

## **ABSTRACT**

### **CHURCH PLANTING PASTORS:**

#### **IDENTIFYING, ASSESSING, AND RECRUITING**

#### **POTENTIAL CHURCH PLANTING LEADERSHIP**

by

Paul Marzahn

One of the major determinants for success or failure in a church plant is its founding pastor. A church planting pastor has a unique apostolic gift and skill set. Only a few traditionally trained pastors possess the gift to successfully plant churches. Others need to be identified outside the regular clergy selection and calling process. The Area Director of New Church Development is the primary leader driving the work of starting new churches in the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. District Superintendents also lead as missional strategists, but their time is often diffused by several administrative responsibilities. Without major focus on early identification, many potential church planters are lost to other careers. Others who are identified are not recruited effectively, so they are lost to other denominations or church planting movements.

The purpose of this study is to improve the process to help identify, assess, and recruit potential church planters from within the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The project looks at the six leaders from the MAC Cabinet as the missional strategists to determine their knowledge of and prioritizing for planting new churches. The data is received by asking key questions through an electronic survey. The research determined that the best practices for identifying, assessing, and recruiting

church planters for the MAC include developing a church planter farm system, supporting multi-site and catalytic church planters more effectively, and prioritizing recruitment over assessment of church planters.

CHURCH PLANTING PASTORS:  
IDENTIFYING, ASSESSING, AND RECRUITING  
POTENTIAL CHURCH PLANTING LEADERSHIP

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by

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **NATURE OF THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

Chapter one identifies difficulties in the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church in identifying, assessing, and recruiting potential church planters. The Minnesota Annual Conference leads all other United Methodist Annual Conferences in decline because of their poor evangelism techniques and unsuccessful new church starts. The first chapter starts with a brief autobiographical introduction, then establishes the problem and purpose of this project. The three main research questions are presented next in Chapter one. Chapter one also lists methods of research, defines key terminology, defines delimitations, describes the review process of relevant literature, defines research methodology, defines the type of research used, gives the rationale for participants who were studied, defines data collection methods used, and describes data analysis used and generalizability of the data received. The chapter ends with a brief project overview. Chapter one lays the foundation for the ministry project by establishing the criteria and methods for identifying, assessing, and recruiting potential church planter leadership.

#### **Autobiographical Introduction**

As I reflect on my life and upbringing, I can see where God was at work in me and those around me to foster an environment of love of God and gifts of evangelism. I am interested in understanding more about how church planters are identified, assessed, and recruited because I look back on my life and realize I was involved in a discipleship system that affirmed my call into ministry. I was identified at an early age with gifts for ministry and had I not been identified as a potential pastor I may have chosen a different career path. I was discipled and mentored by

numerous leaders who saw my potential as a pastor with entrepreneurial ministry gifts. I was raised on a fifth-generation farm in rural Minnesota. My family helped to build the United Methodist Church in our town called Lakeside Evangelical UMC. They continue to serve and support the ministry that was begun there generations ago. Although no one in my family served as clergy, several of them planted additional churches in southern Minnesota over the years.

I reflect on the many coaches, teachers, youth leaders, pastors, camp counselors, and professors who were instrumental in growing my faith and encouraging my call into ministry as well as church planting. They were faithful people who consistently pointed me in the direction of ministry as a calling, though I was not sure at the time what that would look like for me. While mountain climbing on top of Granite Peak in Montana in my senior year in high school, a literal lightning strike woke me up to the confirmation that God wanted me to do God's work for the rest of my life. The fact that I spent much of this trip having serious conversations with my youth pastor who led the trip, and a considerable amount of time talking to God about my future, and that I survived this lightning strike, convinced me that this was a Holy Spirit encounter that changed my trajectory toward ministry. The support and encouragement continued for me to be a pastor as I attended Hamline University, in St. Paul, Minnesota. I started working as a youth pastor at 18 years of age and was mentored by Pastor Jim Ross and even given opportunities to teach and preach at a young age. The reason I chose this topic I would like to see more young men and women be identified early in their faith walk and career paths so they may be encouraged to consider church planting as a ministry call. I would also like to see more successful church plants in the MAC and many have failed due to poor identification, assessment and recruitment.

### **Statement of The Problem**

The problem addressed in this ministry transformation project is the difficulty in identifying, assessing, and recruiting potential church planters in the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. One of the major determining factors for success or failure in a church plant is its founding pastor. A church planting pastor has a unique apostolic gift and skill set. Only a few traditionally trained pastors possess the necessary character traits, knowledge, and leadership skills to successfully plant churches. More church planters need to be identified outside of the traditional clergy selection and calling process to fulfill the need in the MAC. The Director of New Church Development is the primary leader driving the work of starting new churches in the Minnesota Annual Conference but is under the supervision of the Cabinet. The Cabinet is made up of District Superintendents who also lead as district strategists. As the Book of Discipline states: “The superintendent will be the chief missional strategist of the district”. (United Methodist Church Book of Discipline 333). According to the guidelines of their job descriptions in the Book of Discipline, District Superintendents are primarily responsible for identifying, assessing, and recruiting church planters to appoint to new church starts. Without major focus on early identification and assessment, many potential church planters are lost to other careers or assigned to traditional churches. Others who are identified are not recruited effectively, so they are lost to other denominations or non-denominational churches. Others who are recruited to start church plants are often not gifted to do so but are asked by Superintendents because of their effectiveness in pastoral ministry.

### **Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this transformation project was to improve the process of identification, assessment, and recruitment of potential church planters from within the Minnesota Annual

Conference of the United Methodist Church.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the current practices of the Minnesota Annual Conference to identify potential church planters?
2. What are the current practices of the Minnesota Annual Conference to assess potential church planters?
3. What are the current practices of the Minnesota Annual Conference to recruit potential church planters?

### **Rationale for the Project**

Lost people matter to God, and one of the best ways to reach new people who are not connected to Jesus is through starting new faith communities. C. Peter Wagner said, “Planting new churches is the most effective evangelistic methodology known under heaven” (168). This project was necessary so best practices could be discovered to start more successful churches with effective leadership, thereby being best stewards of the limited resources of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Churches. Competent church planters need to be identified, assessed, and recruited to have successful new church starts. This project matters because the Minnesota Annual Conference’s mission statement is to "make disciples for the transformation of the world," which happens best in a local church setting that is focused on life transformation. New churches are more effective in life transformation and disciple making when started with strong leadership. This project was also important since most existing church pastors ordained are focused on growing existing churches. New pools of leadership need to be identified to focus on reaching persons outside the existing churches.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

**Church Planter**-A pastor who focuses on starting a new faith community or new church start where none existed previously. Also referred to as an Apostle.

**Identification**-The early process of noticing those leaders with the potential gifting to lead a new church start.

**Assessment**-The intentional process of evaluation by experts to determine if an identified leader has consistent character, calling, and skill set to be a church planter.

**Recruitment**-The intentional process of hiring/funding assessed church planters into a ministry position where they can begin to live out their call. This process includes building relationships, offering incentives, and realizing that church planters are a highly sought-after resource.

### **Delimitations**

For this project, the research focused on the leadership of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Churches. The project used one instrument and had only six participants who were the Cabinet members of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The instrument makes it difficult to determine reliability or validity. It worked with existing formal structures as well as informal structures. The research also examined which institutions, ministries, and leaders help incubate church planters. I chose not to work with all denominations within Minnesota for a more focused study. I also chose not to focus on equipping or sending church planters, but rather the early part of the church planting selection process. The focus was on those who choose the church planters rather than interviewing the church planters themselves which also limits the scope of the research. The research is limited since the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church has a

non-resident, interim Bishop. Therefore, the interim Bishop was not a part the study.

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

The biblical foundations section examines the importance of a group of people called by God. The literature review examines the life of Abraham, Jesus, and the early disciples that formed the first churches. This literature demonstrates the church as an unstoppable force and the hope of the world for making disciples. The living and organic growing church produces disciples who then become church planters. These church planters then form new faith communities, who then produce more disciples and more leaders. The biblical foundations section of literature examines character traits of pastors and, in particular, church planters. Certain characteristics of healthy church planters are necessary to form healthy new faith communities. The theological foundations literature examines the role of knowledge and leadership skills regarding church planters. The literature forms a variety of theological resources demonstrating best practices of successful church planting ministries, denominations, and associations.

Lastly, the theological foundations section examines church planting literature specifically from the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The examination of the MAC literature relates directly to identifying, assessing, and recruiting new church start leadership within the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. It looks at specific character traits for church planters as well as functional abilities.

### **Research Methodology**

This study used a questionnaire to receive data from the Minnesota Annual Conference Cabinet. This data helped discern current practices, or lack of knowledge of current practices, by members of the Cabinet. The comparison was made with best practices revealed through

research of other successful church planting movements. The goal was to improve systematic processes to help guide the Minnesota Annual Conference to identify, assess, and recruit potential church planters. The current process examined included the following steps: (1) Church leadership identifies laity or clergy to discern if they are being called to fill the role of a church planter; (2) As potential certified or ordained pastors are identified, a formalized church planter assessment is conducted by the Minnesota Annual Conference leadership; and 3) As assessed potential planters are affirmed, the process of recruitment is then finalized.

### **Type of Research**

This project was a qualitative, pre-intervention study. The research focused on studying the Minnesota Annual Conference Cabinet and their knowledge of the church planting process as overseers of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. An anonymous electronic questionnaire was sent to the Minnesota Annual Conference Cabinet members engaged in assisting in the research.

### **Participants**

I chose members of the Minnesota Annual Conference Cabinet as participants for the questionnaire. These leaders determine who is hired to plant churches and received the questionnaire to determine what their current practices are for identifying, assessing, and recruiting church planters. The Cabinet members are also the missional strategists who determine where geographically the best opportunity for planting churches will occur. They were best suited as authorities in the Minnesota Annual Conference to be the participants in the research.

### **Data Collection**

The project design was qualitative and pre-intervention in nature. “Qualitative research systematically seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the

individuals who inhabit these settings. Qualitative research is grounded in the social world of experience and seeks to make sense of lived experience.” (Sensing 5 loc.1636) The data collection was done to understand the mission context of each participant and their knowledge of church planter identification, assessment, and recruitment. The research used Google Surveys as an instrument for collecting the data. The data collected was kept confidential. Each participant was given a choice to participate in the questionnaire by reading and signing an informed consent letter. If they chose to participate, they were asked five open ended questions.

### **Data Analysis**

At the conclusion of the electronic questionnaire, the researcher examined common themes and anomalies. As part of the analysis, the researcher also looked for data that was missing from the Cabinet of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Special focus for data analysis was given to current processes identified by more than one respondent. New insights or ideas were also processed in the data analysis by combining it with ideas from the literature review in Chapter 2. A thorough synthesis using the data of the questionnaire and literature review provided a list of best practices for the project findings.

### **Generalizability**

This ministry transformation project was conducted so that the research could be repeated by other researchers who are looking to identify, assess and recruit United Methodist Church Planters in the State of Minnesota. Based on electronic questionnaires, others can analyze the data to develop their own best practices. Some factors may influence the generalizability, such as cultural factors and mission context, but the data should be consistent in most situations. The basic formula for analyzing open-ended questions from denominational leaders should be reproducible.



## **Project Overview**

The ministry transformation project was completed in five distinct phases, each chapter corresponding to a chapter in the research project. Chapter 1 outlines the nature of the project. Chapter two explores the biblical foundations for the purpose of the church and biblical characteristics needed to be a church planter. Chapter two also examines through the literature review the characteristics, knowledge, and skills needed for a successful church planter. As part of the literature review, the research also examines best practices of non-United Methodist Church Planting organizations and denominations. The final section of Chapter two reviews the literature of the Minnesota Annual Conference and their published materials regarding the identification, assessment, and recruitment of potential church planters. Chapter three presents how the research was designed to discern existing practices for identifying, assessing, and recruiting potential church planters. Chapter four reveals the results of research and analysis of gathered information, thus providing the evidence for the transformation project. Chapter five offers an interpretation of the relevant research findings to explain best practices for identifying, assessing, and recruiting potential church planters. Chapter five summarizes the learning report for the transformation project.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

This chapter shows, in the Biblical foundations section, the importance of a group of people called by God. The literature review examines the life of Adam, Abraham, Jesus, and the early disciples who formed the first churches. This literature demonstrates that the church is an unstoppable force and the hope of the world for making disciples. The living and organic growing church produces disciples who then become church planters. These church planters then form new faith communities, who then produce more disciples and more leaders. The biblical foundations section examines character traits of pastors and in particular church planters. Certain characteristics of healthy church planters are necessary to form healthy new faith communities. The theological foundations literature examines the roles of knowledge and leadership skills regarding church planters. The literature from a variety of theological resources demonstrates the best practices of successful church planting ministries, denominations, and associations. Lastly, the theological foundations section examines church planting specifically from the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The examination of the MAC literature relates directly to identifying, assessing, and recruiting new church start leadership within the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. It looks at specific character traits for church planters as well as functional abilities.

#### **Biblical Foundations**

The following section shows the work of God through Scripture that demonstrates how God calls a group of people to follow him and be in relationship with him. The literature review

starts with God's relationship with Adam, and then examines the calling of Abraham to demonstrate how his election became a blessing to the nations. Through his descendants, Jesus came as the fulfillment of this blessing. Through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, God's redemptive plan comes into focus. The calling forth of a group of people extends to all nations through Jesus Christ. The early church disciples extend this blessing of the people of God by planting churches to call even more people into relationship with him.

### **Old Testament**

The Hebrew Scriptures share the importance of God's people in history., Israel, as God's chosen people, demonstrates God's relationship with his creation. God's redemptive call begins at creation, and God's blessing is extended to humanity. Humanity was the pinnacle of creation and was created in God's own image. "So, God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27, NIV). Adam became the *imago Dei* or image of God that separated him from the rest of creation. Being in God's likeness gave him authority over the rest of creation.

"This likeness is so very special that it sets them apart from all other creatures God made. Man is not made according to their kinds; he is made according to God's 'kind.' In other words, man is made in the image and likeness of God" (Ross).

One of God's primary blessings extended to humanity is the fact that we are created in his image.

God made humanity stewards or care givers of creation. God blessed humanity with a garden to care for their basic needs and provide sustenance. "Then the Lord took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it" (Gen. 2:15). Adam and Eve together cared for the garden and were given authority over all creation. "Bearing the *imago Dei*, the human persons are given a measure of sovereignty over all the earth" (Ross). Genesis 2:4-25 shows that man is to follow the way of the Lord and emulate him. Humanity is to care for

creation as God cares for creation.

As with Adam and Eve, God calls forth another man and woman to be in relationship with him. God selects an older couple and calls them to move to another land. This calling by God challenges them to leave behind what is familiar and go to a place he has chosen.

“The Lord said to Abram, ‘Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse; and all the peoples on earth will be blessed through you’.” (Gen. 12 :1-3)

In this Scripture, Abram (and Sarai) are called by God to bless the nations. His obedience to the calling of God brought blessing upon him and his family. It also spread the blessing of God to all the nations. “It is not hard to see what the central theme of the verses is. The words *bless* and *blessing* shine through it like a golden thread. The root word (barak) actually occurs five times in the three verses” (C. Wright loc. 974). Abram was blessed to be a blessing to others. Through Adam’s obedience to the one who called him, God promises to use Abram and his descendants as a blessing to all the world. Each nation and ethnic group will be blessed due to the obedience of Abram and his response to the call of God.

Abraham’s obedience was a call to sacrifice all that he had known and to move into the unknown. It was a test of his faith and his trust in God. The Apostle Paul references Abraham’s faith and trust in God in Hebrews alongside the other forefathers to the inheritance of God, when he states:

“By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country” (Heb. 11:8-9a)

Abram, later Abraham, stepped out in faith even though he did not know for certain what the future would hold. “He sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country. This was an

exercise of faith.” (Henry, Matthew. biblestudytools.com ). Abraham experienced the fulfilled promises both personally and through his offspring.

In a model like Adam, God calls Abraham and gives him a mission. God called Adam to be in relationship with him and God gave Adam the mission to care for the garden. This similar model for God’s people through Abraham represents both election and mission. “*Election* (God’s choice of Abraham) on one side and *mission* (God’s promise to Abraham) on the other.” (C. Wright loc. 1404) The concept of being called and being a blessing are at the heart of the Church. The church is called out of the world to be set apart (election). The Church is called to disciple the nations (mission).

God chose Abraham to be a teacher and to guide others in the way of the Lord. His offspring, and later the Hebrew people, were to follow the way of the Lord and be an example to the nations. Their pursuit of righteousness would set the path for their blessing, and the blessing of other nations as well. “For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what he has promised him” (Gen, 18:19). C. Wright discussed, “To walk in the way of the Lord, then, means doing for others what God wishes to have done for them, or more particularly, doing for others what (in Israel’s case) God has already done for you...” (C. Wright loc. 1441). Therefore, those who walk in the way of the Lord receive special blessings.

