Future Faith*, 217.

Findings of this research project suggest that an education in pastoral leadership and theological studies, coupled with a comprehensive internship, are required for contemporary Church of God pastors to initiate and maintain growth in the twenty-first century. All of the eighteen senior pastors selected for this thesis project had reported consistent growth over a three-year time interval. Forty-eight percent of the total growth for the time interval came from ten churches led by pastors who had completed some amount of college-level study and had also completed an internship with a seasoned Church of God senior pastor. Thirty percent of the overall growth was reported by pastors who had only completed the internship required to obtain denominational credentials.

Church of God pastors no longer have the luxury of remaining on the periphery of American academia. Results of this project revealed pastors who failed to invest in a formal theological education perceived the present-day working of the Holy Spirit in the church and its community through the framework of past ministry eras. Participants bypassing seminary training addressed their ministry with myopic sectarian ideologies and a simplistic Pentecostal hermeneutic. These participants will find it extremely challenging to address people's skepticism regarding absolute truth, society's current philosophical inclinations, and today's pluralistic religious values. The old denominational cliché "the Church of God is right, hallelujah to the Lamb" will not suffice as a viable apologetic for the Pentecostal Christian worldview throughout the twenty-first century.

Participants electing to sidestep academic study for immediate deployment into a pastoral role recognized the implications this life choice had for their present leadership roles and the growth and vitality of their respective churches. This research study indicated that pastors with minimal education struggled with a variety of leadership proficiencies and were particularly

challenged to develop new paradigms of discipleship and evangelism that relate the gospel and the Pentecostal tradition to all social contexts and cultures.

Church of God pastors are not exempt from the social challenges facing Christian churches across America. The need for church revitalization, ethnic diversity, and rapid shifts in technology exists in Western North Carolina. In particular, the philosophical and religious ethos of American society is a challenge for pastors in this region of the state. Heightened efforts to contextualize the gospel so that people can experience the life changing power of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit, must become a priority in Western North Carolina. These Church of God pastors need to be empowered with the tools required to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Findings of a recent study focusing on the relationships between continuing education, pastoral development, and church growth suggests that a causal link exists between the personal growth experienced by a pastor through online seminary studies and the growth of his or her local church. Results of the study showed evidence that pastors pursuing online learning opportunities were more likely to be serving in consistently growing churches. In communities in which the population was reportedly in decline, the study revealed pastors engaged in online learning to be growing by a two-to-one margin over the nonacademic pastors in their ministry area.[352]

In this research project, each participant recognized the Ministerial Internship Program (MIP) as crucial to their success as a church leader. However, this internship offered by the Church of God's School of Ministry generally subjects pastors to a single context apprenticeship

[352.] Dan R. Jividen, "Study to Show Thyself Approved: The Case for Continuing Clergy Education," (D.Min. thesis., Liberty University, 2009), iv, 67–68.

and roughly one semester of undergraduate coursework. The curriculum, for the most part, is introductory material from the Old and New Testament writings, one survey of Christian doctrine, and one course that outlines theories of leadership, presents select leadership axioms, and discusses leading change and conflict resolution.[353] Findings of this project suggests that the bare-essential academic pastoral training of the MIP program most likely will not adequately prepare Church of God pastors to address the present-day social, philosophical, theological, and technological challenges outlined above.

This researcher recommends pastors with nominal academic backgrounds to pursue online undergraduate level coursework that focuses on the theological basis for multicultural ministry, and assists pastors in identifying the importance and role of the church in contemporary society. The MIP coursework does not present pastors with an overview of the postmodern worldview, or how to respond to religious pluralism, loss of absolutes, and the moral relativism of modern society.[354]

A balanced academic undergirding affords Church of God pastors the ability to develop viable apologetics to the diverse viewpoints and ethical issues that society offers, and in turn, effectively communicate the Christian worldview of the Bible today's multicultural society. The MIP coursework lacks curriculum that instructs pastors on how to utilize modern technology to communicate, preach, and initiate strategies of discipleship and evangelism in the high-tech, multigenerational milieus of modern society.[355]

[353.] Church of God School of Ministry, "Ministerial Internship Program (MIP) Online Studies," accessed July 13, 2018, http://mip.ministerialtraining.org/.

[354.] Church of God School of Ministry, "Church of God School of Ministry: Courses," accessed July 4, 2017, http://www.ministerialtraining.org/courses/.

[355.] Liberty University Online Programs, 2018-19 Liberty University Online Programs, Summer 2018, accessed July 7, 2018, http://www.liberty.edu/online/course-guides/bachelors/divinity.

In addition to the MIP pedagogy and internship, the Church of God School of Ministry offers pastors the opportunity to earn a certificate in ministerial studies. This academic program contains several rigorous undergraduate level online courses that equip pastors to address the social challenges and barriers to growth outlined above. Liberty University offers an Associate of Arts in Religion degree in a completely online format to practicing pastors seeking spiritual and professional development to meet the challenges of their present pastoral role. The online format offered by either of these two educational entities make it easy for pastors to engage in personal development without interrupting their pastoral responsibilities (See Table 17).

Today's pastors must be able to holistically perceive both spiritual and relational depths of ministry contexts and respond prudently to the challenging complexities of ministry initiated by social, philosophical, political, religious, and generational stressors. In order to achieve leadership success and church growth, Church of God pastors in Western North Carolina lacking a robust academic background, will most likely need to take advantage of the professional development opportunities outlined above.

PD Sub-Category 3: Leadership Style and Personality Blend

Most of the pastors (65%) selected for this research project demonstrated a passive persona that was both people and task oriented. These leaders expressed an authentic and passionate desire to cultivate a culture of encouragement, loyalty, and support for leaders and parishioners, but tended to be cautious and calculating when developing growth strategies and managing conflict. These pastors were concerned with securing a stable and steady environment for discipleship, worship, and spiritual formation. They implemented plans of change gradually or incrementally to afford church members and leaders the opportunity to physically and

emotionally adjust to well communicated and executed modifications.[356] Patient team builders, these administrators proficiently managed their emotions and communicated goals and objectives to key church stakeholders. Thirty-nine percent of participating senior pastors demonstrated this steady conscientious personality profile (SC), and 65% of the participants described their temperament either as a blend of the traits of steadiness, reliability, and security-oriented servanthood embodied in the "S" profile, or a blend that exhibits some or all of the "C" persona profile criteria, such as conscientiousness, competence, cautiousness, and compliancy.[357]

This personality, which blends sensitivity with being highly task-oriented, works well for Church of God pastors in Western North Carolina. Findings of this thesis project suggest that this persona significantly impacts church growth when accompanied by a senior administrative paradigm that assimilates the elements of transformational and servant leadership. Ninety-one percent of the total growth for the project's three-year time interval was reported by participants who led utilizing some amalgamation of transformational and servant leadership. Six pastors with distinct SC personality traits and this blended leadership style reported 47.5 % of the total growth. Pastors seeking to stimulate growth in this region of North Carolina will need to be mature role models and adapt a leadership style that communicates high expectations of leaders and parishioners. Laity must be challenged to think *outside of the box* and develop innovative ways to solve problems.[358]

Church of God pastors challenged by growth stagnation in this region of North Carolina should consider building strong relational communities both within the church and in the surrounding community. The successful servant leaders in this research project created a

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356. Carbonell, *How to Solve the People Puzzle*, 167–71.

357. Ibid., 14.

358. Drury, "Handbook of Leadership Theory for Church Leaders," 18.

corporate vision and promoted integrity, trust, and accountability. Participants envisioned the future of their churches, shared decision-making power, set and clarified goals, and took the steps necessary to move their churches to healthier physical and spiritual positions.[359] Additionally, research has indicated that organizations using teams made up of diverse behavioral temperaments are more effective than those that rely on homogeneous teams. Behavioral experts commonly believe that team members are inclined to experience higher morale and facilitate networks of communication in work cultures in which individuals are aware of, and respect, one another's diverse personality traits.[360]

The strength of the SC persona is the individual's serving nature, tenacity, and patience toward reaching goals and objectives. However, pastors with this behavioral temperament can often take too long to make critical decisions, be overly accommodating when resolving conflict, and harbor an aversion to risk-taking. When addressing church growth modifiers, any one of these behavioral characteristics can be detrimental to church vitality.[361] Therefore, staffing and strategic leadership team development criteria should not be based solely on the experience, giftedness, ministry aptitudes, or biblical knowledge of a candidate. Senior pastors seeking organizational success and church growth should consider incorporating the use of personality profile assessments into leadership identification and development stratagems to safeguard workplace compatibility and to ensure new leaders are identified, developed, and deployed with behaviors that complement those of the senior pastor and existing lay leaders.

Behavioral identification instruments like the DISC® personality test, the Myers-Briggs

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[359.] Ibid., 21.

[360.] Mindi K. McKenna, Charlotte D. Shelton, and John R. Darling, "The Impact of Behavioral Style Assessment on Organizational Effectiveness: A Call for Action," *Leadership & Organization Development Journal* 23, no. 5 (2002): 314.

[361.] Carbonell, *How to Solve the People Puzzle*, 170.

Type Indicator®, and the 16pf® Questionnaire afford pastors the opportunity to identify individuals with behavioral styles that would positively contribute to ministry productivity and effectiveness. Behavioral style diversity is believed to increase team flexibility, which in turn enables pastors and leaders to facilitate strategic growth plans. Many researchers perceive such behaviorally heterogeneous teams to be ideally suited to address challenges. Researchers in the fields of psychology, business management, and marketing attribute the following benefits to personality profile assessments:

1. Enhanced organizational collaboration, teamwork, and harmonious relationships
2. Better-quality networks of communication
3. Enhanced conflict resolution strategies
4. Heightened capacities to address interpersonal issues
5. Improved effectiveness in meetings
6. Heightened morale and job satisfaction
7. Higher levels of job performance and effectiveness
8. Greater predictability of organizational growth
9. Increased productivity
10. Better informed staffing decisions[362]

Along with the benefits listed above, persona assessments provide pastors with job-fit information. These measuring tools provide senior leaders with insight into how an individual will most likely react with others in ministry situations. For example, introverts are inclined to shy away from public speaking, while the extroverts tend to covet an opportunity to obtain the spotlight.[363] Individuals with driving, dominating, decisive personality traits tend to be intense and serious minded. They have the capacity to perceive and outline vision, mission, and goals

[362.] McKenna, Shelton, and Darling, "The Impact of Behavioral Style," 315–19.

[363.] Ibid., 319.

faster than other individuals. They dream big and work hard. These individuals are well suited for strategic leadership, especially in purpose-driven, result-oriented scenarios in which minimal guidance is required. However, this behavioral style is not the right choice for administrative positions that require considerable routine and/or tedious attention to detail and precision. According to Myers-Briggs personality type indicators, a person who enjoys working alone (introverted), prefers to focus on facts, and is patient with details (sensing) would be a much better fit for meticulous and highly repetitious leadership roles and ministry applications. Such an individual who makes decisions based on logic (thinking) would flourish best in ministry applications that have well-defined goals and objectives (judging).[364]

Pastors interested in incorporating personality profile assessments into existing leadership paradigms can access the DISC® personality test for free at discpersonalitytesting.com. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® is available at www.truity.com. A limited version of the 16pf® Questionnaire is offered for free at www.16personalities.com, and results can be sent to a personal email address. There are many websites that offer organizations a wide variety of personality, career, and corporate assessments that encompass testing and interpretive reporting for enhancing group leadership and teambuilding. One example is *Discover Your Personality* (www.discoveryourpersonality.com), which offers 31 profiling tests to assist individuals and organizational enterprises in building more effective and productive leadership teams.