Walking in the way of the Lord is what Adam did before the fall when he was caring for the garden. Abraham walked in the way of the Lord to demonstrate righteous living and justice. The people of God are in better relationship with God when they walk in the way of the Lord. They understand the heart of God when they walk in his ways. “We understand what God is like

because we have experienced God's action on our behalf. As the people of God, we are called to follow the way of the Lord and to go and do likewise." (C. Wright loc. 1371). Therefore both Adam and Abraham received God's blessing because they walked in the way of the Lord.

### **New Testament**

The people of God are called into community through Abraham and God's promise to him and Sarah. Both are blessed by God and their blessing is fulfilled through Jesus Christ. Through the descendants of Abraham and Sarah, the one who would bring salvation to the world was formed. The incarnation of God was the extension of the promise God made to be a blessing to the nations. Through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the disciples understood their relationship with God as being more than Israelites but as children of God. The early followers of Jesus were heirs to the promises of God not by just their heritage, but by their relationship with Jesus.

"They saw it as the vital movement not just in human history, but in the entire story of God and the world. Indeed, they believed it had opened a new and shocking window onto the meaning of the word 'God' itself. They believed that with this event the one true God had suddenly and dramatically put into operation his plan for the rescue of the world" (N.T. Wright loc. 389).

Jesus was the fulfillment of the blessing extended to all of humanity. This blessing included both Jew and Gentile.

The incarnation was more than just a babe lying in a manger. The gospel writer John explains the theological significance of God coming in the flesh. "The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). When Jesus became flesh, the presence of God redeemed humanity and brought us back into right relationship. The incarnation changed the theological lens of how followers of God saw themselves. "For us the incarnation is

an absolutely fundamental doctrine, not just as an irreducible part of the Christian confession but also as a theological prism through which we view our entire missional task in the world” (Frost and Hirsch 35). This prism brought into focus the relationship God intended for humanity.

This new understanding of being called by God to be a blessing to the nations was underpinned by the incarnation. It was also demonstrated through the ministry of Jesus Christ. Christ was the manifestation of blessing and wholeness to not only the Hebrew people but to the world. Matthew Henry wrote,

“Jesus Christ is the great blessing of the world, the greatest that ever the world possessed. All the true blessedness the world is now, or ever shall be possessed of, is owing to Abram and his posterity. Through them we have a Bible, a Savior, and a gospel. They are the stock on which the Christian church is grafted.”

The Apostle Paul reminds the early church of the importance of Abraham and the faith from where they came. He calls himself a descendant of Abraham and reminds the new believers that they were grafted into the faith like a branch being grafted into an olive tree. “If some of the branches have been broken off, and you though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.” (Rom. 11:17-18) Craig Keener comments that “Paul portrayed Gentile Christians as grafted into Israel’s heritage as fulfillments of the promise that Abraham would be the father to many nations. That is, Paul viewed them as spiritual proselytes, who recognized that accepting Jesus as Lord they were also embracing the king of Israel, the God of Israel, and the heritage and promises that belonged to Israel. He warned Gentile Christians not to boast against the Jewish people into whose heritage they had been grafted.”

God’s plan of redemption is thus grafted into the story of Abraham and the Hebrew people. The gospel writer John states it well when he reminds the listener the purpose of his sharing:

“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:30). The new calling (election) and the spreading of the good news (mission) is now being shared with the nations. Peter reminds the followers of Jesus to confirm this calling by stating: “Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Pet. 1:10-11) The promise to Abraham is now fulfilled in the following of Jesus Christ. Wright explains how Jesus changed everything and allowed everyone access to election and mission. “And part of the whole point of the Christ Message is that what happened back then, what happened to Jesus, what happened through him, was a one time, never to be repeated piece of history.” (N.T. Wright, “Simply Jesus” loc. 500).

Jesus introduced two main teachings that altered the way the people of God responded to the nations. These teachings are best known as the Great Commandment and the Great Commission. Both discuss how followers of Jesus need to live out the good news of the kingdom of heaven. Heaven is not just a future reality that happens when we die, but the kingdom life begins here and now, not just at the resurrection. “The point of the resurrection is that the present bodily life is not valueless just because you die. What you do with your body in the present matters because God has a great future in store for it. What you do in the present by painting, singing, sewing, praying, teaching, building hospitals, digging wells, campaigning for justice, writing poems, caring for the needy, loving your neighbors as yourself—will last into God’s future ... They are a part of what we call building for God’s kingdom.” (N.T. Wright, “Simply Jesus” loc. 500)

The context of the Great Commandment is important because Jesus made the statement



when he was going through the region known as Galilee, teaching his disciples and others the truth about the kingdom of Heaven. Religious leaders were trying to trick Jesus with what they considered difficult questions. One of the questions they asked was, “What is the greatest commandment?” Jesus did not quote any of the ten commandments handed down by Moses and given to him on Mount Sinai. Instead, Jesus quoted from the “Shema” which is a passage in Deuteronomy 6:4-5 and a portion of Leviticus 19:18.

Jesus’ response prioritized the idea of love of God and neighbor as the core for his ministry. “Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matt. 22:34-40) Jesus challenged both the teachers of the law and his disciples to practice the law of love. Jesus sharing his insights unifies the Hebrew Scriptures with the kingdom of heaven he taught and lived. “Our modeling our love of God the Father and neighbor as Jesus himself practiced it, showing us the way” (Witherington, “Jesus as the Unifier of the Bible”).

Jesus preached on love of God and neighbor, but after he was resurrected, he instructed his disciples that this new way of love was to be shared with everyone regardless of their ethnic background. The Great Commission is a charge that the resurrected Jesus gave to his disciples about what they should be doing until his return. This commission of the twelve closest disciples challenged them to go into the world so that others will know the story of Jesus. The instructions are simple in that they are to make disciples just like he did. They are also to baptize others in the

name of the “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). Jesus ends the commission by reminding them that they will not be doing this without help. He encourages them by letting them know that he will be with them “until the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). “Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matt. 28:18-20)

The mission to make disciples of all the nations continues to happen best through the church. The most effective way to accomplish the Great Commission is to plant churches in every nation. Through new faith communities, we are best able to make disciples and not just converts. Elmer Towns states: “In the past, some have attempted to carry out the Great Commission by focusing on individuals won to Christ through soul winning, street preaching, mass meetings and/or evangelization. But today, many believe the correct biblical methodology is church planting”

The Great Commission is not the only time Jesus, or the Apostles commissioned leadership to expand the kingdom. Commissioning and sending are keys to healthy church planting. Although the Great Commission is stated in Matthew 28:19-20, other Scriptures depict the words of Jesus to go and share the good news. Each of the writers share a similar commission to the Gospel of Matthew. They each remind the disciples that they are to reach out to share the good news. The passages remind the disciples that as commissioned leaders, they are “sent” by Jesus to proclaim the truth about Jesus. It is a biblical mandate shared by Jesus and the early church. The Scriptures are full of disciples being told to “go” or leaders being “sent” through commissioning. A few NIV Scriptures are as follows:

Mark 16:15-16-He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

Luke 24:45-49—Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, this is what is written: “The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

John 20:21-23 - Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”

Acts 1:8 –“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 13:2-3-They were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them. So, after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.”

The Acts 13:2-3 model demonstrates the strength of sending off disciples, who in turn, disciple others and form new churches. The idea of being a “sent” church is critical to the understanding of what it means to be the church. Leaders of the church through prayer, fasting, and discernment determine who should go to form a new faith community. The missionaries were called by God to a particular task. In this case, they were called to preach the gospel to the unreached. Second, God confirmed this calling to the church leaders. This sending entity, the church, heard from the Lord directly and was instructed by God to send them to reach others.

This pattern of sending out church planters in Acts 13 depicts an organized system of church planting and not just individual sharing of the good news.

“Acts 13:1-3 is likely the best example of a church in the New Testament sending missionaries (church planters). As it relates to the role and responsibility of the church in sending missionaries, consider these three lessons from the church at Antioch: First, the missionaries were called by God to a particular task. In this

case, they were called to preach the gospel to the unreached. Second, God confirmed this calling to the church leaders. This sending entity, the church, heard from the Lord directly and was instructed by God to set them apart for the task. Third, the church responded by ceremonially ‘commissioning’ them by fasting, praying, laying on of hands, and then sending them off.” (Wilson and Wilson 99)

In selecting and sending missionaries, the early church was also sensitive to cultural norms. They sought out those who would know the languages and customs of where they would be sent. Their diverse backgrounds, such as Paul’s study of Roman culture, led to the gospel being shared more readily outside of Jerusalem. “In any case, the list of leaders shows a great diversity of backgrounds. What matters more than all differences, though, is what binds them together. These leaders worship God, praying and fasting, and are ready to hear His call when he speaks. Whatever our diverse backgrounds on other points, the one God we serve unites us by spirit.” (Keener, “Multicultural Church”)

Another understanding of the purpose of sending as mentioned in the commissioning Scriptures is the reminder that we are all “everyday missionaries.” Not only should the church set aside and send out missionaries for full-time service, but we should also train church members to be missionaries in their everyday context. The Great Commission may be translated as follows: “Now wherever you go make disciples of all nations...” (Matt. 28:19 The Passion Bible). This translation of “being sent” infers that we as believers are all sent as missionaries into the world. “As a missionary of the church is sent it does not expect non-followers to adjust their lives or cross multiple cultural boundaries to come to the church. Rather, like God sent His Son Jesus into our culture, every believer is sent to carry the mission of God into every sphere of life.” (Stevens 87)

When the church seeks righteousness and justice in an unjust world, the commission of the good news also goes forth through our deeds. The early church cared for prisoners, widows,

and orphans. As the early church grew, the leaders did not want to neglect this important task, but they also wanted to continue preaching and teaching. Acts 6 discusses how they commissioned special leaders to care for the daily distribution of food to the widows. “So, the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, ‘It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables’” (Acts 6:2). The early church ministered in such a way as to live out the prayer Jesus taught them to pray. “It is important to see, and to say, that those who follow Jesus are committed, as he taught us to pray, to God’s will being done ‘on earth as it is in heaven.’ And that means God’s passion for justice must become ours too.” (N.T., Wright Simply Christian loc. 285)

Jesus modeled servanthood for his disciples by healing the sick, feeding the hungry and washing their feet at the last supper. At the Sermon of the Mount, Jesus discussed the importance of justice for all. His message was clear, and the disciples would have been careful to preserve his message.

“The first disciples of Jesus and the earliest post-Easter community would have passed on his words and deeds in a way that showed as much respect for the tradition as Jewish students showed their teachers’ words and deeds in the first century than have allowed the tradition to undergo radical transformation in ways analogous to folk literature.” (Witherington, “Christology” loc. 156)

Jesus demonstrated for his disciples the importance of both words and deeds. Both were passed down to other disciples as the Christian movement grew.

The truth is conveyed through the church that Jesus Christ was born as the Son of God. He came as our savior and died on the cross, so our sins could be forgiven. His resurrection and promise of eternal life for all believers offers hope to the world. “THE TRUTH OF GOD is undefiled and unchangeable, and God has chosen to use His truth to bring transformation to His people.” (Geiger, Kelly and Nation 67) Truth when shared transforms an unbeliever into a person

of faith. This transformation only comes about when the truth is known.

The Apostle Paul summarizes the sharing of truth well in his writing to the church in Corinth. Paul states: “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve” (1 Cor. 15:3-5). Paul explains that this hope is not just in a historical event, but it is a reminder of what we say every time we share communion in the United Methodist Church: “Christ has died, Christ is Risen, Christ will come again.” As the Church gathers in worship, they share this truth so all may come to know the importance of Christ and the resurrection.

The Apostle Paul goes on to explain to the church in Corinth the importance of the resurrection story to our salvation and to our hope. He reminds them that they do not worship a martyr, but the living Lord. Christ followers do not have a false hope in resurrection, but a living hope of eternal life. A believer’s hope is in Jesus, the founder of the church, who came and demonstrated the gift of eternal life. Paul states:

“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ, the first fruits; then when he comes those who belong to him... So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable, it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power, it is sown a natural body; it is raised in a spiritual body.” (1 Cor. 15:20-23, 42-44)

The Apostle Paul makes it clear to the people of Corinth that their hope comes from a savior who is alive. The fact that he was resurrected gives them hope that they will be resurrected as well.

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the church became the unstoppable force of God that could be used to bring down the gates of hell. The story Jesus shared with Peter and the disciples is that the church would be the formidable power that could even stop Satan. Jesus gave this talk

at Caesarea Philippi where it was thought by most in the area that the actual gate to Hades existed by the mouth of a cave. Jesus proclaimed that the church controls the gates of hell and had the “keys of the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 16:19) This powerful story is a reminder of the power of the church to overcome evil in the world. “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matt. 16:18). “Peter is ‘the rock’ in this context because he is the one who confesses Jesus as the Christ. Others who share his proclamation also share his authority in building the church” (Inter Varsity Press NT Commentary, Biblegateway.com, April 2021). All who confess Jesus as the Christ join the church in becoming an unstoppable force and inherit the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

### **Theological Foundations**

The church continues to call people into a relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and then sends them forth to call others into a relationship with God. This is accomplished by planting new churches and making disciples of Jesus Christ. Churches need people to start churches to fulfill their mission. Identifying and selecting qualified church planters is central to planting healthy churches. This section reviews literature on ecclesiology and missiology as it pertains to the functions of the Church and the importance of church planting.

Ecclesiology is the study of the Church and comes from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which often referred to a group of people assembled. The New Testament used the Greek word approximately 114 times. The Church is the assembly of believers who belong to God. Ecclesiology is concerned with the functions of the church that relate to proclaiming the “Gospel of Christ and spreading his message across the world to all peoples. The task of the church is to be a beacon of hope and teach all who enter her doors the ways of salvation” (Hemsworth, “Basics of Ecclesiology”).

In the New Testament, Christians did not “go to” church. Christians “were” the church. The references to church in the New Testament referred to people and not buildings. Church Planters need to understand the importance of ecclesiology since their primary purpose is to gather people and not build buildings. “Ecclesiology should inform, instruct and even excite the mission of planting churches to the glory of God. In other words: church planter, you need a robust ecclesiology that’s in place well before your start trying to plant a church” (Compelling Truth Web).

The five main purposes of the Church demonstrate the need for effective church planters.

“The five basic purposes of every local expression of the Body of Christ are based on the example of the early church as found in Acts 2:42-47. They devoted themselves to the apostles teaching (**DISCIPLESHIP-Edify**) and to the fellowship (**FELLOWSHIP – Encourage**) to the breaking of bread and prayer (**WORSHIP-Exalt**). Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need (**SERVICE – Equip**). Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (**OUTREACH-Evangelism**).” (Howe).

These five purposes define what believers were doing in the early Church movement outlined in book of Acts. These expressions of faith give a template for other followers as well. To follow the biblical and historical template of an effective church planter and successful church plant, today’s church planters would do well to follow the purposes and principals laid out in Acts 2.

The five ecclesiological purposes each have an ecclesiological task assigned to it. The first purpose which is discipleship, is to edify believers or teach the beliefs of the Christian faith. The second purpose is fellowship, and its task is to encourage all believers, but especially new believers. The third purpose is worship, which is to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and “express our individual and corporate love for Him.” (Howe). The fourth purpose is service, which is to equip



the body of Christ. Every believer is a minister with a ministry. All are called to serve. The fifth purpose of outreach, is to evangelize

The first ecclesiological purpose of the church is discipleship. In the Great Commission, Jesus reminds his disciples to make other disciples and “to teach them to do everything I have told you” (Matt. 28:20 CEV). Discipleship is the way we live out this commission of teaching others through instruction and example. For a discipleship ministry to be an unstoppable force of the church, we need to put together discipleship processes that matures believers and multiplies them. Discipleship needs to be more than followers attending worship once a week. A discipleship system should be designed to make us more Christ-like. “Movement leaders are disciple-makers that intentionally put together a discipleship process” (Roennfeldt loc. 44). Church plants must have a discipleship making mindset in order to make a difference for the kingdom of God.

The ultimate goal for discipleship should be to shape people to be more like Jesus. At Orchard Church in Mississippi, this goal of discipleship is paramount though their vision, mission, and values. Bryan Collier, the founding pastor of the church, discussed “growing deep” and “branching out” as the foci of the ongoing ministry (112). The goal of discipleship at Orchard is not to get more head knowledge of the Bible, it is to become more Christ-like. Collier states: “All of our sites reach people for Christ, raise them up through discipleship to be like Christ, and then send them out into the world to act like Christ. That is ultimately the measure of success we pursue” (79).

Another goal of discipleship is spiritual maturity. When a person is baptized into the fellowship, they begin their faith journey. Discipleship is what moves them forward into what John Wesley referred to as “Sanctification” or “Sanctifying Grace” (Trinklein 2). Paul, in his

letter to the Colossians, is also concerned with spiritual maturity. “We continue to preach Christ to each person, using all wisdom to warn and to teach everyone, in order to bring each one into God’s presence as a mature person in Christ” (Col. 1:28 NCV).

In Paul’s letter to Ephesus, he shared a similar understanding about maturity in the faith. He declared that a pastor should “equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and knowledge of the son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:12-13). Paul knew that he had to share uncomfortable truths in his coaching and letter writing to motivate his leaders to grow in discipleship. Tom Landry, the Cowboys football coach, used to say, “Coaching is getting people to do what they don’t want to do in order to become who they want to be.” Substituting the word “discipleship” for the word “coaching,” reveal the similarities. Discipleship is also getting people to do what they do not want to do in order to become who they want to be. Discipleship is necessary, but not always easy, because it involves change and growth. Every disciple should become a trainer and not just a member.

Discipleship is much more than connecting people through membership to the church. “People tend to either grow and mature in their faith or decrease in their commitment to their faith” (Watson loc. 825). Discipleship is the way churches raise up mature disciples and leaders in ministry. Every disciple should eventually be a trainer who starts to teach other new disciples. The goal of discipleship is not graduation, but initiation. It is not about learning certain biblical truths so we can be done with studying. Discipleship is the process where we learn more so we can teach more. Eventually, each and every disciple should become a trainer who trains new disciples. “We are often satisfied if someone will believe and join our church. But the command Jesus gave us is so much more. He wants these new believers to be true disciples. And what do

disciples do? Every disciple is to learn how to obey Jesus' commands, including witnessing to others and then training these new believers to repeat the process. Every disciple should be a trainer" (C. Smith Enduringword.com). John Wesley argued that it was through mentorship and training that believers grew into disciples. Wesley stated: "Disciples are not made through study. They are formed through an apprenticeship" (qtd. in Watson loc. 903).

Through discipleship, followers of Jesus become instruments for the distribution of God's love. God wants to work through us instead of with us. True discipleship is spiritual multiplication where we are used by God to do more than we could ever accomplish by ourselves. "We must understand what God may choose to do through us as much greater than what God does with us that's the beauty of spiritual multiplication" (McNabb loc. 517).

One of the most significant methods of discipleship is referred to as the small groups or class meetings. "While the strategic emphasis on small groups is relatively new, the groups themselves are as old as time." (Boren 9). At CROSSROADS CHURCH, we believe that "Discipleship occurs best in a small group of Christian disciples. The accountability, confrontation, encouragement, and love from other group members bring our spiritual growth into the real world" (CROSSROADS CHURCH T.E.A.M. Partnership Manual 8). It is when 3-12 people gather to learn more about Jesus and each other. John Wesley started a discipleship movement because he involved people in small groups once he led them into a faith relationship with Jesus. "Discipleship, however, is about a way of life not only the life of a mind. Disciples follow Jesus... People who are interested in Christian discipleship make real and meaningful progress toward becoming deeply, committed, followers of Jesus Christ" (Watson loc. 822).

As a name, "small groups" is a very generic term in discipleship. It can represent a variety of ways to gather and grow. Depending on the format of the groups, they may be labeled very

differently.

“Bible study groups, worship groups, fellowship groups, care groups, recovery groups, service project groups, outreach groups, leadership development groups, church leadership groups, committee groups, short-term sermon study groups, sports groups, home groups, task groups, mission groups, missional communities, cell groups, choir groups, and Sunday school groups. It’s only natural that churches would get things done in groups since they’re part of the warp and woof of how good living works. The small group form is one of those fundamental things in life that cannot be surpassed by some new innovation.” (Boren 10).

One needs to be careful, however, because some groups may not disciple others if they are not led with discipleship in mind. One church may have a worship team small group that studies the Bible each week, prays together, and shares life together. Another church may simply have a worship practice team. For a small group to be considered a form of discipleship, it must draw people into becoming more Christ-like. “As I work with churches, I find that many (if not most) groups suffer from good meeting syndrome: they’re good but not great” (Boren 12). Some church meetings focus on accomplishing tasks rather than on building disciples. All gatherings of believers need to be making disciples.

Small groups historically were at the heart of Methodism and were one of the distinctive discipleship expectations. “In early Methodism there were actually two kinds of transformation-driven small groups: the class meetings and the band meeting” (Watson loc. 915). The band meeting was designed for the believer. It was smaller in size and had a great deal of accountability to grow in holiness. Because of accountability, judgements were made about one’s faith journey and members could even be excluded if living in a sinful lifestyle and not repenting. Weekly confession of sin was expected and moving toward perfection was the goal (loc. 939). Class meetings were not as “in-depth or intense” as the smaller band meetings (loc. 918). Larger in size, class meetings were more about training in discipleship, but still took time

in each meeting to examine matters of the heart. Francis Asbury, one of the early founders of American Methodism stated: “The most profitable exercise of any is a free inquiry into the state of the heart” (loc. 476)

The literature reviewed revealed discipleship as the ecclesiological purpose of the Church. The literature reviewed showed how the goal for discipleship should be to shape people to be more like Jesus. The literature reviewed pointed out spiritual maturity as another goal of discipleship. The Apostle Paul wrote in several of his letters that it was important that believers grow in their spiritual maturity. The leader of the Methodist movement, John Wesley, was also concerned about believers growing in sanctification or holiness, and believed that small groups made more intentional disciples. The literature reviewed also demonstrated that discipleship systems are necessary to produce mature disciples of Jesus Christ who will, in turn, produce even more disciples. Church planters need robust discipleship to plant healthy churches.

The second ecclesiological purpose of the church is fellowship, which centers around community building or connections. When we join a church, we join a family of believers where we connect with one another in fellowship. When we are baptized, we are not baptized as solo Christians. We are baptized into the church and into the body of Christ. The church is not a club but a family. “You are members of God’s own family....and you belong in God’s household with every other Christian.” (Eph. 2:19 Living Bible).

This idea of people being saved and invited into the fellowship of believers is mentioned frequently in Scripture. Disciple-making in the early church meant adding to the number of those being saved. It was reaching people with the good news of Jesus and moving them toward growth in their relationship with God. Some passages where the early church baptized and incorporated new members are as follows:

Acts 2:41 – “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.”

Acts 2:47 – “Praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily of those who were being saved.”

Acts 4:4 – “But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.”

Acts 5:14 – “Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.”

Acts 6:1 – “In those days when the number of disciples was increasing...”

Acts 9:31 – “Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers.”

Acts 11:21 – “The Lord's Hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.”

Acts 13:49 – “The word of the Lord spread through the whole region.”

Acts 16:5 – “So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers.”

The actual term used in Scripture for fellowship is the Greek word, *koinonia*. This term can also be translated as community or partnership. People as believers develop a faith-saving relationship and then become connected more fully to the body of believers. This community connection is deeper than what the world considers fellowship. It is more than hanging out and having a good time. It is doing life together and being with one another through the good, bad, and ugly. It also means helping one another when we struggle with sin on our journey. “Interdependence in community is an antibiotic for sin’s deception” (Geiger 164).

One way to think of this powerful purpose of the church is by examining the large sequoia tree. A large sequoia can grow up to 250 feet tall and represent some of the largest living things on the planet. The interesting thing is that one would think a tree that large would have incredibly deep roots. The sequoia tree roots are only 4 feet in the ground, yet they do not topple. The surrounding trees support one another. Their roots are intermingled. They stand for centuries because they are interdependent. “No believer is transformed alone...the discipleship leaders we interviewed overwhelmingly declared that transformation best occurs when a believer

is in an interdependent posture with other ‘believers’” (Geiger 159). Each root system of a sequoia is intertwined with those around its base. There is no such thing as a lone sequoia tree over a certain height. By itself, it topples over and dies. As believers in Christ, we also need community connections to support us through the winds and storms of life.

Community and connection do not mean we have a shallow faith. It means we have an interdependent faith that allows us to grow alongside other believers. Our own relationship needs to continue to grow, but it is supported through the fellowship of the body of Christ. “The Christian faith is personal but never private” (Geiger 161). As we grow in our personal faith it allows us to share so we can also grow in corporate faith.

The literature reviewed emphasized fellowship as an important purpose of the church. A family of believers connect with one another in fellowship. The purpose of the church is fulfilled when Christians are called to belong to the church, and not just believe in Jesus Christ. The literature demonstrated that people as believers develop a faith-saving relationship and then become connected. The literature also discussed how the term fellowship can be translated as community.

The third ecclesiological purpose for church planters to understand is worship. When followers of Jesus worship, we are loving the lord our God with all our “heart, soul, mind and strength.” At one time in history, only clergy were engaged in worship. The church had worship as one of its major functions, but only a few professional full-time clergy actually worshipped. The members of the congregation were spectators to worship. In the last five hundred years, that changed drastically and now clergy are called to be worship leaders who engage the congregation. “Until Luther’s time, congregations rarely sang during Christian worship—and then only in Latin, which they did not understand. By and large it was the priest’s job to worship

and pray. Luther rediscovered the New Testament doctrine of the priesthood of all believers.” (Mangalwadi loc. 611) The concept of every believer being called to worship is very important. Elite educated leaders are not the only ones who should have access to God.

The act of worship in a gathered community strengthens our love for God and empowers us to fight off Satan. “Jesus said to him, ‘Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only’” (Matt. 4:10 NIV). In community, we are encouraged to worship in ways that are difficult to accomplish on our own. “Throughout Scripture we’re commanded to celebrate God’s presence by magnifying the Lord and exalting his name” (Warren, “Purpose Driven Life” 103). Worship allows us access to God’s presence and power.

This hope of the good news can be explained more fully as the story of Jesus and his resurrection power is told. The church has a responsibility to tell the story of God through worship and in other ways. The story is a good-news, bad-news, good-news story. The good news is that we are created in God’s image and God wants to be in relationship with us. The bad news is that humanity sinned and rebelled against God. We push God away. The good news is that God loves us so much he forgives our sins. He came to our world to die so that our sins and rebellion could be forgiven. The good news is that we can be in relationship with God now and forever. When we tell God’s story in the church, we must include the church’s story and why the church is important in continuing the story of God. “Our chapter of the story only makes sense when we tell the whole story... There are many subplots in this great story: lives are changed, marriages are healed, relationships are restored, broken hearts are healed, and shattered dreams are reborn.” (McManus 118) The entire story of God helps humanity understand how much God loves them. God’s story is a love story waiting to be shared.

The end of the story we share in church is a reminder of why we worship. When Christ



returns, our purpose will be to glorify him in worship. Worship in church is a foretaste of the heavenly worship we will all experience in its fullness someday. Revelation 7:9-10, NIV, states: “After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands, and they cried out in a loud voice: ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’” Keener comments on Revelation 7:9-12: “This section on the Multitude of overcomers before the throne may represent a different group than the one pictured... as in apocalyptic texts, the earthly future realm is in some sense presently fulfilled in heaven” (Keener 744).

As the church lives out the purpose of worship, it demonstrates its love for God with all its heart, soul, mind, and strength as they worship. The church glorifies God through worship and reminds people of the truth of the good news. The church is the hope of the world that gathers in worship to tell God’s story, and our story, in relevant ways. “The church is a part of God’s story, but our chapter is not meant to be read from beginning to end. To live out the chapters intended for us, we must begin with the end in mind.” (McManus 118) The good news shared by the church reminds everyone that God is victorious in the end.

The literature review of worship demonstrated this as an important purpose of the church, especially for church planters. It depicted worship as fulfilling the Great Commandment and living out the love of God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. The literature examined how the church is the hope of the world and worship elevates this hope. The literature also reviewed how the act of worship in a gathered community strengthens our love for God and empowers us to fight off Satan. In community, we are encouraged to worship in ways that are difficult to accomplish on our own. Finally, we reflected on how worship is a foretaste of the

kingdom of Heaven to come.

A fourth ecclesiological purpose of the church is service, and the task is ministry. When we love our neighbors as ourselves, we are in ministry to our neighbors. “Ministry is demonstrating God’s love to others by meeting their needs and healing their hurts in the name of Jesus. Each time you reach out in love to others you are ministering to them” (Warren 104). Ministry is the practical function of the church to do what is needed to those who are a part of the body of Christ, as well as those outside the church walls.

Ministry allows us to see the needs in the world around us as an opportunity to be the church in the world. Ministry is a function of the church that trains the body of Christ to be the body of Christ. When the church was going through persecution, the church equipped the body of Christ to be in ministry with one another and to support one another. “The church’s mission began (according to John 20) with three things which have become very familiar to us in recent days. It began with tears; with locked doors; and with doubt.” (N.T. Wright, *God and the Pandemic* 59-60) The early church was able to thrive during difficult circumstances through the power of their ministry and witness.

The early church served others and demonstrated their love of God and neighbor. “The emperor Julian, who tried to de-convert the Roman empire in the late fourth century after it had become officially Christian under Constantine, complained that the Christians were much better at looking after the sick and for that matter the poor, than the ordinary non-Christian population.” (N.T. Wright, *God and the Pandemic* 61)

Serving the needs of the community inside and outside the church walls takes training of church membership to be effective in ministry. “So, Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so

that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:12). “The term of ‘training’ or ‘equipping’ was sometimes used in the Greek world to describe training or discipline, including in the work of philosophers or teachers” (Keener 549). Training followers of Jesus is needed to grow disciples and minister to the needs of others.

This verse from the Apostle Paul makes clear that as apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds, and teachers form churches, they are to minister to those communities by equipping them for ministry. The leaders are not to do all the ministry, but to empower each follower of Jesus in ministry.

“God’s people do the real work of ministry. Leaders in the church have the responsibility to equip people to serve and to direct their service as God leads. The primary purpose of the Church isn’t to convert sinners to Christianity, but to perfect (complete and mature) the saints for the ministry and edification of the Body.” (S. Smith loc. 651)

This idea of equipping is critical to the understanding of ministry. As believers, all are in ministry, not just the pastors. The key is to be able to identify and be trained in how to leverage one’s ministry gifts. Churches use various methods to identify spiritual gifts or abilities to minister to others.

Ministry is about equipping and building up the body of believers. All believers share regularly in the proclamation of the word, and sermons must challenge those in the body of Christ to engage in ministry and service. The gifts of the Holy Spirit when activated in the body of Christ allow believers to minister to one another. “What these particular gifts share in common is the ministry of God’s Word. Through God’s message, given in different ways, these ministers build up the rest of Christ’s body” (Keener, “Words, Gifts and Christ’s Body”).

Equipping of believers should be proclaimed from the pulpit so all may be challenged to find a meaningful place of ministry.

Willow Creek Community Church in Barrington, IL developed a process called NETWORK. “NETWORK’S Goal is to help believers to be fruitful and fulfilled in a meaningful place of service” (Bugbee, Cousins, Hybels 19). They base their ministry assessment on the Apostle Paul’s letter to the Galatians, which states: “You my brothers were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge in the sinful nature; rather serve one another in love” (Gal. 5:13 NLT). The Network program is designed to help people understand “[w]ho God has made you to be,” and that “[w]hen you make your unique contribution, you make a Kingdom impact for eternity” (19). The assessment process does this through a thorough examination of one’s spiritual gift mix, personal style, and ministry passion. Network not only does a great job with the exploration process of a person discovering one’s uniqueness, but it also does an excellent job teaching how serving blesses the church now, while laying up treasure in heaven. It reminds those taking the class that the biblical purpose for serving is to “glorify God” and “edify others” (23).

Saddleback Church does a process similar to Network, but uses the acronym S.H.A.P.E. The SHAPE process helps one discern ministry giftedness and passion.

“Spiritual Gifts - The gifts that God has given you when you become a follower of Christ.  
 Heart - The things that you are passionate about.  
 Abilities - The talents you have.  
 Personality - Personality. How you relate to others.  
 Experience – How your past can help you in the future” (Rees loc. 334-41)

At Saddleback, each member is given a S.H.A.P.E. assessment so that they are actively engaged in ministry. After assessment, a coaching process helps them look at how their SHAPE could help meet the ministry needs at Saddleback Church. Once a placement is made, training,

mentoring, and support are given so that the leader may be successful in their commitment to ministry.