PD Sub-Category 4: Emotional and Cultural Intelligence Aptitudes

Most of the participants in this research project possessed some degree of emotional and cultural intelligence. Several pastors demonstrated the ability to recognize their own emotions

364. Gordon Lawrence, *People Types and Tiger Stripes: Using Psychological Type to Help Students Discover Their Unique Potential*, 4th ed. (Gainesville, FL: Center for Applications of Psychological Type, 2009), 40–73.

and interpret the emotions of others in their facial expressions, voice tone, and body language. Participants showed the ability to manage emotions and use them to facilitate positive cognitive responses and behaviors from others. Thirteen percent of the pastors possessing directing and decisive personality traits were skilled at comprehending implicit emotional language and were sensitive to even slight variations between emotions. These participants seemed to be apt at harnessing their own emotions, as well as the emotions of others, to facilitate performance or reach set goals and objectives.[365]

Recent research studies have identified emotions as having significant implications for decision-making and workplace behaviors. Positive emotions have been shown to enhance creativity and job performance. Pastors, like their secular counterparts, can evoke a wide spectrum of emotions in work and ministry environs which, in turn, stimulate a response from staff, laity, and church members. In times of spiritual, physical, or emotional crisis, effective pastors need to possess the aptitudes required to provoke positive emotions in followers and alleviate the negative emotions of church stakeholders. Current correlation studies on leadership and emotional intelligence have shown high-performing managers to possess greater self-awareness than average managers. Leaders with high magnitudes of emotional intelligence select effective workplace behaviors which, in turn, impact follower satisfaction. Pastors who can accurately identify and interpret the emotional language, tone, and behaviors of those within their ministry scope, tend to integrate emotional considerations into strategic growth planning, conflict resolution, and decision making, particularly when it comes to the choice of instruction

[365.] Zhidong Li, Bindu Gupta, Mark Loon, and Gain Casimir, "Combinative Aspects of Leadership Style and Emotional Intelligence," *Leadership & Organizational Development* 37, no. 1 (2016): 112, doi:10.1108/LODJ-04-2014-0082.

and corporate communication.[366]

In this thesis project, eleven participants demonstrated temperaments with the even-tempered, patient, accountable, steadiness of the "S" persona and/or the precise, systematic, analytical conscientiousness of the "C" persona. They possessed the ability to function effectively in culturally diverse contexts (cognitive cultural intelligence), but were only marginally adept at exhibiting the appropriate explicit and implicit behaviors required to function effectively across cross-cultural ministry boundaries (behavioral cultural intelligence). None of the participating senior pastors demonstrated the capacity to collect data and interpret cultural knowledge (metacognitive cultural intelligence), and only one senior pastor developed behaviors and ministry strategies to address the radical differences encountered in cross-cultural evangelistic endeavors (motivational cultural intelligence).[367]

The emotional (EQ) and cultural intelligence (CQ) of the research participants impacted growth in Western North Carolina churches. Churches led by pastors showing some capacity of emotional intelligence experienced 54% of the total growth for the period from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016, with 50% of that growth reported by eight culturally intelligent pastors. These findings suggest that pastors encountering growth stagnation in this region of North Carolina take the following steps to cultivate emotional and cultural intelligence competencies across church leadership matrices and ministry stratums:

- Step 1: Develop EQ and CQ assessment tools for establishing numerical acumen and aptitude baselines. Set organizational criteria for leadership candidacy inclusion.
- Step 2: Develop and implement customized EQ/CQ training and development to address strengths and weaknesses fleshed out by assessment tools.
- Step 3: Require leaders, ministry team players, staff members, religious educators,

366. Ibid., 111.

367. David C. Thomas et al., "Cultural Intelligence: Domain and Assessment," *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management* 8, no. 2 (August 2008): 125–27, doi:10.1177/1470595808091787.

and any other laity deemed appropriate to undergo targeted EQ/CQ developmental training in identified areas of underdeveloped competencies. Training in specific EQ/CQ constructs can be communicated through diverse modes of learning such as reading case studies to improve analytical and reasoning skills or performing a series of simulations or experiential activities in which the individual is placed in roles or situations that cultivate emotional and/or cultural awareness.

- Step 4: Develop reassessment evaluation to juxtapose with an individual's last known EQ/CQ baseline scores to determine personal levels of improvement and for senior administrators to decide if further developmental training is necessary.[368]

The Institute for Health and Human Potential has a comprehensive online curriculum focusing on the foundational principles of emotional intelligence at www.ihhp.com/emotional-intelligence-training. Pastors can find a plethora of information and training on cultural intelligence from the Cultural Intelligence Center at https://culturalq.com.

Core Category: The Senior Pastor's Ideology and Perceptions (IP) Regarding Healthy Church

Thirteen of the eighteen pastors selected for this research project began their present senior pastoral role with a church in a state of decline or nearing the death stage of its life cycle. Eleven of these pastors had implemented plans of change to stimulate growth and enhance the spiritual and physical wellbeing of their churches. Project findings revealed that the senior pastor's definition of church growth and his theological perspectives significantly influence church growth. Findings also suggest that participants' delineations of the purpose and missional scope of the church have positive and negative implications for growth.

IP Sub-Category 1: Definition of Church Growth

Participating pastors considered rightly defining church growth a key element for initiating church growth. All the pastors defined church growth as a multidimensional process

[368] Nick Daher, "Emotional and Cultural Intelligences as an Assessment Tool for Recruiting, Selecting, and Training Individual Candidates," *International Journal of Business and Public Administration,* 12, no. 1 (Summer 2015): 170, accessed July 21, 2018, http://brainmass.com/file/ 1596504/Emotional+and+cultural+ intelligences+as+an+assessment+tool+for+recruiting%2C+selecting+and+training+individual+candidates.pdf.

beginning with, and perpetuated by, the persuasive work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the unchurched and sinners within the ministry scope of the church. These pastors experiencing growth in Western North Carolina developed discipleship paradigms that motivated and mentored leaders and parishioners toward Christlikeness through the practice of the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, meditation, solitude, relational group engagement, and corporate worship. The successful senior pastors interviewed for this project recognized church growth and vitality to encompass the quantitative elements of finance and church attendance but, more importantly, the spiritual formation of leaders, laity, and membership. Participants shared the opinion that two indicators of growth were the magnitude of their parishioners' investment into, and the church's impact on, nearby cities and communities. Rather than increased attendance and financial resources, participants recognized new conversions, reproduction of leaders, new church plants, and the advancing of ministry networks as the quantitative indicators of growth.

Traditionally, Church of God pastors have defined church growth and vitality in terms of numbers. Findings of this project, however, suggest that church growth for this region of North Carolina is contingent on the senior pastor being able to expand his or her understanding of church growth. The selected participants were not content with the instant gratification of simple mathematical growth. Interviews revealed these pastors to be engaged in coaching, mentoring, and investing in a few gifted individuals until they matured into fruitful leaders who in turn could develop others like themselves.

Rather than seeking to increase weekly attendance, findings of this research suggest that pastors challenged with stagnation in Western North Carolina should focus strategic and developmental goals on increasing their ability to send or deploy pastors, teachers, evangelists,

prophets, and apostles (Eph. 4:11) into surrounding cities and communities.[369] Multiplication growth is slow and lacks the instant gratification of addition growth, but waiting is worth the investment, as its momentum builds and culminates in exponential growth.[370]

IP Sub-Category 2: Theological Perspectives and Missiology

Findings of this research revealed a relationship between church growth and the intentionality and passion of a senior pastor for articulating the core values and beliefs of the Christian faith and the practical pneumatological aspects of classical Pentecostal theology. Data analysis processes showed the senior pastors who led Churches of God experiencing the greatest magnitude of sustained growth from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016, recognized and clearly communicated Scripture-corroborated soteriological and pneumatological definitions of sin, justification, regeneration, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and speaking in other tongues.

Participants with traditional Pentecostal values, considered intolerant in contemporary American society, reported 58% of the total regional growth from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016. Thus, future growth in Western North Carolina is contingent on how well senior pastors can establish and communicate to leaders and parishioners, clear boundary lines that separate the standards of moral purity, personal integrity, and practical holiness embodied in Christlike living from other forms of the Christian faith. The most successful pastors recognized regeneration, the sanctification process, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit as ordered experiential experiences, and they spoke out against controversial issues such as sex outside of marriage, homosexuality, and sexual immorality in general. These churches grew as people responded to the message that all people are born unrighteous and an enemy of God (Rom. 3:9-20), and the only remedy for

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[369.] Warren, *Purpose Driven Church*, 32.

[370.] Neil Cole, *Church 3.0* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 76.

this condition is to repent and have faith in Jesus (Rom. 5:9).

Most of the participants discussed church growth principles and strategies through a denominational lens and held classical Pentecostal values. Forty-two percent of these pastors practiced and articulated legalistic moralism, were culturally disengaged, and manifested a staunch aversion to culturally relevant modes and means of disseminating the gospel message. Data analysis revealed the increasing ethnic diversity of the Western region of North Carolina, with the Hispanic population growing 42% from 2010 to 2014, and all other non-white populations growing by 36% over the same four-year period (See Table 10). At some point, pastors who seek to fortify and maintain their Pentecostal identity instead of adapting to relevant cultural shifts will most likely experience plateaued growth, because they continue to compete for market share in a decreasing demographic (the Red Ocean).

Six progressive pastors demonstrated a better twenty-first century model for pastors seeking growth in Western North Carolina. Rather than utilizing denominational dogma as their framework for developing church growth stratagems, they were committed to aligning ministry and mission endeavors with the Great Commission (Matt. 28:16-20) and the Great Commandment (Matt. 22:36-40). While still remaining dedicated to practicing traditional Church of God distinctives, these participants also recognized the quickly changing landscape of their ministry parameters and began to seek ways to better identify and address cultural interaction and communication barriers that hinder the propagation of the gospel. Like their legalistic contemporaries, these pastors believed in the importance of perpetuating Pentecostal traditions ensuring that Church of God distinctives are generationally dispersed, but not at the cost of embracing the needs of people living in uncontested and ethnically diverse demographic ministry milieus (the Blue Ocean).

IP Sub-Category 3: Ideology Regarding the Mission and Purpose of the Church

Rick Warren addresses several myths associated with church growth. This highly successful growth expert explains to pastors that large scale growth is not a product of growth strategies implemented with the sole purpose of maximizing worship attendance. Rather, growth is the natural result of a healthy purpose-driven church. He further explains that a balanced biblical message maximizes vitality and wellbeing.[371] Participants emphasizing inwardly-focused mission and vision objectives were the least successful at initiating and sustaining growth from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016. These senior leaders believed the chief purposes of the church are to perpetuate Church of God dogma, develop mechanisms that deepen intra-church relationships, and disciple church members. These participants manifested an inability to distinguish contextualization of the gospel message from textual deconstruction. These leaders recognized the influence fellowship, passionate spirituality, inspiring worship services, and gift-oriented ministry had on the growth and vitality of their respective churches, and emphasized the importance of developing vehicles and modes of communication to directly address these growth modifiers. However, pastors with predominantly inward focused ministry objective failed to recognize the correlation between community service, need-oriented evangelism, outward reaching ministry, and church growth.[372] This group of administrators reported 0.6% of the total growth for the three-year period.

Participants positing overarching visions and missions for their churches reported 84% of the overall growth. These senior pastors realized greater growth in the western region of North Carolina by adopting outward-reaching leadership attitudes and behaviors and a

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[371.] Warren, *Purpose Driven Church*, 48–49.

[372.] Schwarz, *Natural Church Development*, 4.

multidimensional perception of why the church exists. Findings suggests that these pastors were more successful than their inward-focused contemporaries because they selected and utilized a team of innovative leaders to assist them in strategically developing and implementing a revitalization plan to catalyze a new growth cycle for the church. Their ministry priorities were community outreach and the development of reproductive discipleship paradigms, as opposed to worship attendance.

The participants who recorded the greatest amount of consistent growth for the three-year period believed the church exists for more than fellowship and communicating God's Word to parishioners. Their broad mission and vision encompassed engaging the social milieus surrounding the church. Along with cultivating healthy internal environs for worship, discipleship, and fellowship, these growth-minded leaders evaluated local demographics and modified leadership behaviors, mobilized membership, and implemented the ministry changes required to meet the physical and spiritual needs of their local communities. These successful participants were not afraid to analyze organizational structure, church staffing, programs, and financial resources to flesh out ministry strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and barriers. They held no aversions to employing contemporary modes of communicating the unchanging message of the gospel, and they believed the perpetuating of unbiblical myths to be detrimental to church vitality.

Findings of this thesis project suggest a relationship between the senior pastors' perceptions of why the church exists and church growth. Traditionally, Church of God pastors have acknowledged worship, ministry, and fellowship as the primary purposes of the church. The participating pastors experiencing the greatest magnitude of growth in Western North Carolina believed the purpose of their church to be multifaceted. Their churches appeared to grow because

they promoted inspiring, Spirit-anointed worship (purpose: worship) and developed methods of ministry that reached inward and outward to meet the spiritual, emotional, physical, and relational needs of the church and its community (purpose: ministry). Pastors spoke of starting church-based food distribution centers, meals on wheels, and providing monetary help in times of disaster. In addition, they provided new opportunities for people to gather together in small groups, table groups, and house churches (purpose: fellowship), initiated visitation teams (purpose: evangelism), and developed innovative and culturally relevant mechanisms of discipleship in order to facilitate spiritual formation for new converts (purpose: discipleship).

Core Category: Modes and Means (MM) Utilized to Address Church Growth Health Modifiers

Church growth experts agree that growing churches manifest common health indicators. These distinctive characteristics of health and vitality apply to all churches regardless of age and size. Out of these important growth modifiers, participating pastors in this research project shared the belief that inspiring worship, ministry outreach, the empowering of lay leaders, and the development of new paradigms for discipleship and evangelism inspired future church growth.

MM Sub-Category 1: Worship

Participating pastors placed considerable emphasis on creating inspiring worship services that glorify God and engage the heart and mind of congregates. Every participant rejected the proposition that the miraculous works, gifts, and manifestations of the Holy Spirit terminated in the era of the Apostles or in any past generation. Participants held to the fundamental Pentecostal principles that worship leaders should promote a corporate attitude of openness to the Holy Spirit and encourage expressions of passionate praise and emotional reactions in Spirit-filled believers. Crucial to successful corporate worship and church vitality was the pastoral ability to discern the

Holy Spirit's presence and heart-changing influence in a worship service, a gift honed through consistent practicing of the spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, solitude, and meditation.

Successful participants were willing to make the changes necessary to create a worship environment in which worshippers made deep relational connections with God and each other. Because they were not satisfied with ritualistic formal unemotional worship, they pressed parishioners to be filled with the Holy Spirit, thereby facilitating daily life-transforming encounters with God, power for service, and an enhanced channel of communication for God to nurture them into Christlike character. In conjunction with motivating leaders and congregates to engage with God and others, these pastors seemed to realize growth in worship attendance because they made changes to structural aspects of their worship paradigm. Participants who increased worship attendance implemented one or more of the following changes:

1. Scheduled times for corporate prayer.
2. Communicated to church stakeholders that worshipping God does not have to always take place in the sanctuary. Participants utilized gymnasiums, homes, and locations in targeted cultural venues to hold worship services.
3. Communicated to church stakeholders that there is no sacred style of music or worship. Most of the pastors employed blended contemporary-traditional worship models.
4. Recognized generational and cultural distances in guests attending the worship service and communicated the gospel message tactfully in relevant learning modes, rather than using traditional "Christianese" to introduce Christ to sinners.
5. Improved the flow of the service by eliminating prayer requests and any other verbiage that hinders the moving of the Spirit in the worship service. Some participants advocated positioning all announcements, offertory, and offering of prayer at the beginning or end of the service.
6. Offered multiple service times when seating became a hinderance to worship or secured ethnically diverse pastors to start multicultural ministries.
7. Selected and trained gifted and hospitable greeters to help visitors feel comfortable and integrate into the congregation. Some pastors developed newcomer welcome packets.
8. Began preaching a series on salvation, sanctification, the works of the Holy Spirit, and the value of church membership.