Other churches have ways of identifying and equipping people for doing ministry like the S.H.A.P.E. assessment system developed by Saddleback Church or the Network process of Willow Creek Church. Orchard Church in Mississippi has a similar ministry philosophy to Saddleback and other churches that work hard in identifying, assessing, and training people to deploy into ministry. Being a multi-site church, they constantly raise up leaders at each of the sites and even deploy some leadership from the main site to assist in starting up new ministries. Pastor Bryan Collier of Orchard Church strongly supports the concept that leaders should be identified and trained in ministry. Their ministry philosophy is less about finding gifted or talented leadership from outside the organization. Orchard Church is more about raising up and finding strong leadership from existing membership. They have a leadership farm system that assesses giftedness. Fruitful site ministry happens when a church gives “attention to the identification, training, and deployment and support of leaders at every level [which] is essential to a fruitful site ministry” (Collier 132). Ministry through equipping is an important way the church can stop the gates of Hell and further the cause of Christ.

A fifth ecclesiological purpose, that the church is to focus on, is outreach and its task is evangelism. Following the admonition of the Great Commission, we are to “go and make disciples” (Matt. 28:19). Evangelism is more than sharing the good news about Jesus; it is to incorporate people into the body of Christ—the church. When the church evangelizes, it invites people to be part of God’s family. The gathered community supports each other and works together to reach others with the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The church shares its resources to live out the Great Commission. The Great Commission is one of Jesus’ last

teachings to his followers, so it is of great significance to the church.

The church is called to make disciples and obey the teachings of Jesus.

“Previously the disciples were to go only to Israel but now they are to make disciples of all nations. Jesus indicates that making disciples involves baptizing in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (this is initial and relates to conversion) and teaching them to obey the commandments Jesus has given his disciples throughout the gospel” (Carpenter and McCown). Obedience to the teachings of Jesus is implementation of the Great Commission to all nations.

The Great Commission is fulfilled when all nations have heard the good news of Jesus Christ.

Many churches work hard to live out the Great Commission so other new churches may be formed. Those who gather in Christian fellowship realize how precious it is to experience the kingdom of God in our midst and want to share this powerful sense of God’s presence. “The church’s principal purpose is to bring glory to God. The expression of that desire is obedience to God and fulfilling the Great Commission. (Franquiz 31). Glory to God is not only expressed when we worship. God is glorified through the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

Churches who are followers of the Great Commission seek to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. Many churches do not want to “play church” but want to transform lives. They want others to experience what they experience. All that is needed is a plan or a strategy to help them live out this Great Commission. Many churches are now following the mandate of the Great Commission and want to be able to move from waiting until people seek the church, to being proactive in sharing the knowledge the church has been given. They are not satisfied with “come and see,” or “stop by and visit our church.” Churches living out the gospel plan are reaching out more and are not constrained by social etiquette. They are going into the world, living out their faith, and transforming hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. “Become a church that decides to go-to rather than wait for the world to come-to; ask a different set of questions;

live by a different set of rules; change the way you think and live and serve and you can see your desires and God's dreams realized" (Collier 1).

To change from a "come and see church" to a "go-to church" requires a change of heart for many existing churches. New church starts can often begin with this strategy from the beginning since they often start without a permanent gathering place.

"We read Jesus' Great Commission in the Bible and saw that Jesus had given a battle plan for us. We did not need another strategy. Jesus had already given us a strategy. What was it? Jesus said, "Go!" Something stirred in my heart... Instead of inviting people to come, I needed to go out and find them, to touch them, to talk to them. I think the first key word is GO, not come." (C. Smith loc. 650)

The pastor who shared this passion realized that, to live out the Great Commission, he had to extend his ministry beyond the walls of the church to where the people were gathering.

Once a church understands that their outreach task is to evangelize, it must be taught at every level of the church. The church will cease to exist unless one's church can permeate this purpose at every age and stage of the church. This can be difficult sometimes, but it is not just a Sunday commitment. The evangelistic fervor of the Great Commission must be demonstrated by the leadership and shared frequently. "Teaching our current attendees what the Bible has to say about the Great Commission we learned is that some in our church embraced the teaching and were excited about our evangelistic focus. Others were indifferent." (Franquiz 30) The challenge of evangelism is for all participants of the church to see it as their mission and their priority.

The literature demonstrated that evangelism is not just about inviting people to come and see but reminding the church to go into the world to make disciples. Churches with an outreach purpose demonstrated the strength of sending off disciples, who, in turn, disciple others and form new churches. Another understanding of the purpose of sending reviewed by the literature was a

reminder that we are all everyday missionaries. Not only should the church set aside and send out missionaries for full time service, but church planters should also train church members to be missionaries in their everyday context. Outreach is an important ecclesiological purpose of the church.

The literature review examined the five ecclesiological purposes of the church which included discipleship, fellowship, worship, service, and outreach. We examined literature that described the five main purposes of the church and their primary task. The five basic purposes of the church were outlined as both values and functions of the church. As part of the literature review, each of these purposes of the church informed the need for effective church planters to grow healthy churches. The literature described that these five purposes were best accomplished through the local church. The local church was presented as the hope of the world that would raise up disciples to grow churches and continue to develop leadership to plant more churches. Thus, the church lives out the words of Jesus and is an unstoppable force that “overcomes the gates of Hell” (Matthew 16:18).

### **Character Traits of Church Planters**

The theology of ecclesiology allows church planters to best understand the purpose and function of the church. Missiology demonstrates to the church planter the importance of missions. Church Planters are missionaries as well as pastors, and therefore must understand what it means to answer the call to join God’s mission. Ed Stetzer describes missiology as being at the heart of church planting. “How does church planting relate to the mission of God? The mission of God is bigger than church planting, but it certainly includes church planting. Why? You can’t love Jesus and despise his wife. The church is the bride of Christ, and if you love the work of Christ, you love the church”. (Stetzer, “Church Planting and the Mission of God.”).



Every church planter needs to be a missiologist and understand the mission of God. The compelling mission of God should stir the heart of everyone contemplating the work of church planting.

The church planter, therefore, needs to have certain traits, or characteristics, to join in God's mission. Erwin Raphael McManus, in his book "Unstoppable Force," explains how the church is God's power demonstrated in the world (118). John Wesley had a simple system for selecting leaders as he started churches in England. "Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of Hell and set up the kingdom of Heaven on Earth" (Wesley).

The Apostle Paul laid out distinct criteria for church leadership in the letters to Timothy and Titus. Paul had been involved in leading and planting new churches throughout his ministry. Paul personally observed what leadership characteristics were needed for a pastor to be successful. Not every church leader is called to be a church planter, but the general characteristics listed by Paul give us qualities that are preferred. In the Apostle Paul's letters to Timothy, Paul references traits that are necessary when evaluating church leadership:

Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, the women are to be worthy of respect, not malicious

talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus. (1 Tim. 3:1-13)

These character traits found in Scripture are described as a “noble task” and not all qualify. Some are tested at lower offices until the needed character traits are observed. “Ancient leadership ideology required leaders to be tested in lower offices, to demonstrate their skills before being promoted... the ever-present danger of false accusation required leaders to do everything in their power to avoid scandal” (Keener, IVP Commentary 608).

The Apostle Paul laid out qualifications of a church planter but, depending on the translation, it is sometimes interchanged with terms like elder, deacon, presbyter, bishop, or overseer. Paul writes a letter to Titus also sharing how to qualify a leader for serving as a pastor:

An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer manages God’s household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. (Titus 1:6-9 NIV)

These qualifications are interchangeable for major leaders in the church. Similar values or qualifications should be used to identify or assess modern-day church planters as well. “Titus is to appoint leaders in each town. The criteria for being a church leader, or elder, clearly indicates that an overseer and elder are interchangeable titles for the same office ... the elder is identified as blameless, above reproach” (Carpenter and McCown. “Choosing Elders”)

These two letters state that the criteria for being a pastor was based less on academic achievement or knowledge, but more on character, family traits, and abilities. Paul seemed to be most concerned that the leaders were of moral character and were not distracted by family

concerns. Louis Daniel Wolfe in his doctoral dissertation lists these traits from Titus and Timothy as follows. He quotes the King James Version of the Scriptures, so the terminology is slightly different from the N.I.V. text quoted earlier.

1. Character Traits:

- a. Blameless: Unquestionable integrity.
- b. Of Good Report: His testimony and reputation, both in the church and the world must be excellent.
- c. Of Good Behavior: Having a modest, orderly lifestyle.
- d. Vigilant: Wary, cautious and circumspect.
- e. Temperate: The leader is moderate and self-controlled in all his lifestyle.
- f. Sober: Holding a realistic view of life and having a good sense of judgement.
- g. Just: Right with God and right with others.
- h. Holy: Clear, upright morals, attitudes and behavior.
- i. Lover of Good: Focuses on the best in life.
- j. Hospitable: Having an open family and house in which all are welcomed and loved.
- k. Patient: Exercising restraint in all situations.
- l. Not a brawler: Not quarrelsome or contentious.
- m. Not soon angry: Not temperamental.
- n. Not striker: Not violent.
- o. Not greedy of filthy lucre: Not acquiring money by dishonest means.
- p. Not covetous: Free from greed.
- q. Not self-willed: Wanting their own way at all costs.
- r. Not given to wine: Not inclined toward alcohol.

2. Family Traits:

- a. Husband of but one wife: Note that the leader is married, but that there be only one spouse.
- b. Ruling household well: Managing the family in both natural and spiritual ways which brings an order that is a good example.
- c. Children in subjection with all gravity: Children who are submitted to their parents and are happy, and well-adjusted in family life.
- d. Faithful children: Children who believe in Jesus.
- e. Children not accused of riot: Not wild or loose.
- f. Children not unruly: Respectful and obedient.

3. Abilities:

- a. Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught: Having a good understanding of God's Word and in harmony with those trained and released to them.
- b. Apt to teach: Having an excellent capacity to impart the Word of God.
- c. Able to exhort and convince: Capable of encouraging and admonishing those who oppose.

d. Not a novice: Not a new believer. (Wolfe 17-18)

These biblical traits mentioned are focused on many things that are not taught in seminary. These traits are more “caught” than “taught” in terms of a leader possessing them. “Character is never built in a classroom. It is built in the circumstances of life...Character development always involves a choice; our character grows more like Christ” (Warren 360). Few, if any, seminary classes are on how to raise a well-behaved family or how to develop a strong community reputation. These are character traits developed as one grows in faith. A strong character is developed over time and lived out. “First you know it; then you understand it; then you believe it with your whole heart; then you do it. The result of these four is character” (362).

The lists of character traits mentioned in Scripture are lengthy, but the actual abilities or skills listed in the Bible are quite few. The Apostle Paul is concerned about basic doctrine and the ability to teach. In most church planting assessments, the ability portion seems to be highly emphasized. Character traits are difficult to assess in an interview format. “Church Planter Paul” seems to be most concerned that a person’s family and character are in order if they are to become a leader in the church. Some abilities are needed, but apparently the Apostle Paul feels most of the abilities needed, besides teaching, will be provided by the Holy Spirit.

In Paul’s second letter to Timothy, he warns the young pastor about false teachers and how to avoid false doctrine. In the fourth chapter, he gives specific warnings and encouragement to church planters. “So be alert to all these things and overcome every form of evil. Carry in your heart the passion of your calling as a church planter and evangelist and fulfill your ministry.” (2 Tim. 4:5 Passion Translation) The key characteristic mentioned for a church planter is to carry the “passion of your calling.” Church planters must be passionate. One cannot start a church without a passion deep down that flows from the heart. “Paul has the same passion that Moses

had. He wants to know God intimately. The intimacy comes when we search for Him with all our hearts” (Calahan).

Church planters need hearts of passion regarding their call that will carry them through the difficult moments when others may challenge their call to ministry. This passion confirms and strengthens church planters regardless of the external circumstances surrounding the ministry. If some church planters do not see qualitative or quantitative success rapid enough, they may get discouraged. The passion of their calling gives them a secure hope and pulls them through hardships that may occur. This is the same passion that the Apostle Paul had when he stated: “More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I might gain Christ.” (Phil. 3:8 NASB)

In I Corinthians 12, Paul speaks extensively about the gifts of the Spirit. He emphasizes that the Spirit determines and distributes gifts that can be used to grow the Kingdom of God. He also emphasizes that each of these gifts are not for our personal edification, but rather for the good of the body of Christ. The gifts given to leaders are for the common well-being of those who participate in the life of the church. Paul explains it this way: “Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. Therefore, I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” (1 Cor. 12:1-7 NIV) The

gifts given to church planters allow them to benefit the body of Christ as a whole. Spiritual gifts are given by God but need to be recognized by the body of Christ and nurtured.

Evidence proves that church planters and leaders, who were able to exhibit healthy characteristics, were chosen by the Apostles to lead. In Scripture, church planters were approved by the early church and sent out as representatives of the existing churches. In Acts 13:1-3, the church in many ways assessed the early leadership and determined the best way for them to serve the church. “Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ So, after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.” (Acts 13:1-3) This missiological act was intentional and was led by the power of the Holy Spirit. Leadership was approved and sent into the mission field.

This same pattern of approval and assessment of leadership qualities appears in the Book of Titus. Titus 1:5 states that Paul expected Titus to approve leaders by a certain standard, and then appoint them for specific works of ministry. “The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you” (Titus 1:5 NIV). Once again, the character of a leader was part of the determining factor in sending out a leader to start or pastor a church. Paul instructed Titus to follow his pattern of assessing leaders and then appointing them to positions of authority. This need for assessment is biblical and has been proven through the centuries as leaders have been chosen and sent. What criteria determine a true church planter seem to be dependent on the type of church being planted and the leader necessary to make the new church start sustainable. “Each group needed good

leaders who were in charge of the Christians...So in this letter Paul told Titus what qualities elders and leaders should have” (Easy English Bible Commentary)

The biblical characteristics listed in Timothy, Titus, Acts, and 1 Corinthians demonstrate that the early church sought leaders who were above reproach. The Apostles were careful not to appoint leaders who were not ready for the responsibility or able to demonstrate the characteristics they deemed necessary. Each new leader had to pass a series of qualifications that would allow them to hold the office of church planter or pastor.

Love is the most important quality a church planter must possess. The biblical list provided in Timothy, Titus, Acts, and Corinthians does not specifically state that a church planter must love God and others, but it is assumed. The greatest command of Jesus is to love. Christians are called to love the Lord with all their hearts, soul, mind, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves. One can teach an intern how to memorize Scripture, but you cannot teach love. One can teach a leader how to fast and pray, but you cannot teach love. A leader can even do loving acts of kindness and demonstrate these deeds to a future leader, but if it is done out of obligation, it is still not love. In the words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 13- “but if I do not have love, I gain nothing” (1 Cor. 13:3b).

The motivation of church planters needs to be the love of Jesus and the love for the people they are trying to reach. A person receiving ministry can tell if they are being pursued out of self-interest or love. It is like my wife asking me for a kiss when I am busy. Giving her a kiss when I do not mean it does not make her feel loved. I must initiate it. I must be passionate about it. I must let her know she is special and that is why I am showing her affection. Without the communication of love, a kiss is simply pressing lips together. As we plant churches, we must do it motivated by love and passion. We plant churches as a reminder of God’s love for us. “God’s

love is permanently fixed upon his children. He is all in. His love is completely and extravagantly lavished on us. And we are not just called children of God – we actually are” (Geiger 100).

### **Emotional Intelligence**

A second major factor that allows a church planter to be successful is to be able to control one’s emotions. Much of the biblical foundations literature reviewed for this project examined specific character traits for church planters. Church planters were called to be “self-controlled, respectable..., not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome” (1 Tim. 3:2-3). In other words, a church planter must have their emotions under the power of the Holy Spirit. James also reiterates that this same behavior is critical for all believers when he states: “My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires... Those who consider themselves righteous but do not have a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless” (Jas. 1:19, 20 and 26).

A church planter maintaining their emotions is a character trait best described in contemporary terms as “emotional intelligence.” Many church planters need to have a strong emotional intelligence to navigate the difficulties of growing a new church start. A strong “EQ” or emotional intelligence quotient is an indicator that a leader will be successful in their endeavors. In identifying or assessing a church planter, the “EQ” of the individual must be taken into consideration. The authors of “Emotional Intelligence,” Travis Bradberry and Jean Greaves believe it is the key indicator to success above all else. They state:

How much impact does EQ have on your professional success? The short answer is: a lot! It’s a powerful way to focus your energy in one direction with a tremendous result. We’ve tested EQ alongside 33 other important skills and found that it subsumes the majority of them, including time management, decision



making, and communication. Your EQ is the foundation for a host of critical skills-it impacts most everything you say and do each day. EQ is so critical to success that it accounts for 58 percent of performance in all types of jobs. It is the single biggest predictor of performance in the workplace and strongest driver of leadership and personal excellence. (19-21)

Emotional Intelligence is based on four competencies or key character traits that are measurable in every leader. Two of the competencies are personal in nature and two are more social. In terms of personal competencies, a church planter must be able to manage oneself and be self-aware. Social competencies measure social awareness and relationship management. Self-awareness, as defined by the literature, demonstrates that this character trait helps a church planter navigate one's own emotions.

A strong self-awareness is a character trait that allows a church planter to not be afraid of making mistakes. Mistakes are bound to happen in a new church start, so being aware of one's emotions during failures can be a huge benefit. "Self-awareness is the ability to accurately perceive your own emotions in the moment and understand your tendencies across situations. Self-awareness includes staying on top of your typical reaction to specific events, challenges, and people" (Bradberry and Greaves 24). Assessment of church planters or other leaders in ministry can be difficult. A church planter should have an awareness of their abilities and inabilities. "Many people are unaware of their inabilities" ( 191)

Self-management is another measurable character trait or skill that will increase the effectiveness of a church planter. Being aware of one's emotions is important, but so is the ability to have control over one's actions. The early Christian writers, James and Timothy, both discussed the ability to control one's anger as critical to maturity in ministry. When I was in seminary, I had a professor who reminded us frequently that the job of a pastor was to be a "non-anxious presence." In other words, a strong leader had to have control over their emotions.

“Self-management is what happens when you act—or do not act. It is dependent on your self-awareness and is the second major part of personal competence. Self-management is your ability to use your awareness of your emotions to stay flexible and direct your behavior positively.”

(Bradberry and Greaves 32)

The third emotional intelligence indicator discussed as an important biblical foundation is the ability to be socially aware. Social competence is essential for a church planter to be successful. This character trait allows a church planter to be able to listen and observe social cues around them. This ability is needed to accurately lead a congregation and in particular a new church start. “Social awareness is your ability to accurately pick up on emotions in other people and understand what is really going on with them. This often means perceiving what other people are thinking or feeling even if you do not feel the same way.” (Bradberry and Greaves 38)

John C. Maxwell also believes that social awareness and the ability to connect with others in a short amount of time is critical. He discusses in his book, “Everyone Communicates, Few Connect,” this importance of social connection. He reminds the reader that connecting is all about others and not about ourselves. Too many church planters are eager to share their vision about their new church start, therefore they do not focus on the needs of the person they are to be listening to. Emotionally intelligent church planters that have social awareness can balance their own agenda with the agenda of others. “You can connect with others if you’re willing to get off your own agenda, to think about others, and to try to understand who they are becomes more natural and less mechanical. It goes from being something that you merely do to becoming part of who you really are.” ( 44)

In ministry, a large portion of a church planter’s job description is relationship management. Social competence requires that a leader manage not only one’s own emotions but

also connect with others in the church in meaningful ways. “While the entrepreneurial gift is important in some circumstances, it takes a back seat to the relationship gift. Many people can start something but to sustain something takes advanced relationship gifts” (Collier 116). A church planter is often called upon to navigate difficult situations where emotions can run high. The ability to help others work through conflict and stress is critical to a leader’s success. “Relationship management is your ability to use your own awareness of your own emotions and those of others to manage interactions. This insures clear communication and effective handling of conflict. Relationship management is also the bond you build with others over time.” (Bradberry 44)

Having a strong EQ or emotional intelligence score is a strong indicator of success when assessing or identifying church planters. However, church planters can be trained in some of the skills over time to strengthen their EQ scores. One can put together an action plan that would allow church planters to change the way they think. “Plasticity is the term neurologists use to describe the brain’s ability to change. Your brain grows new connections much as your biceps might swell if you started curling heavy weights several times a week.... brain cells develop new connections to speed the efficiency of thought without increasing its size.” (Bradberry 52)

A third character trait that is critical to church planting is integrity. The character trait of credibility is needed in ministry more than ever to dispel today’s scandalous headlines about pastors. Sexual sins of Catholic priests and prominent ministers have eroded the credibility of all pastors and especially church planters. Existing ministries have a reputation and, if managed well, give credibility to the new minister. New church starts do not have a long-standing reputation in the community and thus must establish a reputation. The church planter’s credibility goes together with the success of the new church start. “Developing the character of

Christ's is life's most important task and it is the only thing we'll take into eternity" (Warren, "Purpose Driven" 360).

1 Timothy 3:2 states that the early church leader must "be above reproach." To be above reproach is to infer that pastors must be beyond criticism for their actions. Church planters must have a good reputation in the community if the new church start is going to endure. Church planters need to safeguard credibility and should have practices in place to ensure that they are above reproach. "Developing a personal code of integrity starts when you commit yourself to self-imposed guidelines that provide you with a sense of moral control of your life... Such a code builds holy connect into your life before the temptation appears". (H.B. London Jr. and Neil B. Wiseman, "Heart of a Pastor" 227-28). Practicing integrity leads to credibility with those around us. "Congregational anxiety and heightened expectations can create a very difficult context in which to set boundaries even for the most well-intentioned clergy" (Olsen and Devor "Saying No to Say Yes" 40). London and Wiseman suggest putting "hedges" of protection around the behavior of pastors, to live a life "above reproach" as it is defined in the book of Timothy. When looking for church planters who have credibility, one must examine whether they have demonstrated hedges of protection.

The first hedge of protection one should look for is accountability relationships. A potential church planter must have in place the relationships needed to support them, but also hold them accountable when they sin. A potential church planter should demonstrate that they have a consistent circle of friends or colleagues who help them be accountable. London and Wiseman counsel many pastors on how to stay in ministry and finish strong; they give this advice: "I make no major decision unless the circle to which I am accountable agrees unanimously". (London and Wiseman 240).

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, highly encouraged clergy and other leaders to be in accountable discipleship small groups. Five accountability questions were often asked in his early class meetings or small group gatherings: “What sins have you committed since our last meeting? What temptations have you been met with? How were you delivered? What have you thought, said, and done of which you doubt whether it be a sin or not? Have you nothing you desire to keep secret?” (Henderson 118-19)

A second hedge of credibility that church planters and pastoral leaders should acquire is a covenant prayer partner. When identifying or assessing a potential church planter, the planter should be able to identify those in their life praying for them and their ministry. A covenant prayer partner is given permission to ask the difficult questions and intercedes on behalf of the church planter. It should be based on mutual trust and a relationship that is built over time. Although parameters for accountability vary, it is best if the partners can meet at least twice a month. They also have permission to discuss other issues by phone calls or text messaging in between the normally scheduled prayer times. Intercessory prayer allows both the church planter and their partner to build up strength when things are difficult. This intercessory prayer component can also be shared with other trusted leaders in the church planter’s network of close friends. “The process can be uncomplicated, even simple. The key to effectiveness—it takes a great deal of trust to say to another person, ‘I believe in you enough that I will allow you to know who I really am in Christ.’” (London and Wiseman 229-30)

King Solomon, in his wisdom writings, discussed the importance of having those around to support and encourage when things become difficult. He stated: “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work...but pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up.” (Eccles. 4:9-10 NIV). A support network for pastors defines these covenant

partnerships as “rope-holding relationships.” Based on the wisdom of Solomon, they claim that in ministry, pastors need others who hold one another up when we they are struggling. Ministry is a struggle at times and potential church planters need these important relationships to be in ministry for the long haul. “That is why I urge you to be in some rope-holding relationships. Connect with mature friends who can hold you up even when you cannot hold yourself up. A time will come when you will be on the anchoring end for them.” (Cionca 1220)

A third hedge of protection that adds credibility to a church planter is a satisfying marriage. If a church planter is not married, then a single pastor must send a clear message of sexual purity. Single pastors may sometimes find it even more difficult to send clear signals of one’s fidelity to Jesus in all things. This topic or character trait is difficult to assess because it is very personal. Potential church planters may lie or cover up issues in their marriage for the sake of their ministry. Unresolved intimacy frustrations in the marriage can lead to insecurity and possible temptations. Success in marriage adds to the credibility of ministry. “It is in the home where our true success or failure will be measured. The home is the primary arena in which we must succeed if we are to be successful in any of the others” (Diggs 124).

A fourth hedge of protection that helps build credibility is a church planter who can learn from the failures of others. Many successful church planters learn from their own mistakes, but strong planter personalities should also be able to demonstrate the ability to learn from the mistakes of others. They should observe the warnings they see when others fail in ministry. Successful church planters understand that they are not infallible and need to be cautious not to fall into the traps of others. “Too often we see other ministers fail and we automatically assume we are incapable of such a fate. Even though we believe that we would not make the same mistake, significant lessons are to be learned. Who knows how sinful or stupid or downright silly

we might be if the wrong temptations came along, as they so often do.” (London and Wiseman 232) A church planter that can see others fail and learn from that will not fail as easily. This will help them build up their credibility.

John MacArthur taught on credibility at his annual Shepherd’s Conference. He reminded the crowd to learn from both the successes and also the failures of others. He discussed President Trump and what to learn from his recent failures. MacArthur discussed three failures of President Trump that could “bring down any leader (though he was addressing thousands of pastors at this event). He lists those three leadership failures as narcissism, inability to embrace the inevitable, and issues of sin. (Jackson). MacArthur reminded the crowd that even great leaders who accomplish much can be tripped up by sin. One of the greatest sins we all are tempted by is pride. He challenged the crowd to learn from the mistakes of others (Jackson). Church planters who learn this lesson of learning from the mistakes of others will have a higher percentage of success.

A fifth hedge of credibility protection is by being spiritually healthy. Maintaining one’s resistance by keeping spiritually healthy helps a church planter resist the temptation of the evil one. Spiritual health is like physical health and must be maintained. When we are physically healthy, we ward off disease and infection. When we are spiritually healthy, we ward off sin in our lives. Church planters will only be successful for the duration if they can master this character trait. Rev. Billy Graham is one of the finest examples of a man who was friends with presidents of the United States, yet never compromised his values for the sake of politics. He ministered for decades and yet his reputation was impeccable throughout his career. Graham had the safeguards in place when he traveled to always be beyond reproach. He surrounded himself with leadership that made sure that temptations were removed as much as possible from their

paths. Graham knew that credibility was key to his ministry and those of his leadership. He created a “Modesto Manifesto” to apply to the Billy Graham organization and his own personal habits.

“We will never criticize, condemn, or speak negatively about others. We will be accountable, particularly in handling finances with integrity according to the highest business standards. We will tell the truth and be thoroughly honest, especially in reporting statistics. We will be exemplary in morals, clear, clean and careful to avoid the very appearance of any impropriety.” (Myra and Shelley 61)

Being exemplary in moral behavior is key to credibility. Removing temptations and opportunities for misconduct allows a church planter to focus on ministry more effectively.

Graham also pointed out that, if one loses his sense of character in ministry, it is difficult to recover. Trust in leadership is developed over time, but trust can be lost in an instant. A church planter must understand that if they have a moral failure, their reputation is not only ruined, but often the church start itself will not survive. “When wealth is lost, nothing is lost. When health is lost, something is lost. When character is lost, everything is lost” (Myra and Shelley 63). It is critical not to compromise one’s character when planting a church.

One of the best assessments of a potential church planter is to discern if they have the proper safeguards in place to help them sustain a ministry with credibility. The literature pointed out 5 safeguards or “hedges of protection” one should see demonstrated by healthy church planters (London and Wiseman 227). The first hedge of protection one should look for is accountability relationships. The second hedge of credibility that church planters and pastoral leaders should acquire is a covenant prayer partner. A third hedge of protection that adds credibility to a church planter is a satisfying marriage. A fourth hedge of protection that helps build credibility is a church planter who can learn from the failures of others. A fifth hedge of credibility protection is being spiritually healthy. These five practices help a church planter to



keep credibility in ministry.

### **Knowledge and Leadership Skills**

This section of the literature review reveals that biblical character traits, coupled with certain knowledge or leadership skills, are essential for a competent church planter. Character, knowledge, and leadership skills are all needed to have a qualified church planter. The survey of literature demonstrated both the importance of character and that character alone will not produce a successful new church start pastor. Stuart Murray identified eight skills necessary when evaluating potential church planters. The literature reviewed focused on the importance of these eight leadership skills. “Characteristics identified from field research include visionary leadership, willingness to take responsibility, tenacity and perseverance, effectiveness at planning and evaluating, having an indigenous support system, hard-working, problem-solving ability, and the capacity to mobilize people and resources.” (loc. 1874-76).

The first qualification or skill that was reviewed by the literature was visionary leadership. Visionary leadership is necessary for a new church to be successful because at the beginning of a church plant, the vision is the driving force to attract new participants. Without a building or existing ministries, there is little else to offer participants. The leader must have the ability to motivate others around a common goal of planting a church to reach new people for Jesus. “Leadership can be defined as the ability to influence others toward the accomplishment of some goal” (Dilts loc. 211). When a church planter has visionary leadership skills, then they can rally others around them to form teams and accomplish goals together. People must see the preferred future before they are willing to rally around it. “Visions that become shared by a number of people form the foundation of effective teamwork” (loc.155).

The second leadership skill that was evaluated by the literature was willingness to take

responsibility. President Harry Truman was famous for the sign on his desk that said: “The buck stops here.” It meant that if a problem happened, he would take responsibility for it. The ultimate responsibility landed on his desk even if a subordinate made the mistake. A church planter needs to have the understanding that “the buck stops here.” Even though church planting is a team effort, ultimately the planting pastor must take responsibility for the success or failure of the church plant. The denomination can offer finances and support, but cannot hold the sole responsibility once the church has begun. Coaches of the church planter can make suggestions and offer accountability but are not in the planting field when decisions need to be made. A church planter must own his or her church plant. Just like a parent birthing a child, a church planter must realize in the early stages that he or she is responsible for the constant care of the newborn.

If a church planter struggles with taking responsibility, then they may have to look at their own sin issue of pride. Sometimes the reason they do not take responsibility for their mistakes is their own pride. Church planters need to have humility and realize that they cannot be experts in every area of life. “Knowing a great deal in one area of life is no guarantee of proficiency in another, despite the fact that some of us engage in what you call competency extrapolation” (Dickson 52). Modeling humility helps the church planter take responsibility for their actions and ultimately encourages other leaders that it is ok to make mistakes.

Lastly, a church planter must take responsibility so that later he or she can hand it off to others. Not until the church planter proves him or herself can they then pass along the responsibility. It is always a risk to pass along the ultimate responsibility but, at some point, as the mission matures, the responsibility needs to be shared.

“Those who were entrusted with Jesus’ mission doubted (Matt. 28:17), were fearful (John 20:19), and misunderstood his intentions (Acts 1:6)—reactions that

regularly hold people back from mission. Jesus responded neither by refusing to let go, nor by filling up his disciples with more knowledge ('let us send them on another course') but by taking a risk. He passed on responsibility despite the disciples' doubts, fears and misunderstandings." (Moynagh and Harrold loc. 5215)

Taking responsibility and passing on responsibility is a true sign of maturity. Both are necessary for a church planter grow the church.

The third leadership skill evaluated by the literature was tenacity and perseverance.

Perseverance or, as some leaders call it, "grit" is needed now more than ever to plant churches.

Church planters that are needed are those who can stick with the ministry despite all the challenges currently attacking the church universal.

"The crises are certainly many and complex: diminishing numbers, clergy burnout, the loss of youth, the end of denominational loyalty, biblical illiteracy, division in the ranks, the electronic church and its various corruptions, and irrelevance of traditional forms of worship, the loss of genuine spirituality and widespread confusion about the purpose and message of the church of Jesus Christ." (Guder loc. 154)

Perseverance is needed for church planting because one encounters many setbacks and challenges. The Apostle Paul reminds the Galatian community: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (Gal. 6:9). Billy Graham was a leader who overcame many setbacks yet continued to persevere in ministry. Myra and Shelley's book on the leadership of Billy Graham states that a pastor must have thick skin like the hide of a rhino. Graham states: "The qualifications of a pastor are to have the mind of a scholar, the heart of a child and the hide of a rhinoceros...especially the part about the hide" (qtd. in Myra and Shelley 86). Graham also discusses how we must have courage to endure hardship. "The word 'courage' comes from the Latin word for the heart. It shows what we are at the core" (162).

Another descriptive word for perseverance is resilience, the ability to come back after

hardship or difficulties. A church planter must not just endure but be able to bounce back so the body of Christ may flourish. “Resilience is commonly thought of as bouncing back like a spring to our pre-crisis shape or norm. A more apt metaphor for resilience might be bouncing forward, rebounding, and reorganizing adaptively to fit new challenges or changed conditions” (Wicks 163).