9. Began to consistently, in some form, communicate the mantra *change is normal for a healthy church*, until church stakeholders embraced this attitude.

A plethora of research into church growth and vitality has proven that preaching and teaching alone will not initiate and sustain church growth.[373] Rick Warren explains that a cultural setting challenges every church's ministry because every church is situated in a unique community or city. All of the strategies and implemented changes that stimulated worship attendance for research participants may not produce the same outcomes in other church locations and ministry cultures. However, pastors challenged by growth stagnation in Western North Carolina may want to consider incrementally adopting some of the strategies instituted by participants to stimulate growth in their churches. Another proposition is to introduce changes to a worship paradigm provisionally until outcomes can be determined.

MM Sub-Category 2: Ministry

It was the consensus of the selected research participants that effectual growth sustaining ministry is the product of superlative pastoral leadership. Every participant, in varying degrees, emphasized the importance of strategic planning and demonstrated some degree of proficiency in managing resistance and conflict resulting from implemented organizational and/or ministry changes. Fifty percent of the participants believed that ministry success in the twenty-first century depended on the senior pastor's ability to develop and implement biblically-informed ministry and growth strategies.

Thesis data showed 54% of the overall total growth from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016, in churches led by pastors who had developed and implemented strategic growth and ministry plans. These exemplar leaders enlisted the planning support of highly influential and gifted lay

[373.] Ibid., 26–27.

leaders. Malphurs explains that such a group will facilitate congregational buy-in to proposed changes and infuse planning processes with diverse perceptions and innovative ideas.[374]

Before plan development even began, these leaders took the initiative to conduct demographic studies of the local community and do internal church audits to assess organizational and ministry strengths and weaknesses. These internal and external evaluations afforded the senior pastor and the strategic leadership team the ability to identify the organizational and ministry changes required to eliminate growth barriers, cultivate deeper relationships, and ensure the church mission was in alignment with the Great Commandment and Great Commission. Strategic planning allowed pastors the ability to target revitalization with the appropriate magnitude of change required to ignite corporate spiritual formation and meet community needs without overtaxing the ability of congregants to adapt to future changes.

The selected participants demonstrated dispositions and behaviors that indicated they were unafraid of proposing and initiating change. They effected remedial changes to evangelistic programs to halt recognized atrophy among church leaders and enacted radical staffing changes to ensure the moral integrity and ministry competency of existing leadership teams. Pastors recognizing shifting demographic and socioeconomic trends within the church's scope of ministry modified service schedules, marketing schemes, and systems of evangelism. Some participants utilized ministry assessments to identify leaders' personality traits, while others employed data results to identify deficits in the small groups offered by the church. In each of the above examples of change, the ministry analysis endeavors of these senior pastors enabled them to tailor instructional curriculum, discipleship vehicles, evangelistic outreach methods, and organizational structure to generate high quality leadership and ministry.

[374.] Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 59–60.

Pastors addressing church revitalization and seeking to engender new growth cycles for their church must understand the importance of strategic planning. Malphurs argues that revitalization and/or new growth cycles cannot be experienced without intentional long-range planning. Several of the research participants who lacked academic training acknowledged competency deficits in church administration. Malphurs' planning method is an excellent tool for pastors who are not seasoned strategic planners. In his book, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A 21st Century Model for Church and Ministry Leaders,* he presents readers with a comprehensive method for church revitalization.[375] The successful pastors in this research project emphasized the importance of several of the elements in Malphurs' planning model. Along with completing ministry evaluations and demographic studies, most participants had written mission and vision statements and had established the core values that would guide overall behavior and determine ministry distinctives.

Findings suggest these churches grew because their senior pastor and team leaders knew the present condition of the church (through ministry analysis) and knew the reason for their ministry efforts (by determining core values). The strategic leadership team and senior pastor had developed a description of the overarching purpose of the church (a written mission statement), and they had sought God until they knew what the church would look like and how it would serve its members and the community in the future (a written vision statement). Finally, pastors with the greatest magnitude of consistent growth had developed and implemented a plan for growth and ministry to ensure the church accomplished the stated mission and vision (through strategic planning).[376]

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375. Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 26.

376. Marcus Bieschke, "The Malphurs Group," *Advanced Strategic Planning Method*, 2001, accessed August 1, 2018, http://www.cityvision.edu/courses/coursefiles/304/malphurs.pdf.

Participants recognized the inevitability of conflict and resistance to change. The senior leaders agreed that even the slightest modification to existing ministry dynamics can be fatal to church health and growth. Even before implementation, participants minimized change stagnation by reiterating regularly the reason for the proposed changes, especially to influential church stakeholders. Then, once change began, they implemented it slowly and incrementally. Pastors who experienced the least amount of change resistance were highly transparent, trustworthy, and unbiased when negotiating between conflicting parties. Findings showed pastors demonstrating a dominating authoritarian style of leadership, to have difficulty implementing change, and their behavioral temperament created barriers to team building and plan communication, as well as hindered positive negotiation outcomes between conflicting parties.

MM Sub-Category 3: Leadership Development and Empowerment

Andy Stanley argues that God does not expect senior leaders to know every aspect of their multifaceted ministry roles and responsibilities. However, leaders are responsible for handing down their accumulated wisdom and knowledge to other gifted and capable men and women (2 Tim. 2:1-2, NIV).[377] Leadership professional and renowned writer John Maxwell explains that the goal of every great leader is to produce other leaders. He further explains that the development of potential leaders expands and enhances the future of an organization. In short, senior administrative success is contingent on the developing and empowering of potential leaders.[378]

Data analysis revealed research participants chose leadership candidates by recognized

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[377.] Andy Stanley, *7 Practices of an Effective Ministry* (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2004), 164.

[378.] John C. Maxwell, *Developing the Leaders Around You* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2006), 1–15.

character qualities, perceived spiritual giftedness, desired personal attitudes, or ability to influence others. Senior pastors with a predominately transformational leadership style chose potential apprentices by the quality of their character and power of influence. Participants who were quintessentially servant leaders chose individuals to mentor according to identified gifts and talents. All participants voiced an aversion to micromanaging church staff and ministry volunteers. Participants agreed that the teleological goals of every apprenticeship should be guiding individuals toward Christian maturity, assisting people in discovering their divine purpose, and helping others maximize their leadership and ministry potentials.

Senior pastors who operated church-based leadership development vehicles reported 94% of the total growth from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016. Pastors who chose leaders because of quality of character and power of influence (61%) experienced the greatest amount of sustained growth. However, the pastors who chose candidates based on spiritual giftedness had the greater percentage of well-developed, church-based leadership development vehicles. To catalyze exponential growth, findings suggest that a viable plan for identifying, mentoring, and deploying potential leadership candidates for Church of God pastors would need to integrate the developmental principles of both approaches to leadership. This researcher proposes that such a church-based leadership development plan (LDP) would include the following:

1. Saturate all phases, strategic planning, and mentoring processes of the LDP from beginning to end with prayer.
2. Determine a point person to initiate and lead the major processes of the LDP.
3. Utilize the Strategic Leadership Team to delineate the meaning of *leader* and *leadership.* This definition should include required character, degree of spiritual maturity, expected level of influence and charisma, and acceptable overarching mission and vision statements.

   An excellent resource to instruct leadership candidates on the biblical characteristics of Christian maturity is Gene Getz's comprehensive study of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-

10, *The Measure of a Man*.[379] Getz's twenty indicators of spiritual maturity can also serve as guiding principles for evaluating the spiritual readiness of church leaders.

4. Determine the existing leadership hierarchy and any existing gaps in leadership.
5. Determine who will recruit, mentor, evaluate, and deploy leadership candidates.
6. Develop a system(s) for mentoring emerging leaders (one-on-one, group coaching, advancing coursework, pastoral shadowing). Research participants recommended limiting coaching/mentoring groups to no more than twelve individuals.
7. Develop evaluation instruments for all mentoring systems and coaching vehicles and incorporate rewards and/or opportunities to celebrate the completion of learning goals and objects.
8. Set emerging leaders up for success by teaching them to manage their time and stress and to spend regular time in prayer, resting, with their families, and reading Scripture.
9. Deploy the new, highly capable leaders into positions of ministry. Ministry placement should be reserved for faithful Spirit-filled believers who have demonstrated ministry competency, and are gifted by the Holy Spirit to accomplish the roles and responsibilities associated with all possible position assignments.[380]
10. Empower deployed leaders by sharing authority, fostering participation in decision making, expressing confidence in their leadership performance, and providing opportunities for leadership autonomy without the micromanagement of senior administrators.[381]

This researcher suggests that Church of God pastors lacking the skills to develop a robust church-based leadership development paradigm consult two works by Aubrey Malphurs. In *Being Leaders,* Malphurs discusses the characteristics of spiritual leadership and offers pastors measuring tools to evaluate the spiritual and natural giftedness, interpersonal skills, leadership style, core values, and intentionality of potential leaders. In *Building Leaders,* Malphurs and his coauthor Will Mancini provide a blueprint for developing leaders at every level of church

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[379.] Getz, *Measure of a Man*.

[380.] Aubrey Malphurs, "11 Steps for Developing Strong Church Leaders," *The Malphurs Group*, 2018, accessed August 1, 2018, http://malphursgroup.com/11-steps-for-developing-strong-church-leaders/.

[381.] Minyoung Cheong et al., "Two Faces of Empowering Leadership: Enabling and Burdening," *The Leadership Quarterly* 27 (2016): 603–4, doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2016.01.006.

ministry.[382]

MM Sub-Category 4: Discipleship and Evangelism

Most of the participating pastors preferred small groups over all other discipleship vehicles. During the three-year period, thirteen of the eighteen pastors had included small relational groups in their growth strategies to stimulate growth and facilitate effectual Christian maturation. Jesus utilized a small group to impart his wisdom, knowledge, and ministry principles to twelve men (Luke 6:12-16). These men experienced fellowship (John 21:1-14), ministry (Mark 6:39-44), worship (Matt. 17:1-13), and spiritual lessons extrapolated from familiar life settings (Mark 12:41-44; John 10; 15:1-17) with their mentor in the close intimacy of a group. This discipleship model deepened their relationships with each other, the leader, and with God. History confirms that eleven of these apprentices went on to significantly influence the dissemination of the gospel and the growth of the Christian church across the world.

The Church of God pastors interviewed for the project started small group ministries as an addendum to existing discipleship vehicles such as Sunday School, adolescent classes, and children's church. However, most participants believed these forms of discipleship to be antiquated, platitudinous, and ineffective. The innovative participants were offering undergraduate and graduate-level coursework to leaders and parishioners. Others were tailoring church-based pedagogy to instruct unique target audiences in the rudamentary tenets of the Christian faith and Pentecostal distinctives. Some pastors were emulating secular mentoring programs to guide church-based discipleship vehicles. In particular, one pastor was in the initial stages of establishing an audio visual learning lab to meet the discipleship needs of his church.

[382.] Aubrey Malphurs, *Being Leaders: The Nature of Authentic Christian Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003); Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini, *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004).

Churches employ a wide variety of small groups, also named life groups, cell groups, or home groups, to help individuals connect, assimilate into the church family, and accomplish the mission and vision of the church. Small groups are a discipleship vehicle designed to support church ministries and help parishioners engage in a biblical community that will guide them toward Christlikeness in every area of their lives. The early church grew expotentially as believers assembled in small communities to engage in fellowship, communion, prayer, biblical instruction, and corporate worship (Acts 2:42-47).[383] Small group experts agree that there is no right way to do small groups, but when executed well, they can be powerful tools for life change and spiritual growth. To be successful, small group leaders must learn how to initiate systems of prayer, establish methods of accountablility, teach the fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith, create a safe environment for group discussion, support and encourage group members, manage emotions, model Christlike character, and resolve group conflict.[384]

This researcher suggests pastors interested in incorporating small groups into an existing church discipleship paradigm should start by saturating all planning processes and leadership training for the small group program from beginning to end with prayer. Select a point person to oversee all small group planning, implementation, and operations, and have this small group pastor conduct internal and external demographic evaluations to determine what type of groups are best for the church's small group program. Program success will depend on how well pastors train their leaders. Small group leaders should be trained to lead *before* groups are initiated.

[383.] Carolyn Taketa, "Why Small Groups," *SmallGroups.com*, 2012, accessed August 1, 2018, https://www.smallgroups.com/articles/2012/why-small-groups.html.

[384.] Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Making Small Groups Work: What Every Small Group Leader Needs to Know* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 16–104.