The fourth leadership skill evaluated by the literature was church planter effectiveness at planning and evaluating, a skill many pastors do not have and very few are trained by seminaries to do systematic planning. Many traditional pastors are trained to shepherd their flock, but often this means interpersonal relationships with a few at a time. A leader effective at planning and evaluating, needs to focus on the big picture and put systems in place to care for all the sheep. “A successful site pastor is ‘flock-focused’ rather than ‘lamb focused’” (Collier 116). In other words, a pastor must have a heart for the people but be able to think through how to minister to everyone by putting plans into place. A church planter must be able to plan, and evaluate ministries, so new plans can reflect ongoing changes needed.

When church plants begin to fail, it is often due to lack of planning. Church planters that fail to plan are automatically planning to fail. Consultants are called to fix weak church planning, but strong church planters can build planning and evaluation into the culture of the church before it begins to fail. “We’re often invited to consultancies by weak or struggling church plants. Some of the most serious weaknesses exposed are failures in planning and preparation” (Moynagh and Harrold loc. 7581).

Church planters are often afraid to focus on planning and evaluation because they feel it is not spiritual. Planning is often correlated with business models and church planters want to feel like they are following a movement of the Holy Spirit.

“Indeed, for many church founders, ‘planning’ has mechanistic connotations they would reject. It is, however, discussed extensively in the business literature. The traditional approach understands planning in terms of analysis. In the light of a venture’s purpose, vision and values, planning involves identifying goals, breaking a goal into steps, designing how to implement the steps and anticipating the consequences of each one.” (Moynagh and Harrold loc. 7582).

This trait is extremely important, but not always easy to find in new church start pastors.

The fifth skill that was important to discern in the literature was the ability to have an indigenous support system, which means to have those in the community who support and encourage the church planter. It also means that the church planter must have a love for the community that she or he is serving. At Orchard Church in Mississippi, it was quite apparent that the pastors loved the communities they served, and the communities loved them. “One final general gift is a passion for the community in which they serve” (Collier 117). The North Town Campus was in a community called Gun, Mississippi. When our Doctor of Ministry class toured the North Town facility and met the campus pastor, he explained how uniquely different this church was in comparison to the main campus. One could tell from his passionate sharing how much he loved this unique loving community of Jesus followers. We also met volunteers who were indigenous to the community. They were incredibly supportive of both the mission of Orchard Church and in particular their campus pastor. (Marzahn, “Class Journal” 08-16-2016). When a church planter is passionate about their indigenous community, the community will often be supportive of their pastor.

The sixth skill that was evaluated by the literature was whether a potential planter was hard-working. This trait at one time may have been assumed by all entering ministry, but can no longer be assumed and church planters must be evaluated to discern if they have this quality. This skill or trait was one of the most difficult to review in literature. A strong work ethic cannot be evaluated merely by the number of hours a church planter logs into work.

Qualitative and quantitative time are needed to be a successful church planter. “Some church planters want to receive a great church but are unwilling to give of themselves and work hard” (Thomas).

Putting in time at something and working hard at something are two different things. Randy Gage, who studied hard-working entrepreneurs, explained how about 10 percent of people in any organization are hardworking, 20 percent are very lazy or unproductive and 70 percent are somewhere in between. Entrepreneurs or church planters that are successful are usually in the top 10 percent of hard-working people. The 20/70/10 principle as Gage describes it encourages employers to look for the hard-working entrepreneurial employees who are actual producers. “There’s a third group, and this is where the magic happens. I would call this group “Entreployees...employees who think like entrepreneurs” (Gage 39).

The Apostle Paul, who planted many churches, explained to his leaders the importance of hard work. “In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35 NIV). Unfortunately, for church planters the general perception of clergy is that they are not very hard working. Church planters must overcome this stereotype of a pastor who sits in his or her study all day reading. Many see clergy on Sundays where they are perceived as working only an hour that morning. Those in the ministry profession know this is far from the truth. One way we can overcome this stereotype is to demonstrate the servant nature of Jesus Christ. Jesus “came to serve and not be served” (Matt. 20:20a NIV). When we work hard physically by helping around the church with a variety of tasks, we are perceived as hard working. When people realize we work hard, they also serve with more enthusiasm. “As pastors we are called servants of Jesus Christ, yet we are told to be leaders as well. Well, which is it,

servants or leaders... the truth is that we are both, and our role is called servant leadership?" (Cionca 99).

The literature review had many testimonies by church planters referencing the hard work they put into their new church starts in the early days of planting. They often mentioned working long hours or putting in extra effort to make sure their church succeeded.

Here is a testimony of a church planter who gave the visual image of rolling up his sleeves to get his church work done. He described it as much more than a desk job. "We accepted the call, made the move, and rolled up our sleeves. I threw myself headlong into the world of church planting, full of vigor, bold idealism, and excitement to see God do extraordinary things in our "great adventure" (Bennardo loc. 172).

The seventh leadership skill evaluated by the literature was problem-solving ability. A church planter is asked to make decisions each day that can affect the new church start. Decisions about who to put into leadership positions can make or break a faith community that is just beginning its launch. Style of worship, where to gather, what to preach or teach, are all decisions that need special attention to grow the body of Christ. The most difficult decisions are the ones a church planter does not expect to make.

For example, when we planted CROSSROAD CHURCH, we arrived to set up and hold worship on a Sunday morning at a school we were using for our place of worship. We could not get to the school that day because the janitor had the only key, overslept, and was not answering his phone. Do we cancel worship? Do we worship an hour later? Do we drive to the janitor's house? Our new church faced this dilemma and we decided to worship in the parking lot instead. We had to problem solve where to get electricity, where to set up the stage and instruments, where to get chairs, and how to configure the sound system. It is common in new church starts to

have something go wrong and a church planter must be able to think on their feet and find solutions quickly. The good news is not every problem needs to be solved by the church planter themselves. In fact, soliciting wisdom from others is usually the best way to come to a decision. Good problem-solvers need to be able to listen to advice from others. “This is a lesson I wish I had learned earlier in my leadership journey: to be grateful for the critiques and opinions of others, sifting through them and learning from them and not letting them feed my insecurity” (Surratt 39).

The ability to not confuse problem-solving with vision casting is important. Problem-solving is a “mental process that involves discerning, analyzing, and solving problems. The ultimate goal of problem solving is to overcome obstacles and find a solution that best resolves the issue” (Goldman 1). Problem solving usually involves a three-step process that a church planter must go through. First, church planters need the skill to identify the problem. It may seem obvious, but many times the problem that surfaces is not the real problem. For example, people may complain about someone singing on stage, but the real problem might be the sound engineer. Seek to identify the problem behind the problem. Second, define the problem so people can understand it. If people cannot grasp the true nature of what needs solving, they cannot come up with solutions that make sense. Third, develop a strategy that can be implemented (Goldman 2). Do not just throw out ideas. Ideas alone cannot solve problems. “When I hear people talk about good intentions with no plan for executing them, I always think about this quote from Peter Drucker, the father of modern management: Many brilliant people believe that ideas move mountains. But bulldozers move mountains: ideas show where the bulldozers should go to work” (Wilson and Mancini, “Dream Big, Plant Smart” 110).

A church planter needs to solve problems by soliciting the advice of others and working



through the problem by identifying, defining, and developing a strategy. For a church planter to be successful, however, they must use both their head and their heart. Brainstorming alone at times will not solve the problem. Like Moses in the wilderness, we sometimes need to turn to God for our solution to problems. Being in tune with God and utilizing his wisdom helps us with problem solving. Sometime there is no logical solution but praying and listening to the Holy Spirit can lead to spiritual solutions. God sometimes makes a way when there is no other way. A church planter needs to seek God's voice in matters of problem solving as well. "Good decision making is an overflow of a heart that is in tune with God" (Surratt 73).

The eighth and last leadership skill evaluated by the literature was the capacity for a church planter to mobilize people and resources. A church planter cannot plant a church by themselves, so they must have the ability to gather others and leverage resources. Through friends, family, or other relationships, they must be able to motivate people to serve. "Relationships and friendships are key motivators to encourage leadership as you start a church" (Miller Web).

If a church planter does not have the skill to equip and empower faithful disciples of Jesus, they will not be able to grow the new church start. Different people are motivated to serve by different techniques. My dad said growing up on the farm, "Some horses need a carrot, and some need a switch." In other words, people (and horses) need to be coaxed to motivate them to move. In our doctoral class training at Asbury Seminary, we spent part of a day trying to get horses to move without touching or leading them. We had to discover what motivated them to move (Marzahn, August 16, 2016). "A church planter needs to use techniques that motivate those you serve. A pastor will need to develop different techniques to different people that are invited to lead" (Miller).

To motivate and mobilize volunteers, a church planter must be able to communicate

effectively. Motivation does not happen in a vacuum. “A church planter must be able to communicate the gospel message clearly in an attractive and understandable way” (Collier 119). When we share the gospel message or demonstrate the kingdom of God in our midst, a church planter must be able to do it in a way that motivates other leaders. It is important for a church planter to be able to communicate things simply, so others can join in the process of serving. The message must also be communicated compellingly enough, so others will want to give sacrificially to further the cause of Christ.

The literature reviewed in this section examined eight leadership skills needed by church planters to successfully start a new faith community. The literature reviewed was not just traditional church planting literature, but material identified by a variety of leadership resources. The eight skills reviewed included visionary leadership, willingness to take responsibility, tenacity and perseverance, effectiveness at planning and evaluating, having an indigenous support system, hard-working, problem-solving ability, and the capacity to mobilize people and resources. This section of the literature review revealed that biblical character traits, coupled with certain knowledge or leadership skills, provided for a more successful new church starts. Character, knowledge, and leadership skills are all needed to have a competent church planter.

### **Non-United Methodist Church Planting Sources**

This section of literature reviewed specific literature by church planting organizations or movements that are non-United Methodist to reveal how they identify, assess, and recruit church planters. The literature reviewed demonstrated that these organizations and leaders identify and assess church planters based on character, knowledge, and leadership skills. The literature reviewed also demonstrated how these organizations actively recruit potential church planters by using a variety of techniques to persuade them to plant with their particular organization.

Geoff Surratt, Greg Ligon, and Warren Bird have written several books on church planting. Each author is a national expert in this field and present at the Exponential Church Conference and several other training events each year. In a workshop I attended with Geoff Surratt in Florida in 2016, he was emphatic about the importance of the church planter in a new church start. Surratt compiled a list of reasons why a new church fails and he put “a poor choice of campus pastor” at the top of the list. For a new church start to have a successful ministry, the right person must be identified, assessed, recruited, trained, and sent to lead the campus. Without a healthy, well-trained church planter, Surratt shared that the best plans will not be successful. He referenced that a church planter is important to a new church start like a quarterback leading a football team. They must “tryout” to make sure they can play the position and do what is necessary to ensure that they have the talent to win games. Like a quarterback, they have very specialized skills and are needed to pull the rest of the team together. He reiterated that football as well as church planting are team sports, and each player has a specific role. “Yet too many football teams, and churches, lack the catalytic leader to get the best out their teammates” (Surratt, Exponential Conference 2014).

Non-United Methodist Church planting literature concurs with the observations of Surratt regarding the importance of finding the right key leader to start a new faith community. The literature examined non-United Methodist Church planting organizations to discern best practices for identifying, assessing, and recruiting church planters. The criteria for identifying and assessing a church planter is varied among denominations and church planting support networks. Some networks use quite simple guidelines and other organizations use quite complex psychological and social testing. Assessments are common among most church plant sending groups. Denominations, associations, and churches that pursue multi-site churches are all

looking for best practices to identify and assess potential church planters.

The first resource reviewed regarding non-United Methodist assessment was Ken Nash, the Lead Pastor at Watermark Wesleyan Church near Buffalo, New York. His doctoral research at Asbury Theological Seminary involved training and sending laypersons to launch multi-site campuses. He has planted several churches in the Wesleyan Denomination. Wesleyanism is similar in theology to United Methodism but has its own distinctions when it comes to church planting. He discussed at length in his dissertation qualities needed to identify, assess, and recruit potential church planters.

Nash, as a multi-site pastor, adapted a well-known church assessment strategy developed by the Journey Church co-pastors, Nelson Searcy and Kerrick Thomas. Journey Church has several multi-site campuses around New York City. They have established a “Three-C” criteria for the hiring of potential leaders from within their congregation: character, chemistry, and competency (113). Nash has added three more “C” words to the identification and assessment criteria suggested by Journey Church founders Searcy and Thomas. Along with character, chemistry, competency, Nash has added calling, commitment, and courage.

In his dissertation, Nash suggested that a multi-site leader may be clergy or a lay trained leader. He suggested a proper metric to help discern whether a campus pastor has the primary traits needed. In his doctoral thesis, he suggested five traits that are critical to the discernment process: character, chemistry, competency, calling, and commitment (33-44). Since the writing of his dissertation, Nash has added a sixth characteristic to his original five, namely, “courage.” He revealed this sixth characteristic at a church planter training event held by the Minnesota Annual Conference at CROSSROADS UMC in 2016 (Marzahn, April 7, 2016).

Nash discussed the importance of character at length and cited several authorities on the

importance of character. Nash and his team that does identification and assessment look at character as their number one filter before exploring other qualifications. He cited church planter Bill Hybels as an example.

I didn't always place character above competence, but I do now. I have learned that in church work an occasional lapse in competence can be accepted. But lapses in character create problems with far reaching implications. A breakdown in character tends to create distrust and will inevitably alienate team members. It also de-motivates the leader when it comes to investing time and emotional energy into that particular member. And of course, if the leader does not deal with the wayward team member wisely, he or she may lose the respect of other team members. (Nash 81)

A second leadership trait necessary in a potential planter according to Nash is that of chemistry. Chemistry is vital to the health of any team and any new church start. Other church planter recruiters, such as Dave Ferguson, Jon Ferguson, and Eric Bramlett, talk about the vital importance of having a team with healthy harmony: "When you have a team of people who are able to think creatively together, and one person reaches his or her limit on an idea, another person's creativity can then take the idea to the next level" (150).

Church planter and multi-site pastor, Larry W. Osborne, concurs with the important assessment of chemistry discussed by Nash. Osborne discusses how the chemistry of the team is critical to the success of the church. "Today, maintaining unity remains top on my list, far ahead of church growth, evangelism and every other goal" (Osborne 14). A church planter must have a healthy ability to build chemistry with his or her teams, church, and community. Nash and others see chemistry as important for assessing a potential church planter.

Nash discussed that a leader may be capable of drawing a crowd due to chemistry or character, yet the ministry will likely struggle without competency. Competency to learn important skills is critical to a church planter's success. Competency has been a primary trait for leadership both in the church and in secular business. Like Nash, Alan Hirsch and Dave

Ferguson claim that pastors and leaders in the church must “respond, innovate, adapt, and learn” in the midst of all of the changes occurring around the minister today (Hirsch and Ferguson 222).

Nash points out that one of the competency factors is a leader’s ability to influence others. Effective church planters have the capability of not simply telling, but inspiring people toward the tasks needed within the new church start at any given moment. Church planter and author, Neil Cole, agrees that the influence of the church planter is critical. He states: “The success of the leader is not determined by the number of followers attained, but by the number of fruitful leaders that are blossoming around the leader” (*Multi-Site Church Model* 5). Cole, along with other leadership developers like John Maxwell, understand that an effective leader is one who is competent in inspiring others to carry on the vision (Maxwell 99-100). Nash, alongside other leaders, used competency traits in order to identify and assess potential church planters.

God calls all people into ministry. Martin Luther started the reformation movement to instill understanding of the priesthood of all believers. “God calls all of us. Throughout Scripture we are told about God’s call on our lives to be in ministry” (Nash 1). Yet, being called into church planting is a unique call to ministry or priesthood. This type of call needs to be confirmed by the planter and the community calling the planter into service.

A successful church planter must be able to articulate their unique calling to plant a church. As part of the assessment and recruitment process, they should be able to explain in plain terms how God has spoken to them about being a pastor and starting a church. Whether it was a process over time, or a burning bush moment like Moses, a potential church planter should be able to describe why they feel called to plant a church at this time. Likewise, a discerning certifying organization or board of ordained ministry needs to confirm their call into ministry. Confirmation of their call by their pastor and their local church, and in some instances their

denomination, is part of the confirmation process. Credentialing is the last part of the process which certifies a lay person or clergy to be commissioned into service (Wesleyan New York District).

The fifth identification and assessment criterion Nash searches for in church planters is commitment. According to Nash, if a church planter has the right character, chemistry, competency, and call, but lacks commitment, the new church start will still fail. Other planting networks agree that the identification and assessment process must include a way to judge a potential church planter's commitment to see things through. A church planter will continually be challenged in their efforts to start a church. Endurance will be needed to not give up when difficulties arise. Church planter Joel Rainey uses the analogy that planting a church is a lot like having a baby. "New babies are among the most joyous experiences God gives us in life, but let's be real about this; those experiences cost us! Many nights are sleepless... Just like any childbirth once this happens the poop and vomit will follow" (Rainey 84-85). He goes on to say that parenting a church is like parenting a baby. Church planters must be committed to sleepless nights and long days. Commitment is a key qualification that helps a planter succeed when others would give up. Any identification or assessment of a church planter according to Nash, must include this criterion of commitment.

The sixth characteristic that Nash looks for in a potential church planter is courage. As Nash assessed and recruited potential church planters, he realized that courage was also necessary for a potential leader. Nash, in his dissertation, suggested five characteristics but courage is now a part of his identification and assessment criteria. "Courage is a necessary characteristic for potential multi-site leaders. Courage, linked with faith, allows a leader to step fearlessly into the future" (Marzahn Journal. April 7, 2016). Other church planting recruiters

agree with Nash. Courageous leaders are needed because times will come when a leader will need to take risks and make difficult choices. “It takes brave disciples to start a church. But our Savior fills us with courage beyond ourselves.” (DCPI, “The Courage of Jesus” Web.)

Nash’s six characteristics are a great way to discern a potential church planter. The traits of character, chemistry competency, calling, commitment, and courage are all important for a church planter to possess. Likewise, once a potential church planter is identified, the recruitment process needs to begin. Potential church planters are often qualified for other jobs both in ministry and outside of ministry. They may need a nudging of the Holy Spirit and convincing by others to take on the task of planting a church. “Recruitment is an ongoing process that begins as soon as a potential church planter is identified according to the six ‘C’ process” (Paul Marzahn Journal. April 7, 2016).

Nash and the Wesleyan denomination use a traditional model for identification, assessment, and recruitment. Clearly identify the character, knowledge, and skills needed for a church planter. Then seek out ways to find people who fit the qualifications and recruit them into joining. Other organizations prefer to use a mentoring or apprentice approach to identifying, assessing, and recruiting potential church planters.

Church planter identification, assessment, and recruitment are intertwined by many organizations and denominations. As soon as a potential church planter is identified, the recruitment process begins many times even before the formal assessment process is complete. Because church planters are a much-needed role in ministry settings, those with the potential character, knowledge, and skills are highly sought after. Denominational churches used to be the primary church planting drivers, but in the last 15 years there has been a tremendous shift to non-denominational churches. “Today, God is still calling church planters and more of them. But



these planters are not banging down the doors of denominations. Between the flourishing of the internet and growing number of independent networks, a church planter today can take a different route to starting a church” (Stetzer, “Five Places”).

Stetzer is a church planter and Christian missiologist. He serves as professor of Mission and Evangelism at Wheaton, College and as a member of the Send Institute which defines itself as a “think tank for evangelism and church planting in North America” (Stetzer, “5 Places to Find Your Next Church Planter”). The Send Institute has researched and determined that there are five primary places to recruit potential church planters other than through a leadership farm system or discipleship pipeline. The first place the Send Institute approaches are schools. They understand that many young adults are looking to find a meaningful calling in their life. During their senior year in high school and through most of their first two years of college, young adults are exploring a variety of career options. Send Institute attends career fairs at schools, offers internships or networks with college deans to get access to potential church planters. “Most Bible colleges and seminaries require a missions and evangelism course. Include church planting in those classes as an evangelistic strategy” (Stetzer , “5 Places to Find”)

Second, the Send Institute recruits church planters in ethnic (non-Anglo) church networks. Unfortunately, for many mainline denominations, the vast majority of clergy are Caucasian, and their networks are mostly Caucasian. To be effective at recruiting the best talent in church planting, church planting recruiters need to look at how to establish networks with non-Anglo Christian leaders. Non-Anglo leadership is flourishing in church planting in North America. “Non-Anglo ethnic leaders are already doing great work without you” (Stetzer,” Five Places”). Ethnic church planters do not need denominational connections, but denominations need ethnic church planters. If church planting recruiters hope to recruit some of the best pastors who are

leading some of the fastest growing church networks, they need to develop recruitment strategies in this area. One way to recruit ethnic partnerships in church planting is through credentialing. “Credentialing signals a partnership. When you raise up indigenous, local leaders in the Brazilian, Vietnamese, or other ethnic communities, you’re empowering and expanding into other people groups at the same time” (Stetzer, “5 Places”).

Youth pastors are the third category that the Send Institute recruits. Youth pastors have experience in ministry and often demonstrate the character, knowledge, and skills necessary to plant a church. Many youth pastors have started new ministries and have experience in recruitment and leadership development. “Every youth pastor is a budding church planter who just needs freedom to grow.” This may be an overstatement, but many youth pastors are not looking to work with youth all their careers. At some point, many become dissatisfied working with youth and move on to other forms of ministry. Church planting may be a viable alternative for a youth pastor looking for more options. “[Y]outh pastors frequently make great church planters often because they’re accustomed to engaging the next generation culture that church plants reach well” (Stetzer, “Five Places”).

Associate pastors are the fourth category that the Send Institute targets in their recruitment strategy. Like youth pastors, associate pastors have ministry experience and can lead. As an associate, they have already developed several skills necessary for a new church start. Their experience in discipleship and worship programming will serve them well as they develop ministry plans for the new church. “Associate Pastors ... are usually adept at dealing with various areas of ministry and developing strategies for new or expanded ministries, which is important when planting a church” (Stetzer, “5 Places”). Associate pastors often have experience in evangelism and missions so this can aid their learning curve at reaching out to a new

community. “Associate pastors often have great mission ideas, so search for church planters among them” (Stetzer, “5 Places”).

The fifth area for recruitment of church planters is conferences. Church conferences or training events draw youth pastors, associate pastors, and other potential church planters. There are specific conferences designed for church planting, such as those sponsored by The Association of Related Churches or New Thing Network. “God often speaks to aspiring church leaders at these types of conferences. Strike while the iron is hot and connect with church planters at conferences where they are seeking opportunities” (Stetzer 5). The largest church planting conference on the planet is called “Exponential.” This draws the largest crowd of any church plant gathering. The primary conference is in Orlando, Florida but has grown so large it has expanded to a west coast option in Southern California as well. “The Exponential Conference in Orlando is what I call ‘Church-plant-a-palooza.’ Six thousand plus people come to talk about church planting. If you want to fish, you might as well go where the fish are” (Stetzer, “5 Places”).

The ultimate recruiting is not just where you find potential planters, but how you treat them. No matter where a church planter is discovered, relationship building is what makes a church planter feel comfortable joining the organization or denomination. A church planter has keen relationship skills and knows if they are being recruited to meet your needs. A recruiter must have the needs of the potential planter at heart and discern if their network or denomination is best for the potential church planter. Ultimately, recruiting is about developing relationships. “Where you find your church planter doesn’t matter, only that you find them and develop good relationships” (Send Institute 6). The Send Institute discussed a targeted, personal approach to finding church planters. Some church systems are very closed and only recruit within the system

by word of mouth or minimal advertising.

A third method of recruitment is mentoring and recruiting from within an organization or denomination. One advantage that some denominations or planting networks have is a leadership development system where leaders are groomed to start new churches or lead new campuses. Some call their leadership development system a “discipleship pipeline” where the best disciples are identified to start new churches or ministries. “The Discipleship Pipeline is a means by which we can create an environment for discipleship that will clearly engage, integrate and mobilize every person in the church. In turn, those disciples can be mobilized and sent to continue multiplying new disciples in places, near and far, where the Gospel is not yet being proclaimed” (Wallar loc. 570-72).

In a church planting system that advocates for apprentice leadership, the vast majority are already serving as high potential leaders within the local church. “Prayerfully look around the pool of potential leaders. Who are those who naturally have an influence on others? Which of them demonstrate faithfulness, servanthood, teachability, willingness, and availability?” (Logan loc. 4836). Once a potential candidate for church planting rises to the surface, it is a matter of giving them an opportunity to serve alongside a gifted church planter.

The Southern Baptist Convention is one of the fastest growing church planting organizations in the world. They plan to set an aggressive goal to plant a minimum of 1,200 churches a year for the next six years. The 2025 plan includes a bold goal of adding “6,000 churches in the next five years” (Perry). In 2018, the Southern Baptists planted 624 new churches. Sixty-two percent of those churches were either non-Anglo or multi-ethnic” (Perry). Their main strategy to recruit church planters is to aggressively go after people attending their churches who demonstrate leadership capacity.

The Southern Baptists have three sub-strategies for recruitment of church planters within their organization. They start with a wide focus of their extended network. “First, cast the vision for church planting widely. Wherever people in your network or organization are talking about evangelism, discipleship, and missions-they should know you and your vision about church planting” (churchplanter.lifeway.com 1). This broad network includes professors and denominational leadership identifying these potential church planting candidates. “You have to equip and empower other people (pastors, missionaries, denominational workers, seminary professors) to always be on the lookout for potential church planters, but to also cast the broad vision for church planting” (churchplanter.lifeway.com 1).

The second focus for recruitment by the Southern Baptist Convention is extending their reach by recruiting other recruiters. Those responsible for identifying and assessing church planters work on encouraging other pastors and leaders to help them recruit. It is an expectation of every church and every pastor to identify potential church planters. The expectation is not only to recruit lead pastors of a new church start, but Southern Baptists want the leadership to encourage partnerships for future church plants. It is a multi-faceted approach to recruitment. “Second, equip people in your organization and networks to be talking and recruiting for church planters. Be consistent in casting a vision to help them see how church planting fits into God's mission and how to tell others about it. When you are doing this, you aren't just recruiting church planters but also partners for your future church plants: pastors and leaders of church planting churches (sponsor), coaches, mentors, mission teams, etc.” (churchplanter.lifeway.com 2).

A third way that Southern Baptists work hard to recruit is through existing new church starts and successful church planters. Those already doing the work create a catalyst to

encourage others to join. Other denominational influencers like pastors and denominational leaders are key to recruitment. It is a team effort. “Thirdly, who are the preachers, leaders, teachers and influencers that church planters in your organization are drawn to? Find them, get to know them, and recruit them to help you recruit. Make a point to be at the events where they are connecting with your future church planters” (churchplanter.lifeway.com 2).

A fourth method of identifying, assessing, and recruiting a church planter is found by examining the literature of an organization called The Association of Related Churches or ARC. ARC seemed to use a combination of techniques to actively recruit potential church planters. Overall, they promoted the strength of teamwork and supportive relationships. They have a video on their site called “Teamwork makes the Dream Work.” The video depicted how you will be supported by a team cheering you on. They describe in detail how they believe in the power of positive, supportive relationships. “ARC is named the ‘Association of Related Churches’ because we believe in the strength of relationships. We believe no one should do ministry or life alone and that we are better together. Church planting can have some tough days and you will need people who believe in you and want to see you win. With a strong “family” culture and solid network around the country, you will have the opportunity to build those relationships that are crucially for you personally” (Association of Related Churches Web.)

First, their website and materials appear to be top notch and appeal to many tech-savvy, young church planters. After logging onto their website, only two buttons are offered to choose from: “I want to start a church” or “I’m an existing church.” Both lead to other pages that are well designed to walk someone through the process of starting a church. The front page also states the ARC purpose, which is, “launching, connecting and equipping the local church”. (Association of Related Churches Web.)

Second, ARC has a strong appeal for those seeking a life-changing opportunity and not just a ministry job. When a planter joins the ARC organization, they will help the church planter reach a city with the hope of Jesus. They do not start with a church assessment process, but rather work to recruit a church planter before assessing them. They assume that anyone checking out their website is serious about planting a church and they want to help.

“We want to help you start a life-giving church. If you have a dream in your heart to start a church and reach the city with the hope of Jesus, ARC is here to come alongside you in the journey. Our goal is to help you see that dream come true by providing necessary tools to help you launch and grow a life-giving church.”  
(Association of Related Churches Web.)

While many church planting organizations start with assessment and profiling, the ARC team starts with building a relationship.

Third, ARC uses a journey motif to help recruit and support church planters. ARC’s literature puts a heavy emphasis on “doing planting together.” Their recruitment technique is based on letting a potential church planter understand that they will not be doing this alone, and that ARC is more like a friend helping them rather than an organization. “There are cities that need life-giving churches and people in need of the hope and healing that can only be found in Jesus. We believe in you and are here to help your dreams of reaching those cities become a reality. Let’s get going!” (Association of Related Churches Web.)

The fourth thing ARC promises is support. They lay out all the benefits of being a part of their team approach. They discuss how their model of church planting has proven successful and exceeded the national averages. They explain the resources you will receive if you are a part of the ARC organization. “Launch with ARC and receive: TRAINING, COACHING, FUNDING, RELATIONSHIPS, RESOURCES and OPPORTUNITY.” They are very upfront about funding

and let you know that if you raise \$50,000, they will match up to \$50,000 to assist you as a church planter in your launch. “It takes resources to launch a church and ARC is here to help. We will match dollar-for-dollar the first \$50,000 raised to go towards your launch” (Association of Related Churches Web.)

ARC has an excellent training program and a proven method of celebrating at the end of the training process. They provide online training modules as well as a 3-day intensive training where a planter has “hands-to-hands, face-to-face time with ARC team, other pastors who have already planted, as well as other church planters that are on this journey with you” (Association of Related Churches Web.) I personally took the training when we launched multi-site campuses at CROSSROADS UMC. The training was superb, but what was most impressive was the care the trainers showed. I remember them stopping to pray several times during the class for concerns that came up. I was extremely impressed with the graduation ceremony after we completed the class. It left me feeling like I was heading out to change the world and had all this support around me. The experience was incredible. The training was informational, but more importantly it was motivational. The graduation was not as formal as my ordination ceremony, but significant in other ways. I felt commissioned by those who had done what I was about to do. The trainers also followed up for weeks after the class, even though CROSSROADS UMC chose not to join ARC or launch an official ARC Church.

The literature reviewed a fifth recruitment strategy, which is to target women for recruitment to church planting. Many organizations have realized their mistake in targeting men only in their identification, assessment, and recruitment profiles. Many denominations and churches are now realigning their ways to include more women in leadership. “Women are very actively involved in the actual work of planting churches in many contemporary situations, as



they were in New Testament times and throughout the history of the church, especially in cross-cultural contexts. But church planting often appears to be even more male-dominated than other spheres of church life. Almost all books on church planting are written by men, and men dominate church-planting conferences and consultations to the extent that even “token women” may be absent. Non-inclusive language mars some now rather dated books on church planting, and patriarchal and frankly sexist attitudes are still surprisingly evident among those who plan and organize church-planting events (Murray loc. 1939-44).

Stadia is one church planting organization that has targeted women to assist with church planting. One technique that has helped recruit women is to have a specific community designated to help support women who identify as church planters. Stadia called this support community “Bloom.” One female church planter and author quotes Bloom and comments, “We offer opportunities for connection, both in person and online, that help empower women to maximize their roles in starting churches. Because of my involvement with Bloom, I have a much stronger grasp of my gifts as leader and a church planter” (Tandy). The same woman further testified to the support Stadia gives to women church planters. She stated: “The Bloom Community has been integral in my development as a leader and a church planter. As I have served on the Stadia team over the past two and a half years, I know that Stadia is committed to championing women to serve and lead in their own unique giftings” (Tandy).

Sherry Surratt is another female church planter who partners with her husband Geoff in ministry. She and her husband both spend more time championing the cause of women in ministry than when they first began ministry. Surratt asks a question that helps us all remember that women have often aided in our faith development regardless of their formal title. She states: “Think of a woman in your life who has made a marked difference for you. What would your life

have been like if she hadn't noticed you, affirmed your gifts, challenged your strengths and kicked you in the pants when you needed it?" (Surratt and Catron 9). Her challenge to those who recruit church planters is to be observant of women in leadership. "Do you constantly have your radar on for other talented leaders, even when it's a younger, sharper woman who may someday replace or outshine you?" (Surratt 140). Recruiting women for church planting is one of the fastest growing recruitment strategies.

The literature reviewed a sixth category of literature that looked at three specific types of church planters. Besides examining the character, knowledge, and skills of a church planter, ReachGlobal Ministries realized that certain types of church planters are best suited for certain styles of planting. ReachGlobal especially focuses on diverse societies around the world and partnering with them to make disciples in their own native context. The literature discussed as follows:

Essentially three types of church planters, corresponding to three broad approaches to church planting, can be identified: the pastoral church planter, the catalytic church planter, and the apostolic church planter. Each has a different understanding of the church planter's role, will invest his or her time and energies differently, is faced with particular opportunities and challenges, is suited for a particular situation, and will influence the likelihood that the church plant becomes a reproducing church. (Ott and Wilson loc. 1776)

Each of these types of church planters are needed to target the type of planter best suited for a particular situation.