This researcher recommends two texts written by Dave Earley to use as resources for training small group leaders. In *8 Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders,* Earley and his co-author Rod Dempsey discuss the key leadership principles and behaviors required to direct and sustain a growing and reproducing small group. Earley's *Turning Members into Leaders* outlines the step-by-step process of how to turn parishioners and small group members into leaders.[385] Steve Gladen, pastor of small groups at Saddleback Church in Orange County, California, has also written a comprehensive book on small group leadership titled, *Leading Small Groups with a Purpose.* This is an excellent resource for pastors seeking to initiate purpose-driven small groups developed around the goals of fellowship, ministry, worship, discipleship, and evangelism.[386] In addition, the following website resources will assist leaders in starting, naming, and developing curriculum, as well as tracking group attendance and vital signs:

- **smallgroups.com**: a website dedicated to helping leaders strategically plan and implement small groups. This site offers descriptions of every type of small group and instructions on building, leading, managing, and sustaining small groups.
- **smallgroup.com:** small group curriculum written by seminary-trained professionals from Lifeway Christian Resources.
- **faithcrunch.com:** a Christian ministry name generator.
- **ministrygear.com/youth-group-names:** a giant list of group names.
- **groupvitals.com**: superlative online small group management software.

Once church leaders have determined what types of small groups they will offer, the leadership team should draft mission and vision statements for every group, determine modes of marketing groups and communicating group missions, and establish start dates. *Activate,* a book written by Nelson Searcy and Kerrick Thomas, is an excellent resource for pastors to consult

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385. Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *8 Habits of Effective Small Group Leaders: Transforming Your Ministry Outside the Meeting* (Houston, TX: Cell Group ResourcesTM, 2001); Dave Earley, *Turning Members into Leaders: How to Raise Up Your Group Members to Lead New Groups* (Houston, TX: Cell Group Resources, 2001).

386. Steve Gladen, *Leading Small Groups with Purpose: Everything You Need to Lead a Healthy Group* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012).

before making decisions regarding the structure and format of each type of small group. Searcy and Thomas explain how to target specific group types, conduct church-wide group sign-up campaigns, and make recommendations on how to effectively promote groups to newcomers.[387]

Research findings showed that participants shared outward-reaching dispositions and a common belief in the need to impact the surrounding community. These senior pastors created food banks, established soup kitchens, and provided monetary aid to help the disadvantaged living in nearby neighborhoods. They further impacted their community by motivating and mobilizing members to invest time and financial resources in the support of local schools and area police and fire departments. Participants agreed that such intentional evangelistic efforts greatly impacted the growth of their churches.

Church leadership can obtain outreach opportunities from the websites of local social service representatives, school systems, city and county human services, as well as, police and fire departments. In addition, they can search for existing soup kitchens and food distribution outreach ministries. Another avenue is to search for local churches that are presently engaged in community outreach and establish an outreach network.

Conclusion

The successful growth pastors selected for this thesis project recorded consistent growth from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016. They recognized the importance of passing down Church of God distinctives and Pentecostal perspectives to future generations, and every senior pastor included in this research project was committed to modeling a holy and righteous lifestyle. These men demonstrated a deep-rooted belief in the power of the Holy Spirit, the gifts and

[387.] Nelson Searcy and Kerrick Thomas, *Activate: An Entirely New Approach to Small Groups* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2008).

manifestations of the Spirit, and commonly held the belief that God is miraculously pouring out his Spirit in contemporary society. However, Western North Carolina is rapidly becoming ethnically and generationally diverse. Churches are unable to keep up with the rapid pace of changing technology and social modes of communication. Pluralism, relativism, and cynicism have diminished the church's image and power to influence. Because Americans no longer accept the Bible as absolute truth, they no longer consider *sin* and *sinner* applicable to mankind.

Findings of this thesis project indicate that to sustain church growth in Western North Carolina in the twenty-first century, growth stratagems, discipleship paradigms, and systems of evangelism will have to consist of more than Pentecostal preaching, revivals to increase membership, hackneyed Sunday School lessons, musical extravaganzas, and potluck dinners. Pastors challenged with stagnation will have to implement growth plans that align with the Great Commission and Commandment. Leaders and congregants must first return to a focus on Christ (an upward refocusing) and to loving and worshiping God with all their hearts (Matt. 22:37). Research participants demonstrated a passion for growth and a willingness to create strategic teams to develop new and innovative discipleship vehicles that would deepen relationships (an inward refocusing) and facilitate the spiritual formation of parishioners (Matt. 22:39). These pastors established need-oriented outreach goals and objectives and experienced growth (initiating of an outward focus). Research results revealed that participants experiencing growth were willing to sacrifice the sacred cows of traditional worship, and the doctrinal heresies of inherited myth, to offer sinners and the unchurched in surrounding communities a practical gospel message.

Project findings suggest that stimulating and maintaining church growth in Western North Carolina is dependent on how quickly the senior pastor can forget the methods and growth

plans that worked in glorious past eras and kindle a personal passion for the unchurched and sinners. Church of God pastors experiencing plateau and decline in Western North Carolina must take the advice of the Apostle Paul (Phil. 3:13) and cease looking at what has been done in the past and develop a culturally-relevant and innovative plan of growth for the church (a forward focus toward the future).

The goal of this thesis project was to identify and describe the common leadership traits, aptitudes, and strategies utilized by successful regional Church of God pastors to promote church growth, with the end goal of providing pastors experiencing growth stagnation, a leadership growth model derived from grounded data. The model below is a graphic presentation of the common leadership factors that influence growth for the senior leaders participating in this research project (see Figure 7). Hopefully, the model will provide pastors experiencing plateau and decline helpful insight into how their successful colleagues and contemporaries catalyzed and are maintaining church growth in the Western region of North Carolina.

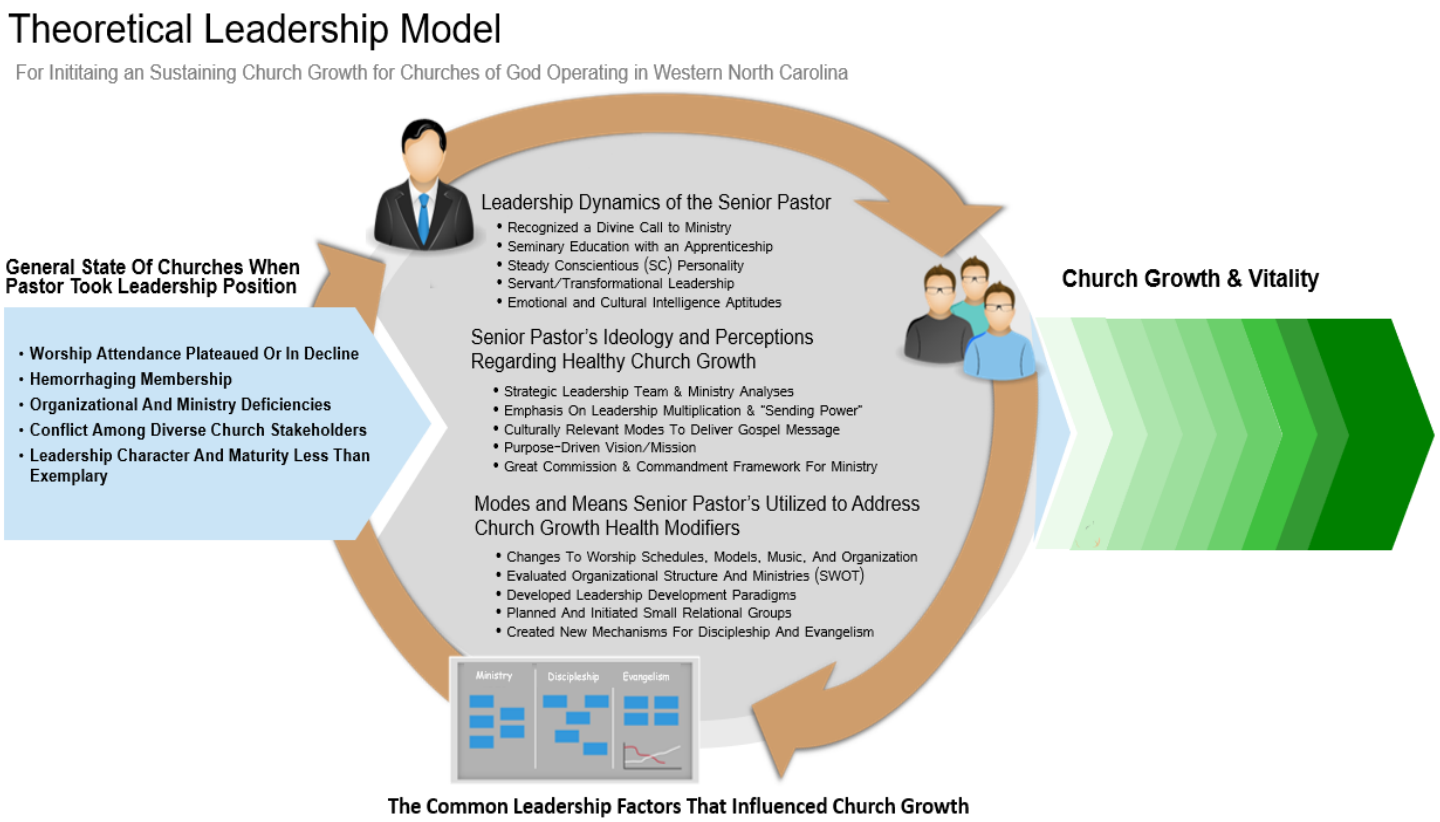

Figure 7 The growth perceptions, stratagems, methods, and leadership behaviors utilized by successful Church of God pastors in Western North Carolina provides a framework for revitalization and growth catalyzation.

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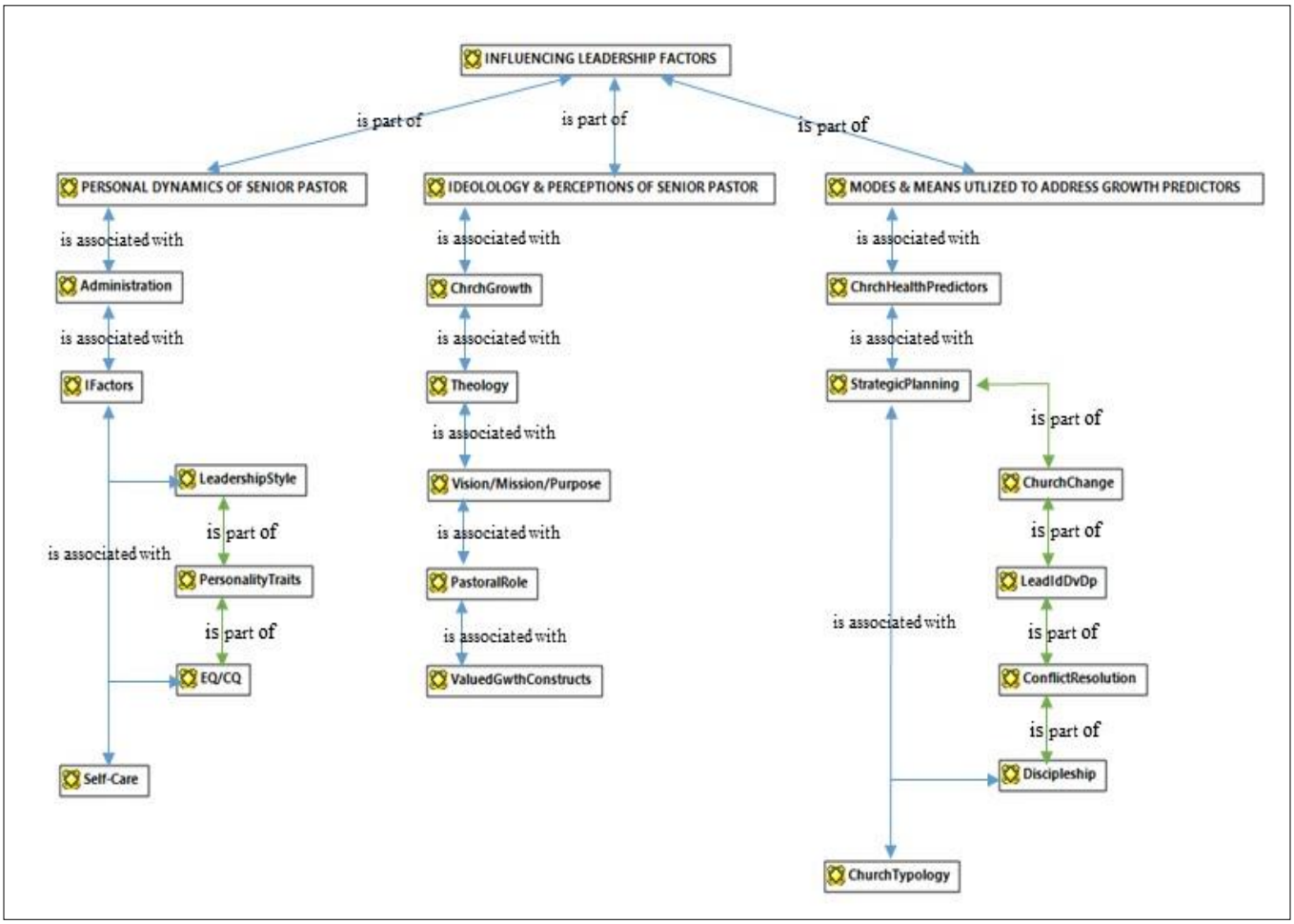
Table 1. Example of a Network of Emerging Themes Created in ATLAS.ti



Source: Data created in Scientific Software Development GmbH. "ATLAS.ti Qualitative Analysis Software, Version 7.5.15.

Table 2. Example of Co-Occurrence Table Created in ATLAS.ti

Growth Predictor	Church Mobilization	Burden for the Lost	Ministry Analysis	Mission Development	Functional Structures	Holistic Small Groups	Need-Oriented Evangelism	Totals
Gift oriented ministry	0.09	0.14				0.03	0.10	0.36
Passionate Spirituality		0.07			0.08	0.05	0.05	0.25
Functional structures/administration/leadership	0.06		0.08			0.05		0.19
Inspiring worship	0.04		0.06		0.24	0.06	0.03	0.43
Holistic small groups/intentional disciple-making paradigms	0.07		0.06	0.03	0.05		0.08	0.29
Need-oriented evangelism/personal witnessing/missions	0.09	0.06		0.02		0.08		0.25
Loving relationships/fellowship	0.06	0.05	0.04		0.03	0.10	0.07	0.35
Purpose/Mission/Vision	0.03	0.23	0.10	0.14	0.08		0.05	0.63
Church planting			0.08	0.07				0.15

Source: Data created in Scientific Software Development GmbH. “ATLAS.ti Qualitative Analysis Software, Version 7.5.15.

Table 3. Significant Emergent Categories Codes and Themes

Administration Influencing Factors Leadership Style Personality Traits Emotional and Cultural Intelligence Self-Care	Church Growth Perceptions Theological Perceptions Vision/Mission/Purpose Pastoral Role Valued Growth Constructs Church Typology	Church Health Predictors Strategic Planning Church Change Leadership Development Conflict Resolution Discipleship

Source: Data created in Scientific Software Development GmbH. "ATLAS.ti Qualitative Analysis Software, Version 7.5.15.

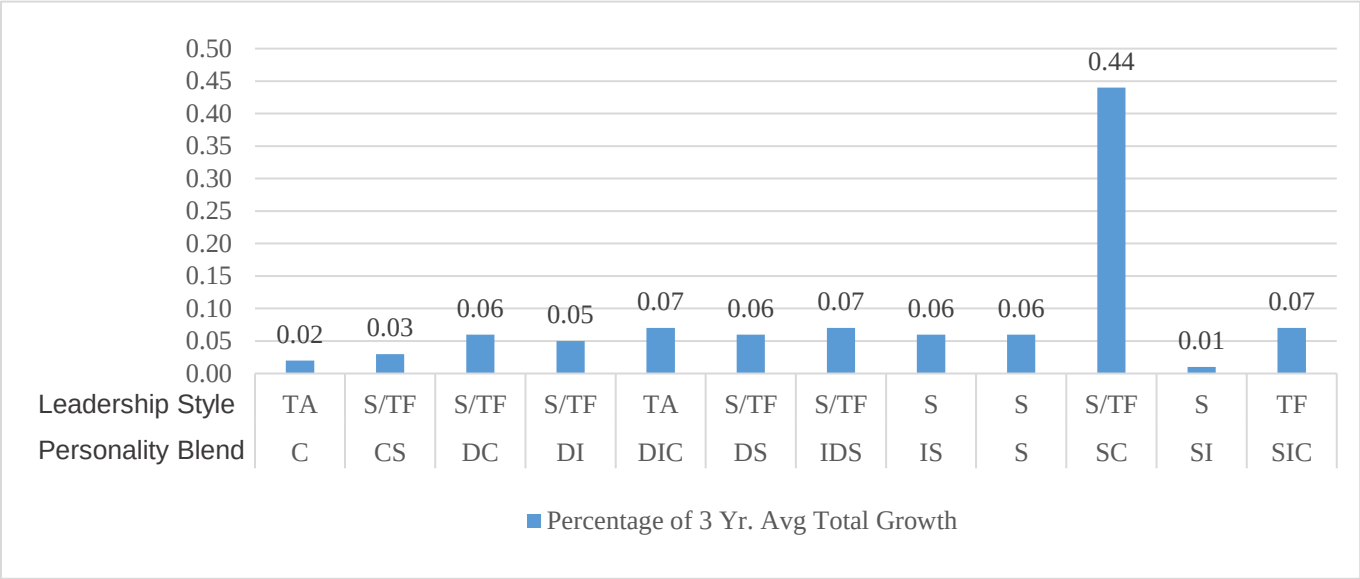
Table 4. Co-occurrence Table for Senior Pastor's Personality Types

Personality Profile Co-occurring Code Category	D	I	S	C	Total
Admitting a weakness: Church administration	0.000	0.000	0.043	0.000	0.043
Admitting a weakness: Staff selection and management	0.000	0.000	0.040	0.053	0.093
Change1: Determining God's will and developing a vision	0.000	0.000	0.029	0.000	0.029
Change2: Building a guiding coalition	0.000	0.000	0.056	0.032	0.088
Change3: Transforming the vision into a plan	0.000	0.000	0.033	0.087	0.120
Change4: Communicating the change plan	0.000	0.000	0.050	0.000	0.050
Change6: Implementing the plan/change	0.000	0.000	0.032	0.000	0.032
Communicating change at the corporate level	0.000	0.000	0.026	0.063	0.088
Communicating change with key influencing stakeholders	0.000	0.000	0.067	0.040	0.107
Conflict Type12: Interpersonal	0.077	0.000	0.042	0.056	0.174
Conflict Type15: Over value/Worth	0.083	0.071	0.091	0.000	0.246
Conflict Type17: Over Means/Ministry	0.154	0.000	0.000	0.053	0.206
Demonstrating a contemporary leadership model	0.182	0.071	0.000	0.000	0.253
Demonstrating a leadership style of teamwork	0.040	0.000	0.000	0.033	0.073
Demonstrating a leadership style/personality trait	0.106	0.119	0.120	0.200	0.545
Demonstrating conflict resolution strategy	0.136	0.125	0.059	0.000	0.320
Describing a construct through COG denominational lenses	0.030	0.000	0.000	0.026	0.057
Describing church change strategy	0.071	0.044	0.018	0.064	0.198
Describing conflict resolution strategy	0.048	0.000	0.138	0.000	0.186
Describing leadership IDD protocol	0.000	0.000	0.024	0.000	0.024
Describing results of personal leadership	0.000	0.133	0.000	0.111	0.244
Describing results personal development from apprenticeship	0.077	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.077
Developing personal ministry skills	0.091	0.077	0.045	0.000	0.213
EQ1: Self-awareness	0.077	0.067	0.042	0.000	0.185
EQ2: Perceiving emotions	0.000	0.000	0.038	0.000	0.038
EQ3: Using emotions	0.091	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.091
EQ4: Understanding emotions	0.000	0.000	0.083	0.000	0.083
EQ5: Managing emotions	0.000	0.000	0.125	0.050	0.175
Establishing target audience	0.000	0.000	0.031	0.038	0.070
Expressing a personal leadership principle	0.000	0.000	0.020	0.045	0.065
Expressing the necessity of transparent communication	0.000	0.000	0.095	0.000	0.095
GrwStrg1: Prayer	0.000	0.000	0.036	0.000	0.036
Identifying the need for change	0.087	0.000	0.000	0.034	0.121

Personality Profile Co-occurring Code Category	D	I	S	C	Total
LeadSty1: Transactional	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.133	0.133
LeadSty2: Transformational	0.000	0.091	0.065	0.000	0.155
LeadSty3: Servant	0.059	0.027	0.146	0.079	0.311
Presenting an example of trust and respect acquisition	0.111	0.091	0.000	0.000	0.202
ResoRole1: Negotiator	0.111	0.091	0.000	0.000	0.202
ResoRole3: Group Facilitator	0.000	0.000	0.080	0.000	0.080
ResoRole4: Advocate	0.182	0.000	0.000	0.059	0.241
ResoStyle2: Accommodation	0.077	0.067	0.087	0.056	0.286
ResoStyle3: Confrontation	0.067	0.059	0.038	0.000	0.164
ResoStyle5: Collaboration	0.000	0.000	0.074	0.000	0.074
ResoStyle7: Controller	0.333	0.000	0.000	0.063	0.396
VMP3: Vision mission perception (dogma)	0.053	0.000	0.000	0.042	0.094

Source: Data created in Scientific Software Development GmbH. "ATLAS.ti Qualitative Analysis Software, Version 7.5.15.

Table 5. Relationship of Senior Pastors Personality Profile with Overall Percentage of Church Growth from April 1, 2014 to April 30, 2016



Source: Data created in Scientific Software Development GmbH. "ATLAS.ti Qualitative Analysis Software, Version 7.5.15.

Table 6. Co-occurrence Table for Senior Pastor's DISC® Themes

Personality Profile Correlation Co-Occurrences	D	I	S	C	Total
D-Personality: Person places emphasis on accomplishing results, the bottom line. Exhibits confidence. Emphasizes shaping the environment by overcoming opposition to accomplish results.	0.000	0.176	0.036	0.045	0.258
I-Personality: Person places emphasis on influencing or persuading others, openness, relationships. Emphasizes shaping the environment by influencing or persuading others.	0.176	0.000	0.069	0.000	0.245
S-Personality: Person places emphasis on cooperation, sincerity, dependability. Emphasizes cooperating with others within existing circumstances to carry out the task.	0.036	0.069	0.000	0.097	0.201
C-Personality: Person places emphasis on quality and accuracy, expertise, competency. Emphasizes working conscientiously within existing circumstances to ensure quality and accuracy.	0.045	0.000	0.097	0.000	0.142

Source: Data created in Scientific Software Development GmbH. "ATLAS.ti Qualitative Analysis Software, Version 7.5.15.

Table 7. Participants' Common Reflections of Church Growth Constructs as Informed by Significant Theological Distinctives

Discussed Church Growth Constructs Through Church of God Doctrinal Framework								
IdNo	3 YR Growth %	Challenged to Distinguish Between Message vs Mode	Church Type 1: Soul Winning	Church Type 2: Experiencing God	Church Type 3: Family Reunion	Church Type 4: Classroom	Church Type 5: Social Conscience	Worship Style
P13	0.19	•					•	Traditional
P4	0.14					•		Traditional
P15	0.14		•		•	•		Traditional
P5	0.14	•			•			Blended
P6	0.12	•		•	•			Traditional
P7	0.11	•	•		•			Contemporary
P8	0.10		•					Blended
P17	0.09	•			•			Blended
P18	0.09		•		•			Traditional
P10	0.07		•				•	Blended
P2	0.05		•				•	Blended
P3	0.01				•			Blended
Totals		**5 (41.7%)**	**6 (50%)**	**1 (8.3%)**	**7 (58.3%)**	**2 (16.7%)**	**3 (25.0%)**	
% of Total Population Sample		**27.8%**	**33.3%**	**5.6%**	**38.9%**	**11.1%**	**16.7%**	
Discussed Church Growth Constructs through the framework of the Great Commission (Mat. 28:16-20) and the Great Commandment (Mat. 22:36-40).								
IdNo	3 YR Growth %	Challenged to Distinguish Between Message vs Mode	Church Type 1: Soul Winning	Church Type 2: Experiencing God	Church Type 3: Family Reunion	Church Type 4: Classroom	Church Type 5: Social Conscience	Worship Style
P16	0.11				•			Blended
P1	0.10		•	•	•	•	•	Blended
P9	0.10		•					Traditional
P11	0.03		•			•		Contemporary
P12	0.02		•			•		Blended
P14	0.01				•		•	Blended
Totals		**0 (0%)**	**4 (66.7%)**	**1 (16.7%)**	**3 (50.0%)**	**3 (50.0%)**	**2 (33.3%)**	
% of Total Population Sample		**0.0%**	**22.2%**	**5.6%**	**16.7%**	**16.7%**	**11.1%**	

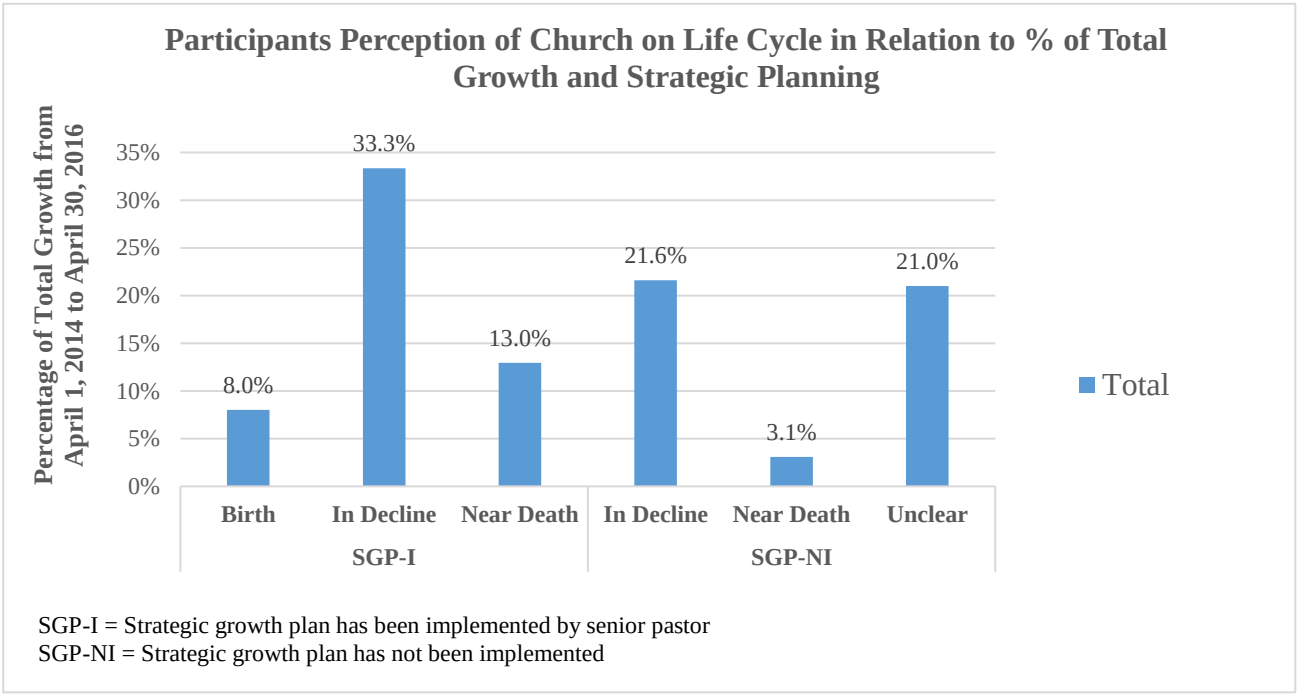
Source: *Data created in Scientific Software Development GmbH. "ATLAS.ti Qualitative Analysis Software, Version 7.5.15.*

Table 8. Co-occurrence Table for Senior Pastor's Theological Perceptions (Church Type)

Senior Pastor's Theological Perceptions (Church Type)	Challenged to Distinguish Between Message vs Mode	Church Type 1: Soul Winning	Church Type 2: Experiencing God	Church Type 3: Family Reunion	Church Type 4: Classroom	Church Type 5: Social Conscience
No. of Churches	5	10	2	10	5	5
% of Sampled Churches	0.278	0.556	0.111	0.556	0.278	0.278
% of 3 YR Growth	0.401	0.500	0.136	0.568	0.265	0.259

Source: *Data created in Scientific Software Development GmbH. "ATLAS.ti Qualitative Analysis Software, Version 7.5.15.*

Table 9. Position of Sampled Churches on Church Life Cycle



SGP-I = Strategic growth plan has been implemented by senior pastor
SGP-NI = Strategic growth plan has not been implemented

Source: *Data created in Scientific Software Development GmbH. "ATLAS.ti Qualitative Analysis Software, Version 7.5.15*

Table 10. Estimated Population Change and Rate of Growth for Western North Carolina Counties (by Race)

Estimated Demographic Population Change from 2010 to 2014 (Percent Change)

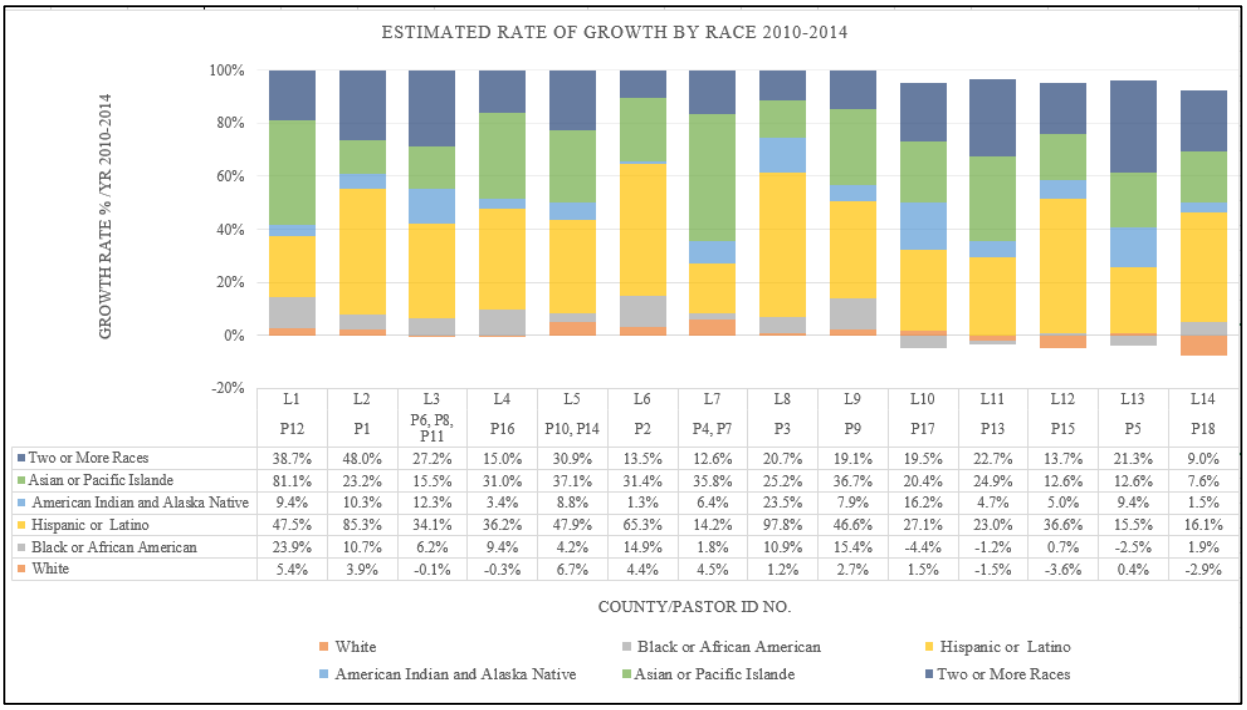
County ID No.	Total Population	White	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	American Indian and Alaska Native	Asian or Pacific Islander	Two or More Races
NC	23.5%	9.8%	22.2%	136.0%	13.5%	125.4%	68.9%
L1	46.6%	21.5%	95.6%	189.9%	37.7%	324.2%	154.9%
L2	20.6%	15.7%	42.9%	341.1%	41.4%	92.9%	191.8%
L3	10.9%	-0.4%	24.8%	136.4%	49.3%	62.1%	108.9%
L6	21.6%	-1.4%	37.6%	144.8%	13.6%	124.0%	59.9%
L7	35.9%	27.0%	16.9%	191.5%	35.1%	148.5%	123.4%
L9	23.7%	17.6%	59.8%	261.0%	5.3%	125.7%	54.2%
L11	25.2%	18.2%	7.2%	56.8%	25.6%	143.1%	50.4%
L12	13.6%	4.9%	43.4%	391.2%	94.0%	100.8%	83.0%
L13	45.6%	10.9%	61.7%	186.3%	31.6%	146.7%	76.3%
L14	11.1%	6.0%	-17.7%	108.5%	64.7%	81.6%	77.9%
L15	-0.3%	-6.0%	-5.0%	92.0%	18.8%	99.7%	90.7%
L16	-1.2%	-14.3%	2.7%	146.6%	19.8%	50.3%	54.9%
L17	3.8%	1.6%	-10.2%	61.8%	37.6%	50.5%	85.1%
L18	3.9%	-11.8%	7.5%	64.6%	5.9%	30.6%	35.8%

Estimated Demographic Population Change from 2010 to 2014 (Estimated Growth Rate/YR)

County ID No.	Total Population	White	Black or African American	Hispanic or Latino	American Indian and Alaska Native	Asian or Pacific Islander	Two or More Races
NC	5.9%	2.4%	5.6%	34.0%	3.4%	31.4%	17.2%
L1	11.6%	5.4%	23.9%	47.5%	9.4%	81.1%	38.7%
L2	5.1%	3.9%	10.7%	85.3%	10.3%	23.2%	48.0%
L3	2.7%	-0.1%	6.2%	34.1%	12.3%	15.5%	27.2%
L6	5.4%	-0.3%	9.4%	36.2%	3.4%	31.0%	15.0%
L7	9.0%	6.7%	4.2%	47.9%	8.8%	37.1%	30.9%
L9	5.9%	4.4%	14.9%	65.3%	1.3%	31.4%	13.5%
L11	6.3%	4.5%	1.8%	14.2%	6.4%	35.8%	12.6%
L12	3.4%	1.2%	10.9%	97.8%	23.5%	25.2%	20.7%
L13	11.4%	2.7%	15.4%	46.6%	7.9%	36.7%	19.1%
L14	2.8%	1.5%	-4.4%	27.1%	16.2%	20.4%	19.5%
L15	-0.1%	-1.5%	-1.2%	23.0%	4.7%	24.9%	22.7%
L16	-0.3%	-3.6%	0.7%	36.6%	5.0%	12.6%	13.7%
L17	1.0%	0.4%	-2.5%	15.5%	9.4%	12.6%	21.3%
L18	1.0%	-2.9%	1.9%	16.1%	1.5%	7.6%	9.0%

Source: *Data from United States Census Bureau, 2010, https://factfinder.census.gov and UNC Demography, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2014, http://demography.cpc.unc.edu/.*

Table 11. Graph of Estimated Population Change and Rate of Growth for Western North Carolina Counties (by Race)



	L1 P12	L2 P1	L3 P6, P8, P11	L4 P16	L5 P10, P14	L6 P2	L7 P4, P7	L8 P3	L9 P9	L10 P17	L11 P13	L12 P15	L13 P5	L14 P18
Two or More Races	38.7%	48.0%	27.2%	15.0%	30.9%	13.5%	12.6%	20.7%	19.1%	19.5%	22.7%	13.7%	21.3%	9.0%
Asian or Pacific Islande	81.1%	23.2%	15.5%	31.0%	37.1%	31.4%	35.8%	25.2%	36.7%	20.4%	24.9%	12.6%	12.6%	7.6%
American Indian and Alaska Native	9.4%	10.3%	12.3%	3.4%	8.8%	1.3%	6.4%	23.5%	7.9%	16.2%	4.7%	5.0%	9.4%	1.5%
Hispanic or Latino	47.5%	85.3%	34.1%	36.2%	47.9%	65.3%	14.2%	97.8%	46.6%	27.1%	23.0%	36.6%	15.5%	16.1%
Black or African American	23.9%	10.7%	6.2%	9.4%	4.2%	14.9%	1.8%	10.9%	15.4%	-4.4%	-1.2%	0.7%	-2.5%	1.9%
White	5.4%	3.9%	-0.1%	-0.3%	6.7%	4.4%	4.5%	1.2%	2.7%	1.5%	-1.5%	-3.6%	0.4%	-2.9%

Source: *Data from United States Census Bureau, 2010, https://factfinder.census.gov and UNC Demography, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, 2014, http://demography.cpc.unc.edu/.*

Table 12. Participants' Perceptions of Church Vision, Mission, and Purpose

IdNo	3 YR Growth %	Challenged to Distinguish Between Message vs Mode	Church Type	Worship Style	Target Audience	General Perceived Purpose of Church	General Perceived Vision of Church	General Percived Mission of Church	% of Total Growth
P8	0.10		SW	Blended	NTA	EE	MCN-SNP	EMCN-DIDM	6%
P13	0.19	Yes	SW-SC	Traditional	NTA	MP	MCN-PPD	EMCN-COGD-RLUC	
P14	0.01		FR-SC	Blended	NTA	MP	MCN-MGN-SNP	EMCN-DIDM-RLUC	12%
P1	0.10		PD	Blended	NTA	MP-CG	SNP	DIDM-RLUC	
P17	0.09	Yes	FRT	Blended	CI	MP-CG	MCN-CHE	EMCN	
P18	0.09		SW-FR	Traditional	NTA	MP-CG	MCN-SNP-PPD	EMCN-COGD-RLUC	
P2	0.05		SW-SC	Blended	LI	MP-CG	PPD	EMCN-COGD-RLUC	20%
P5	0.14	Yes	FR	Blended	CI	NPERPurpose	MCN-NET-CHE	NPERVision	
P6	0.12	Yes	EG-FR	Traditional	LI	NPERPurpose	MGN	NPERVision	
P10	0.07		SW-SC	Blended	CE	NPERPurpose	MCN-MGN-PPD	EMCN-COGD-RLUC	20%
P7	0.11	Yes	SW-FR-CL	Contemporaty	NTA	MP-CG-EE	PPD	RLUC	
P16	0.11		FR	Blended	NTA	MP-CG-FB	MNE-CHE	EMCN-DIDM-COGD-RLUC	
P9	0.10		SW	Traditional	CE	MP-CG-FB	RUL-CHE	RLUC	
P15	0.14		SW-FR-CL	Traditional	NTA	MP-CG-FB	FUI	DIDM-COGD-RLUC	
P11	0.03		SW-CL	Contemporaty	NTA	MP-CG-FB-EE	MCN	EMCN-DIDM-RLUC	
P3	0.01		FR	Blended	NTA	MP-CG-FB-EE	FUI	DIDM-COGD	
P4	0.14		CL	Traditional	NTA	WG-MP-CG-EE	FUI-SNP-CHE	EMCN-DIDM-COCD	
P12	0.02		SW-CL	Blended	CE	WG-MP-CG-EE	MCN	EMCN-DIDM	41%

Source: *Data created in Scientific Software Development GmbH. "ATLAS.ti Qualitative Analysis Software, Version 7.5.15*

Table 13. Participants' Perceptions of Church's Mission

Pastors' Overarching Perceptions of Church Mission	No. of Participants	% of Total Participants	% of Total Growth
RLUC	**11**	**61%**	**62%**
EMCN	**11**	**61%**	**56%**
COCG	**8**	**44%**	**49%**
DIDM	**8**	**44%**	**41%**
No Mission Recognized	**2**	**11%**	**16%**

Pastor Id. No.	3 YR Growth %	Pastors' Explicit Perceived Mission of Church	% of Total Growth
P13, P18, P2, P10	**0.40**	**EMCN-COGD-RLUC**	**24.7%**
P5, P6	**0.26**	**No Perceived Church Mission**	**16.0%**
P7, P9	**0.21**	**RLUC**	**13.0%**
P15	**0.14**	**DIDM-COGD-RLUC**	**8.6%**
P4	**0.14**	**EMCN-DIDM-COCD**	**8.6%**
P8, P12	**0.12**	**EMCN-DIDM**	**7.4%**
P16	**0.11**	**EMCN-DIDM-COGD-RLUC**	**6.8%**
P1	**0.10**	**DIDM-RLUC**	**6.2%**
P17	**0.09**	**EMCN**	**5.6%**
P11, P14	**0.04**	**EMCN-DIDM-RLUC**	**2.5%**
P3	**0.01**	**DIDM-COGD**	**0.6%**

Pastors Perception of Church's Mission
EMCN=Engage and Meet Community Needs
DIDM=Deepen Internal Church Family Relationships and Disciple Parishioners
COGD=Perpetuate Church of God Dogma
RLUC=Reach the Lost and Unchurch in Surrounding Cities and Communities

Source: *Data created in Scientific Software Development GmbH. "ATLAS.ti Qualitative Analysis Software, Version 7.5.15*

Table 14. Church Health Modifiers

Worship

Inspiring Worship
Personal and Corporate Prayer
Meaningful Relationships with God (Passionate Spirituality)

Ministry

Ministry Analysis, Strategic Planning, Strategy Implementation, and Evaluation
- Motivating Influence and Overarching Goal for Ministry and Mission
- Identifying Need for Change and Barriers to Growth
- Ministry Analysis (The Minimum Factor)
- Church Change
- Conflict Resolution
- Development and Implementation of New Innovative Ministry Paradigms

Empowering Leadership
- Leadership Development
- Gift Oriented Ministry

Effective Organizational System (Functional Structures)

Evangelism

Social Services for the Surrounding Community (Need Oriented Evangelism)
Systematic Evangelism
Church Planting

Fellowship

Loving Relationships
Relational Health

Discipleship

Holistic Relational Groups
Reproduction and Multiplication
Innovative Creation of Discipleship Paradigms

Source: Indicator matrix synthesized from *Biblical Purposes of Ministry*, *Small Groups with Purpose*, Steve Gladden, Baker Books, 2011, *Eight Quality Characteristics, Natural Church Development*, Christian Schwarz, ChurchSmart Resources, 2003 and the "*Institute for Church Growth in Korea Multivariate Model", Models of the Church Growth Movement*, Young-Gi Hong, *Transformation* 21, no. 2 (2004): 101-13, http://www.jstor.org/stable/43053123.

Table 15. Correlation Coefficient of Church Health Modifiers

Church Modifiers Co-occurring Code Category	Correlation Coefficient Total
Inspiring worship	1.000
Implementing a growth strategy	0.884
Mission development (What are we supposed to do?)	0.853
Functional structures/administration/leadership	0.830
Passionate Spirituality	0.828
Loving relationships/fellowship	0.811
Determining Church Purpose/Mission/Vision	0.801
Ministry analysis (What kind of church are we? Internal/external? SWOT)	0.777
Expressing a burden for the lost	0.745
Biblical financial stewardship	0.723
Identifying the need for change	0.713
Determining God's will and developing a vision	0.666
God's empowering presence	0.601
Communicating change at the corporate level	0.577
Holistic small groups/intentional disciple-making paradigms	0.576
Acknowledging a relationship between churchwide mobilization and church growth	0.569
Recognizing church's core value(s): Unity in the local body and the surrounding community	0.563
Need-oriented evangelism/personal witnessing/missions	0.523
Strategy implementation	0.518
Centralizing of God's Word/Grace/Gospel	0.506
Communicating change with key influencing stakeholders	0.488
Implementing the plan/change strategy	0.488
Ministry/plan evaluation	0.452
Building a guiding coalition	0.447
Acknowledging a positive correlation between church growth and personal contact: relationships	0.442
Acknowledging a relationship between spiritual disciplines and church growth	0.413
Communicating the change plan	0.386
Vision mission perception (unchurched)	0.366
Church-based Leadership Development Mechanisms (strong)	0.349
Establishing target audience	0.305
Growth Strategy: Prayer	0.287
Church Type: The Experiencing God Church. (Worship) The focus is on experiencing the presence and power of God in worship. The worship service receives more attention than anything else.	0.250

Table 16. Participants Shared Belief Regarding Church Growth and Community Outreach

Pastor ID.	Document No.	Key Point	Code
P7	D3	We started going out to the community and sewed into that community as well as what we'd sewn into ourselves and the churches around us.	GwthPredict7
P1	D6	…when the members of the church go out and visit the community, let the community know that they care about them, and that is been more effective in my ministry than anything else.	GwthPredict7
P11	D7	We also get very involved with the community that we are in. The city we are in. We've grown through that. So, just really being involved in the community. And inviting people inside the church. We've had these big events and people come and like I say, 100 may show up, but a family stays with us out of that. We count that as a success. That's one more family that wasn't there. So, that's been our way through the years, growing.	GwthPredict7
P12	D8	We're had several community events where we're invited the community and we've fed them.	GwthPredict7
P17	D12	We've just continued growing, being community oriented. Doing everything in the community. Saving up money just to go buy 200 loaves of bread at one of the discount places and going through the community inviting people to church.	GwthPredict7
P16	D19	When we started having the time of worship within, then we started branching out to involve the community. We would promote and have community activities here where we would have prayer station ministry. We went out in the community and pray for people and start witnessing to them about the Lord. Invite them into the church and everything.	GwthPredict7
P5	D1	We have a local ministry, King Outreach, where they feed the poor of the town, and help pay the light bills. We send money to them every month.	RPysneedsLC:
P16	D19	in December we're planning on doing a localized Samaritan's Purse. We're going to do shoeboxes up for needy kids in our community and send those out through evangelism efforts. So, evangelism is part of our core thing.	RPysneedsLC:
P11	D7	Not all of our growth, a vast majority, a big majority of our growth has been getting involved in our community and being active where we are. I would tell any pastor that's in a church to be involved in that community. It's a shame for a church to be in a neighborhood and for them to not know about that church	Share6:
P14	D16	We continue to focus on that issue and men take our message to our community, the soup kitchens, the hospitals, the nursing homes, the police department, the fire department…	Share6:

ATLAS.ti Codes

GwthPredict7: Need-oriented evangelism/personal witnessing/missions

RPysneedsLC: Reaching physical needs of local community

Share6: Mission/Evangelism/Witnessing

Source: Data created in Scientific Software Development GmbH. "ATLAS.ti Qualitative Analysis Software, Version 7.5.15

Table 17 Undergraduate Level Online Courses Opportunities for Church of God Pastors for Addressing Current Social Challenges and Barriers to Growth

Current Issue Challenging Church of God Pastors	COG School of Ministry Course	Liberty University Online Course
Churches across America desperately need revitalization.	Name/No: *Planting and Growing Churches* Description: Course is designed to teach students the practical strategies for church planting such as networking, small groups, home visitation, cross-cultural, and media usage. Discussion includes the profile of a church planter, the process of church growth, as well as the different kinds of growth.	Name/No: CHMN 400 *Leading Next Gen Ministry* Description: this course affords pastors the opportunity to learn the essential competencies required for leading next generation ministry. Pastors are presented with effective contemporary leadership strategies and leading spiritual formation that engages the entire family from birth to college in the local church. Students are taught how to create safe environments across ministry programs, design a spiritual formation strategy for the family, and to develop the leadership skills necessary to lead in the local church. Name/No: CLED 450 *Organization and Leadership in Ministry* Description: this course is designed to address constructs of organization and leadership unique to ministry organizations. Emphasis is placed on methods for analyzing and diagnosing the personal spiritual needs of the clerical leader. Students are presented with some of the common mistakes leaders make in ministry, and various principles that leaders need to learn to effectively manage people.
Communities surrounding most churches have rapidly become culturally diverse.	Name/No: *Ministering to Culturally Diverse Populations* Description: Course curriculum focuses on the theological basis for multicultural ministry. Students learn to Identify the strengths and weaknesses of multicultural ministry. Students are required to discuss the importance of multicultural ministry in today's society and identify the role of the church in multicultural ministry. The ultimate goal is for students to embrace other cultures into their own churches or plant a cross-cultural church.	Name/No: GLST 200 *Introduction to Global Studies* Description: This course explains the history, principles and foundations of global engagement and presents pastors with the elemental principles for engaging the current global environment. Name/No GLST220 Intercultural Communication and Engagement Description: This course takes a close look at behaviors and core values of the North American culture. Students learn to identify areas where these values are barriers to effective intercultural communication and explore principles for effective engagement in another culture.

Churches today are challenged by young generations that were born in the wake of postmodernism, relativism, and deconstructionism, and religious pluralism.	Name/No: *Faith Foundations for Life in the 21st Century* Description: This course presents students with a historical overview of the postmodern world and the undermining of faith through the loss of absolutes and the relativity of morality. By the end of the course, students should be proficient at describing the moral dilemma, discussing the postmodern world and the Christian faith, and answering the question: "How should I live as a disciple of Jesus Christ in a secular society?"	Name/No: RLGN 104 *Christian Life and Biblical Worldview* Description: Students learn to develop and apply a biblical worldview in this course. This course presents students with the core fundamentals of the biblical worldview with the intent of equipping the student to present that view in relation to competing worldviews. Name/No: RLGN 105 *Introduction to Biblical Worldview Course* Description: This course introduces students to the biblical worldview and present-day moral issues. Coursework also explores religious and philosophical worldviews. The goal of the course is to challenge students to articulate and to validate his or her worldview by defining what is believed and defend why it is believed. Learning outcomes include students learning to critically reflect on the diverse viewpoints and ethical issues that society offers, and in turn, effectively communicate the biblical/Christian worldview in a multicultural society.
American Christianity now tenets interpretations of Scripture that favor same-sex relationships and the inclusion of LGBTQ individuals' ministry and church leadership roles.	Name/No: *Walking in the Truth* Description: Student learns to discuss the core of Christian values which impact social and individual behavior. Ministerial and Christian ethics are examined along with how sexuality, ethnicity, economics, marriage, war, reproduction, and Christian character are relative in modern society.	Name/No: APOL 220 *Introduction to Apologetics* Description: This course is designed to equip students with a foundational understanding of the field of apologetics. Students explore today's major apologetic issues and learn both the critical thinking skills and theological principles to respond persuasively. This course teaches the foundational theological and practical skills required to engage the questions, doubts, and skepticism of unbelievers and believers in modern culture.
The terms "Pentecostal" and "evangelical" are recognized as highly elastic to the world at large today.	Name/No: *Knowing the Holy Spirit* Description: This course examines the person and work of the Holy Spirit, with emphasis on the Pentecostal experience and spiritual gifts. Discussion encompasses the activity of the Spirit in the Old Testament and outlines the doctrine of the Holy Spirit through the New Testament, the early church, and the Pentecostal Movement.	Name/No: EVAN 301 *Evangelism and The Work of The Holy Spirit* Description: In this course students learn the importance of sharing the Gospel message through the power of the Holy Spirit. Students are taught the importance of being filled with and being obedient to the Spirit, so they might more effectively evangelize the lost and endure spiritual opposition. The course emphasizes the redemptive and transformative power of God made available for the work of evangelism and

	Coursework discussion explore what it means to be filled with the Spirit. Students learn to define and identify the gifts of the Spirit and to describe the activity of the Holy Spirit among Christians in today's society.	reinforces the crucial role that prayer, walking in the fullness of the Spirit, pre-evangelistic strategies and spiritual warfare play in the process of reaching the lost.
Traditional approaches of church leadership and ministry are presently being provoked by extreme shifts in media, philosophy, science, and religion. Pastors lack the technological savvy to update church communication modes and cannot communicate with the digital generations of the twenty-first century.	Name/No: *Preaching the Word Today* Description: This course teaches pastors how to utilize modern technology to prepare and deliver sermons. By the end of the course, students should be proficient at selecting the type of sermon needed for any particular audience, and able to prepare and deliver it using the best methods for the occasion. Pastors learn how to communicate, preach, and initiate strategies of evangelism in the high-tech milieus of modern society.	Name/No: SCOM 110 *Media & Culture* Description: This course is a global survey of digital communication (news, information, entertainment). Coursework includes cultural impact, targeted messaging, collaborative solutions, and trust-relationships between content producers and their participating users. Students are introduced to the application of these new forms of media being utilized in personal lives, organizations and business. What media consists of, how each medium functions, and why media is so very important to all of us, is also discussed in the course. Name/No: STCO 356 Digital/Social/Mobile Marketing Description: Pastors can learn how to successfully design, develop and execute targeted marketing campaigns for news, information and entertainment in this course. The coursework introduces students to the practices used in implementing effective integrated web and social marketing programs. Pastors gain an understanding of the application of digital, social and marketing techniques upon completion of this course.

Source: Data adapted from Biblical, Doctrinal, Pastoral Courses, "Church of God School of Ministry," accessed July 17, 2018, https://www.ministerialtraining.org/courses.

Source: Data adapted from Undergraduate Divinity Course, "2018-19 Liberty University Online Programs, Summer 2018," accessed July 17, 2018, https://www.liberty.edu/online/course-guides/bachelors/divinity.

Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Describe the experiences and professional or academic training that led up to you becoming the senior pastor of a church.

2. What factors of your background do you think most prepared you to be an effective senior church administrator?

3. Using birth, growth, plateau, decline, and death to describe the growth cycle of a local church, where was your church positioned when you took over the senior pastor position? What steps did you take to move the church to a healthier position of growth and vitality?

4. What are the vision and mission and core values of this local church?

5. How are organizational and ministry changes identified, planned, and implemented?

6. How is the need for change communicated to membership, and how is resistance to change and conflict resolved?

7. How would paid staff and volunteer church leaders describe your personality, personal qualities, and leadership style?

8. In your opinion, how should church growth be measured, and what leadership factors and strategies have had the greatest impact on the growth of your church and the number of souls won to Christ over the past three years?

9. If you were asked to speak for three hours at an open forum to a group of pastors who were experiencing conversion growth stagnation (past three to five years), what leadership concepts, philosophies, traits, resources, and strategies would you intentionally include in your presentation? Why?

10. What kind/type/model of church do you think you presently pastor? What changes do you perceive taking place for conversion growth to be maintained or augmented in the future?

11. How do you identify, develop, and deploy potential and seasoned leaders?

12. If resources were not a factor, describe your idea of an exemplar growth and discipleship model?

Appendix B

Open Codes Assigned to Instances

Accounting for personal spiritual and leadership development	Categorizing church paradigm and worship style
Accepting the need for experiential life-long learning	Change1: Determining God's will and developing a vision
Acknowledging a positive correlation between church growth and personal contact: relationships	Change2: Building a guiding coalition
Acknowledging a relationship between church wide mobilization and church growth	Change3: Transforming the vision into a plan
Acknowledging a relationship between spiritual disciplines and church growth	Change4: Communicating the change plan
Acknowledging a relationship between transparency and church growth	Change5: Developing the change plan
Acknowledging the business aspects of the local church	Change6: Implementing the plan/change
Acknowledging the importance of a written vision and mission statement	Change7: Evaluating the outcomes of the plan/change
Acknowledging the relationship between interdependence and ministry success	CognCQ(H): reflects knowledge of the norms, practices and conventions in different cultures acquired from education and personal experiences. This includes knowledge of the economic, legal and social systems of different cultures and subcultures and knowledge of basic frameworks of cultural values. Those with high cognitive CQ understand similarities and differences across cultures
Admitting a weakness: Church administration	CognCQ(L): reflects minimal knowledge of the norms, practices and conventions in different cultures acquired from education and personal experiences.
Admitting a weakness: Inability to recognize changes needed to address multicultural 21st century audience	Communicating change at the corporate level
Admitting a weakness: staff selection and management	Communicating change with key influencing stakeholders
Advocating academic training	Conflict Type12: Interpersonal
Advocating denominational ministerial development vehicles	Conflict Type13: Over Issues/Beliefs
Advocating mentoring	Conflict Type14: Over Facts/Truth
Advocating reading of publication written by experts in their discipline	Conflict Type15: Over value/Worth
Applying acquired secular leadership and management skills to church administration	Conflict Type16: Over Goals/Mission
BehavrlCQ(H): reflects the capability to exhibit appropriate verbal and nonverbal actions when interacting with people from different cultures. Those with high behavioral CQ exhibit situationally appropriate behaviors based on their broad range of verbal and nonverbal capabilities, such as exhibiting culturally appropriate words, tone, gestures and facial expressions	Conflict Type17: Over Means/Ministry
BehavrlCQ(L): reflects an inability to exhibit appropriate verbal and nonverbal actions when interacting with people from different cultures	ConflictType1: Intrapersonal
C-Personality: Person places emphasis on quality and accuracy, expertise, competency. Emphasizes working conscientiously within existing circumstances to ensure quality and accuracy	D-Personality: Person places emphasis on accomplishing results, the bottom line. Exhibits confidence. Emphasizes shaping the environment by overcoming opposition to accomplish results.
	Demonstrating a contemporary leadership model
	Demonstrating a leadership style of teamwork
	Demonstrating a leadership style/personality trait
	Demonstrating conflict resolution strategy
	Describing a church plant/birth
	Describing a construct through COG denominational lenses
	Describing a declining/dead church

Describing church change strategy Describing conflict resolution strategy Describing evangelistic/missional outcomes Describing exemplar discipleship paradigm Describing family background: historically clerical, COG Describing family background: historically clerical, introduced to COG from another denomination Describing leadership IDD protocol Describing ministerial training Describing ministry start Describing results of discipleship strategies Describing results of MIP training Describing results of personal leadership Describing results personal development from apprenticeship Developing personal ministry skills Discipleship1: Recognizes all stages of Christian development Discipleship2: Recognizes a few stages of discipleship process Discipleship3: Recognizes no stages of discipleship process Discipleship construct EQ1: Self-awareness - knowing what you are feeling and why, it means knowing what you are good at and what you are not good at, it means knowing what others think about you EQ2: Perceiving emotions – the ability to detect and decipher emotions in faces, pictures, voices, and cultural artifacts—including the ability to identify one's own emotions. Perceiving emotions represents a basic aspect of emotional intelligence, as it makes all other processing of emotional information possible EQ3: Using emotions – the ability to harness emotions to facilitate various cognitive activities, such as thinking and problem solving. The emotionally intelligent person can capitalize fully upon his or her changing moods to best fit the task at hand EQ4: Understanding emotions – the ability to comprehend emotion language and to appreciate complicated relationships among emotions. For example, understanding emotions encompasses the ability to be sensitive to slight variations between emotions, and the ability to recognize and describe how emotions evolve over time	EQ5: Managing emotions – the ability to regulate emotions in both ourselves and in others. Therefore, the emotionally intelligent person can harness emotions, even negative ones, and manage them to achieve intended goals Establishing target audience Explaining growth perception Explaining the value of anointed preaching Expressing a burden for the lost Expressing a deep-rooted love for the body of Christ Expressing a personal leadership principle Expressing God's transforming grace in personal life Expressing the need for an experienced church administrator Expressing the necessity of transparent communication Failing to distinguish between biblical theology and modes of communication Failing to recognize church position on life cycle Growing up in COG GrwStrg1: Prayer GrwStrg10: Ministry/plan evaluation GrwStrg2: Ministry analysis (What kind of church are we? Internal/external? SWOT) GrwStrg3: Values discovery (Who are we/why do we do what we do?) GrwStrg4: Mission development (What are we supposed to do?) GrwStrg5: Environmental scan GrwStrg6: Vision development (What will it look like?) GrwStrg7: Strategy development (How are we going to accomplish our mission?) GrwStrg8: Strategy implementation GrwStrg9: Ministry contingencies analysis (What if? - Good or Bad) GwthPredict1: God’s empowering presence GwthPredict10: Purpose/Mission/Vision GwthPredict11: Biblical financial stewardship GwthPredict12: Church planting GwthPredict2: Gift oriented ministry GwthPredict3: Passionate Spirituality GwthPredict4: Functional structures/administration/leadership

GwthPredict5: Inspiring worship GwthPredict6: Holistic small groups/intentional disciple-making paradigms GwthPredict7: Need-oriented evangelism/personal witnessing/missions GwthPredict8: Loving relationships/fellowship GwthPredict9: Centralizing of God's Word/Grace/Gospel I-Personality: Person places emphasis on influencing or persuading others, openness, relationships. Emphasizes Shaping the environment by influencing or persuading others. IDDL1: Strength of character IDDL2: Level of influence IDDL3: Attitude IDDL4: Interpersonal/Communication skills IDDL5: Gifts and talents IDDL6: Track record IDDL7: Confidence IDDL8: Personal discipline/faithfulness IDDL9: Needs based Identifying the need for change IFactor1: Academics IFactor2: MIP IFactor3: Apprenticeship/Mentoring IFactor4: Personal development (reading) IFactor5: Trial & error IFactor6: Secular work experience Implementing a growth strategy LD1: completed MIP Program LD2: Committed to profession development via reading LD3: No academic or MIP training LD3: No academic or MIP training LD4: Started academic training and quit LD5: Completed academic training and has a college degree LD5: Holds a college degree LD6: Presently perusing a degree LDevPlan1: Church-based (strong) LDevPlan2: Church-based (weak) LDevPlan3: Networked (weak) LDevPlan4: Professional (strong) LDevPlan5: No training offered	LeadSty1: Transactional (Contingent reward/Management-by-exception) LeadSty2: Transformational (Charisma, Inspirational motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, Individualized Consideration) LeadSty3: Servant (Values & Develops people, builds community, displays authenticity, Provides and shares leadership) LifCycPer1: Clear perception of church location on the growth cycle/w-strategic plan implemented LifCycPer2: Clear perception of church location on the growth cycle/wo-strategic plan implemented LifCycPer3: Unclear perception of church location on the growth cycle/w-strategic plan implemented LifCycPer4: Unclear perception of church location on the growth cycle/wo-strategic plan implemented M&M MotivnlCQ(H): reflects the capability to direct attention and energy toward learning about and functioning in situations characterized by cultural differences. Those with high motivational CQ direct attention and energy toward cross-cultural situations based on intrinsic interest and confidence in their cross-cultural effectiveness MotivnlCQ(L): reflects minimal capability to direct attention and energy toward learning about and functioning in situations characterized by cultural differences. No intrinsic interest and confidence in their cross-cultural effectiveness NLifeDiscvry: Church has evangelism/mission ministries ParentingStage1: Infancy (individual requires a model to imitate) Church has established vehicles for learning new truths, and behaviors for other Christians. ParentingStage2: Childhood (individual requires unconditional love and a need to identify with a hero) Church has established relational groups for moving converts from self-centered though and behavior to caring for others ParentingStage3: Adolescence (individual requires increased freedom and exhortation from a coach) Church has established vehicles for building consistent Christlike character ParentingStage4: Adulthood (individual requires mutuality, respect, and ministry participation with a peer) Church has established vehicles for leadership identification, development, & deployment. Multiplication is taking place

Perceiving a relationship between leadership development/ministry delegation and church growth	Recognizing church's core value(s): Unity in the local body and the surrounding community
Perceiving a relationship between personal prayer and spiritual development	Recognizing core values: Unconditional love
Perceiving church vision	Recognizing diversity of community
Perceiving Church vision: facility expansion and/or monetary increase	Recognizing outreach resources: Prayer, finance, the Word, human touch
Perceiving church vision: Family unity and interdependence	Recognizing psychosocial skills: acknowledging interpersonal proficiencies to be a product of spiritual and emotional maturity
Perceiving church vision: meeting community needs	Recognizing the Great Commandment as the basis for church vision and mission
Perceiving church vision: meeting global needs	Recognizing the need for a holistic discipleship paradigm
Perceiving church vision: meeting spiritual needs of parishioners	ResoRole1: Negotiator (someone who tries to help two groups who disagree to reach an agreement with each other)
Perceiving church vision: meeting the needs of exceptional children/parents	ResoRole2: Mediator (a person who helps negotiate between two feuding parties)
Perceiving church vision: networking with church and para church entities	ResoRole3: Group Facilitator (a person who assist with communications between two or more parties; makes negotiation process easier or less difficult)
Perceiving church vision: Propagating Pentecostal doctrine and praxis	ResoRole4: Advocate (a person who argues for or supports a cause or policy. a person who works for a cause or group)
Perceiving church vision: reach the unchurched, over-churched, and de-churched	ResoStyle1: Avoidance
Perceiving church vision: To glorify God by creating a healthy environment of worship, instruction, fellowship, evangelism	ResoStyle2: Accommodation
Perceiving God as ultimate source for personal, leadership, and spiritual development	ResoStyle3: Confrontation
Perceiving missional and evangelistic parameters	ResoStyle4: Competition
Perceiving pastoral role: Coach	ResoStyle5: Collaboration
Perceiving pastoral role: Evangelist	ResoStyle6: Compromise
Perceiving pastoral role: Rancher	ResoStyle7: Controller
Perceiving pastoral role: Spiritual leader	S-Personality: Person places emphasis on cooperation, sincerity, dependability. Emphasizes cooperating with others within existing circumstances to carry out the task.
Perceiving the effectiveness of mentor's leadership	Serving as an apprentice
Presenting an example of trust and respect acquisition	Share1: Administration/management
Purpose1: Worship: the church exists to worship God	Share10: Self-Care
Purpose2: Ministry: the church exists to minister to people	Share11: Theology
Purpose3: Evangelism: the church exists to communicate God’s word	Share12: Vision/mission/strategic planning
Purpose4: Fellowship: the church exists to provide fellowship for believers	Share2: Change/Conflict resolution
Purpose5: Discipleship: the church exists to edify/educate God’s people	Share3: Church health & growth
Reaching outward to local community	Share4: Disciple-making/small groups
Reaching physical needs of local community	Share5: Emotional/Cultural intelligence
Realizing God’s call to ministry	Share6: Mission/Evangelism/Witnessing
Recognizing diversity in parishioners	Share7: Personality/Leadership style

Share8: Preaching Share9: Principles/values Sharing a personal leadership axiom Starting senior pastor role late in life Type1: The Soul Winning Church. (Evangelism) The church's main goal is to save souls; it is always reaching out to the lost. Anything other than evangelism is relegated to a secondary role. Type2: The Experiencing God Church. (Worship) The focus is on experiencing the presence and power of God in worship. The worship service receives more attention than anything else. Type3: The Family Reunion Church. (Fellowship) Pastor is highly relational, loves people, and spends most of his time caring for members. The gathering is more important than the goals. 80% of churches fall into this category. Type4: The Classroom Church. (Discipleship) Pastor emphasizes preaching/teaching, and de-emphasizes others. A Classroom church may have the word "Bible" in its name. Type5: The Social Conscience Church. (Ministry) This church is out to change society. Liberal (focus on injustice in society) and Conservative (focus on moral decline), plays a major role in political process. Members of each one of these churches see themselves as the most spiritual. Much of the conflict occurs when a pastor's gifts and passion do not match what the church has been in the past VMP1: Vision mission perception (community) VMP2: Vision mission perception (church family) VMP3: Vision mission perception (dogma) VMP4: Vision mission perception (unchurched) VMP5: Vision mission perception (global) VMP6: Vision mission perception (other) WorStyle1: Traditional WorStyle2: Contemporary WorStyle3: Blend	

IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

May 9, 2016

Harold Jordan
IRB Approval 2508.050916: Sustaining Growth for Local Church of God Churches in Western North Carolina: A Grounded Theory

Dear Harold,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

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