The literature examined how some organizations look for a pastoral church planter. A pastoral church planter is one who has the apostolic gifting to plant one church. They often plant a church and then remain in the community they started. Other times they plant the church and pass along the ministry when it becomes self-sustaining. The main goal of this model and its pastor is "to plant the church and pastor it until it is large enough to call and pay its own pastor"

(Ott and Wilson loc. 1776). Organizations recruiting this church planter type often look to establish a church that can be passed on to a denomination or sponsoring agency.

A second model and church planter type that organizations look for is an apostolic church planter. The apostolic planter has a completely different model of church planting. ReachGlobal and church planters Craig Ott and Gene Wilson discuss the many advantages of an apostolic planter methodology. The planter will not be a founding pastor like the pastoral church planter, but more of a missionary behind the scenes, empowering others. As a planter, they will not be in the limelight, thus allowing the followers who come to Christ to form their own church with their own indigenous leadership. “This church planter seeks to follow the model of the apostle Paul, who as far as we know never became the pastor of a church he planted. Instead, after initial evangelism, he focused on empowering the local believers, primarily laypersons, to carry on and expand the work after his departure” (Ott and Wilson loc. 1898).

Apostolic planters can establish a church through equipping disciples, and then move on to multiply other church movements. If done well, the churches they establish follow a similar model and become churches that plant churches. Their goal is not to develop long term relationships with one community, but to start several faith communities in their lifetime of ministry. The purpose of an apostolic model church who recruits an apostolic church planter is “[t]o multiply churches that are not dependent on the church planter or outside resources” (Ott and Wilson loc. 1776).

A third model and type of church planter referenced by the literature is called the catalytic church planter. Some organizations utilize the gifting of catalytic church planters who will stay with a church plant after it has been started. It is a hybrid of the pastoral church planter and the apostolic planter profile. This type of church planter has apostolic gifts to plant more than one

church and thereby leverages the first new church start to help form other new faith communities. “The catalytic church planter plants a church and remains as pastor in that church or serves as a resource person in the region to become a catalyst or facilitator for church reproduction.” (Ott and Wilson 1778) Catalytic planters are unique because their apostolic gift is different from pastoral church planters who are satisfied with planting a single church. A catalytic planter strengthens the original church plant with the goal of launching additional plants in the region.

The literature review demonstrates that an organization must be clear that the model church they are seeking to start fits the gifting of the church planter. The literature examined three styles of new church starts and the type of church planter needed to initiate each church. The pastoral church planter, the apostolic church planter, and the catalytic church planter each has a distinct ministry. The sending organization must have a clear understanding of the church planter’s role. Each church planter has a unique job description and expectation on how they invest their time and energies. In recruiting these church planters, one must carefully pair the style of church with the strengths of the church planter’s skills and calling.

The literature reviewed a seventh method of recruitment which is done through advertising. Many church organizations recruit publicly by using staff recruitment organizations such as “Churchstaffing.com,” “Indeed.com,” and even “Craigslist.” Here is a recent advertisement for church planting with a job description on churchstaffing.com. “A Church Planter is an individual who establishes a new church. A Church Planter is a temporary role responsible for studying the neighborhoods and establishing relationships with the community to figure out how a new church could fit their needs.” (Churchstaffing.com 1). Advertising is not always the most effective way to identify and recruit, but with it does bring results for some organizations.

In terms of recruitment, twenty-five positions were advertised and posted in this month's advertising on Churchstaffing.com. None of the postings were for United Methodist new church starts. Some were denominational positions, but most were for non-denominational church planting opportunities. The website Indeed.com posted eighty-eight church planting jobs and none were for United Methodist Churches or denominational positions. Mormon Church Planters and non-denominational churches appeared to be recruiting most heavily using this medium of recruitment. At CROSSROADS UMC, our most recent worship leader and communications administrator was found on Craigslist and has proved a huge success. This method can be successful depending on the region.

In summary, this section of the literature discussed how non-United Methodist organizations and denominations identify, assess, and recruit potential church planters. The first literature reviewed in this section was Ken Nash and the Wesleyan denomination. The second literature reviewed how the Sent Institute recruits church planters and, where they find potential church planters. The third literature reviewed examined recruitment through mentoring or recruiting from within a denomination. The literature reviewed looked in depth at the way the Southern Baptist Convention focused on church planter identification and recruitment. The fourth literature reviewed was the Association of Related Churches that based its recruitment strategy on teamwork and relationship building. The fifth literature reviewed was Stadia and their recruitment of female church planters. The literature reviewed a sixth recruitment strategy, that of ReachGlobal which looked at three distinct church planter types that correspond to three broad approaches to church planting. The literature identified them as the pastoral church planter, the apostolic church planter, and the catalytic church planter. Lastly, the literature reviewed ways that churches or organizations recruit by advertising. These organizations look to

find existing church planters on staff web postings. Overall, this entire section reviewed literature that focused on recruiting that is done in a variety of ways by various non-United Methodist ministry organizations and denominations.

### **Minnesota Annual Conference (MAC) Theology of Church Planting**

The first section of the literature review demonstrated that churches are needed to defeat Satan and grow the kingdom of heaven. The literature also revealed that church planters are needed to continue to start and grow healthy churches that will become a formidable force in the world. The second section of literature reviewed discussed how certain character traits needed to be present in a church planter for the new church start to be successful. The survey of literature demonstrated the importance of character but also demonstrated that character alone will not produce a successful new church start pastor. The third section of the literature review revealed that biblical character traits, coupled with certain knowledge or leadership skills, provide for a more successful new church start. Character, knowledge, and leadership skills are all needed to have a competent church planter. The fourth section of the literature review looked at specific non-United Methodist church planting organizations that selected church planters. The literature examined their criteria for identifying and assessing planters. It also examined literature that discussed ways to recruit potential church planters. This section of literature review examines the identification, assessment, and recruitment strategies of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

The Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church believes strongly in the biblical foundation of church planting. A board within the Minnesota Annual Conference focuses on church planting and forming new faith communities. They are called the “Congregational Development Team” and they have put together what they consider their biblical foundations for

church planting. The rationale that new churches are needed is laid out in six statements endorsed by the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

The first statement promoted by the Minnesota Annual Conference is a reminder that the God we serve is a God that sends others into the world to share about him. One of the ways the United Methodist Church goes into the world to share the good news about Jesus is to plant churches to incorporate people into the body of Christ. Making disciples and starting churches are the same saving work discussed in the Great Commission.

“First, God is a sending God, and Jesus has sent us to plant churches. As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (John 20:21 NIV). This is just one of many biblical texts that identify Christians as “sent people.” When Jesus said, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19 NIV), he was actually talking about church planting because “baptizing” in the book of Acts is consistently associated with incorporation into a body of believers. It is impossible to read the New Testament or think of the history of the Christian movement without linking it to the planting of new churches (Minnesota Annual Conference. Reach, Renew, Rejoice).

This statement by the Minnesota Annual Conference is a bold new emphasis to see discipleship making and church planting as a high priority. It reminds the clergy and lay leadership of its primary mission.

The second statement the Minnesota Annual Conference addressed is the need for new churches to reach new unchurched people. In North America, the population is increasing and growing more diverse. The Minnesota Annual Conference has set a goal to plant more churches to reach those who are not connected to a local church community. The MAC hopes to particularly target a younger demographic and churches with more ethnic diversity. “Second, North America needs more new churches to meet the needs of the unchurched ... New churches are needed to present the timeless gospel in a new and relevant form to a new generation.”

(Reach, Renew, Rejoice 2) Younger people are not attending existing churches and need ministries designed to attract them. It is also recognized within the MAC that communities are

increasing in ethnic diversity and we need new churches to reach this new demographic.

The third premise that the Minnesota Annual Conference shared with existing churches is that new churches grow at a more rapid rate than existing churches. This was difficult for some existing churches to accept, but facts were presented around growth cycles to help people understand the reality. New churches grow at a faster rate and are needed to reach more people for Jesus.

“Third, new churches grow at a faster rate than existing churches. Reaching new people for Jesus Christ is a challenging task in North America today. While existing churches can be effective in this evangelistic effort, the overwhelming evidence is that new churches tend to do significantly better. Churches 15 years old or younger tend to grow faster and reach farther into the mission field than do older, more established congregations. This has led many to agree that church planting is the single most effective way to reach new people.” (Reach, Renew, Rejoice. 3)

New churches are needed because they systematically do a better job of evangelism. Churches like families have different patterns of growth and decline. New churches are needed to offset the declining or closing churches.

The fourth premise the Minnesota Annual Conference shared with existing churches is that they need a plan in place to grow strategically. Throwing more money into church plants or ministries would not accomplish the goal of planting new churches. New church planters need to be identified, assessed, and trained to plant churches in strategic areas. “Fourth, church planting is strategically smart ... Growth happens exponentially when a multiplication strategy is used, and church planting is the core activity in the multiplication strategy. (Reach, Renew, Rejoice 4)

This MAC recognizes that to plant more churches it will take more than simply raising more money. The MAC will need to be more strategic with its resources in order to plant sustainable churches that will reproduce.

A fifth premise that the Minnesota Annual Conference introduced was the importance of



parent churches. Parent churches are churches that agree to help start another new church. Similar to any parenting model, they help birth and sustain a new church start. This can be anything from financial support to sharing actual members to begin the DNA of the new church. Most churches planted in the Minnesota Annual Conference recent history were known as “parachute drop” churches. The Minnesota Annual Conference had been starting a church a year for almost the last twenty years. Some years they have even started more than one church. The MAC Cabinet used primarily only one model of a church plant which Path One defines as “The Classic Missionary Strategy”. (United Methodist Discipleship Web.) This type of church plant happens when the MAC Cabinet sends an ordained clergy into a new territory where there is no existing United Methodist Church nearby. The MAC identify, assess, and recruit ordained clergy willing to plant a church in this area. Sometimes the planter is already from the area, but most times a pastor is appointed to a new area of the state. When the planter has established an informal network, she or he then proceeds with discipleship and worship without an official partner church. CROSSROADS UMC intended to launch as a daughter church of Rosemount United Methodist Church, but was started as a parachute drop using the classic missionary strategy.

Introducing the expectation of parent churches to the MAC strategic plan was a big shift in church planting methodology. One of the ways they helped recruit parent churches was by reminding existing churches that parenting a new church start can help revive the existing parent church. “Fifth, church planting revives the parent church. Church planting will usually activate passive members of your existing congregation. ... When congregational leaders move out to start something new, they open positions for service and create space for people to step up and engage (Reach, Renew, Rejoice 5)

The sixth premise that the MAC introduced as they prioritized church planting was the need to reinvigorate existing churches. To identify, assess, and recruit church planters, the MAC realized that they needed a bigger pool of vital churches and pastors from which to choose. Church growth principles and evangelism training became a part of the MAC strategic plan to help existing churches grow. A by-product of church growth was the ability to identify potential leadership for other new church starts. “Sixth, Church planting will also bring to the surface principles and practices associated with church growth that are often forgotten in established churches. Supportive parent congregations watching a new startup can learn valuable lessons.” (Reach, Renew, Rejoice 1) The lessons learned by the parent church allow for new innovation. Church plants and church planters are creative, and this will help the churches

The Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church not only theologically agreed that church planting was a preferred future for the MAC, it funded it at a higher level. Bishop Bruce Ough, alongside leadership from the MAC Cabinet, started a leadership initiative in 2015 to support new churches. The campaign was called, “REACH, RENEW, REJOICE.” It was a media campaign, as well as a fundraising campaign, to demonstrate the importance of new church starts. The Reach, Renew, Rejoice Campaign envisioned a Minnesota Annual Conference with a preferred future that included forming new faith communities in all areas of the state and not just in the metropolitan areas. It included raising resources, but also raising an awareness of the importance of growing new churches to reach new people.

The Minnesota Annual Conference made church planting one of its strategic initiatives starting in 2015 and ending in 2022. Here is their statement that discussed what they hoped to accomplish in those seven years:

‘The Minnesota Conference’s vision is for all congregations to live out God’s call to grow in love of God and neighbor, reach new people, and heal a broken

world. We have an opportunity to help new people find and experience Christ while stirring our own hearts and aligning them with what God is calling us to do. Sustained prayer and generosity are needed to accomplish the work that God has prepared for us. Here's what the seven-year plan would make possible: Each year for the next seven years, we will start one new church where demographics and opportunity align, assist 20 existing churches in revitalizing their ministries, and partner with a vital parent church to multiply its ministry beyond its current site. These efforts will occur in every district within the Minnesota Conference. As of June 1, 2016, more than \$3 million has been pledged.' (Reach, Renew, Rejoice 1)

The Reach, Renew, Rejoice Campaign identified the following ways the Minnesota Annual Conference started churches during those seven years. It expanded the models used so that the "parachute drop" new church start model was less used.

The MAC made a commitment to start churches using the following church planting models:

"We will start a variety of new churches. Church starts typically fall into these categories:

**Chartered church:** A church that is launched to reach a new geographic-, demographic-, or lifestyle-based group and is led by appointed clergy; churches become chartered when they reach 125 in worship and demonstrate sustainability.

**Partnered congregation:** A church that focuses on reaching an underserved and/or economically challenged population group and receives ongoing support from outside of the people it serves often from another "partner" church.

**Restart:** A previously chartered church that goes through an intentional rebirth by ceasing regular worship and programming and starting over in an effort to reach a new group; typically, the process involves relocating, renaming, and welcoming a new leader.

**Fellowship:** A United Methodist group with a spiritual leader who may be clergy or lay; fellowships are on track to become self-supporting as unchartered churches, although some seek a charter later in their life cycle." (Reach, Renew, Rejoice 2)

The Minnesota Annual Conference made a renewed effort to plant churches over the last six years using these variety of new church start models. The Bishop and the MAC Cabinet struggled to find qualified men and women to serve effectively in leading these new church starts. The Congregational Development Team and the MAC Cabinet worked together to determine best practices to move forward with identifying, assessing, and recruiting new church

start pastors. In January 2016, the Dakotas and Minnesota UMC Conferences hired jointly a Director of New Congregation Development for Dakotas and Minnesota Conferences UMC. Since that time, Ben Ingebretson has been working alongside the MAC Cabinet to assist with implementing the Reach, Renew, Rejoice strategic initiative. He has also been doing a similar initiative in the Dakota Conference called “Thrive.”

The vision was cast in 2014-2015 to plant more churches. The funding was secured through the Reach, Renew, Rejoice Campaign. One of the obstacles was finding or developing qualified church planters. Ben Ingebretson introduced in 2016 the Church Planter Assessment Pathway. Identification and assessment had not been consistent over the last 20 years I served on the Congregational Development Team. Outside consultants were hired and it varied from year to year. Jim Griffith Coaching and Cathy Townley Coaching were used frequently for the assessment process. Both were also used for the training once a church planter was identified and assessed. They both are United Methodist and have served Church Plants in their past ministries.

Ben Ingebretson introduced the Church Planter Assessment Pathway in April 2016 to the Minnesota Annual Conference website. The Pathway is referenced by the leadership of the Minnesota Annual Conference and is being lived by potential candidates. The consensus is that a clear pathway helps potential church planters understand steps to enter the process. The Pathway is a series of steps that help a potential church planter and leadership discern if a person is ready to plant a church. It is one of the major recruitment tool pathways used by the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Here is the Assessment Pathway as described on the Minnesota Annual Conference Website:

*Step 1: Pray. Is God nudging you forward onto this path? Do you feel called?*

*YES: Take the next step and keep praying and exploring!*

*MAYBE: Take the next step and keep praying and exploring!*

*NO: Pause. Discern what has prompted your interest and reconsider.*

This part of the discernment process is individual. At this point there is no information exchanged so there may be some potential planters who may never get past Step 1. If they move to Step 2, then information is acquired for a follow-up by the Director of New Church Development.

The second step of the recruitment process by the MAC is to complete an interest application online. The application is designed to encourage a potential church planter to reflect on why they want to be a church planter. The application also asks basic questions as to their vision for the type of church they would like to plant. The interest survey even delves into some deeper topics, such as, if they have persons financially supporting the ministry. The survey is the second step and allows for direct follow up. The online interest application includes the following questions:

*“Step 2: Complete an interest application online.*

*“1. Name, Phone Number and Email*

*2. Describe what your vision is for church planting. Include preferred location, known and potential partners, planting model and impact group. How many people are currently following you and your vision?*

*3. What has led you to explore planting a new church?*

*4. Are you committed to planting a United Methodist Church? Why? What is your current professional standing (licensed, ordained or another denomination?)*

*5. What steps have you taken toward your vision? (committed partners, funds, etc....) What time frame are you thinking?*

6. *What else should we know to be good partners with you?"*

The third step of the MAC recruitment process is a face-to-face meeting with the District Superintendent and/or the Director of New Church Development. This meeting is partial recruitment and partial assessment of the potential church planter. The purpose of this meeting is to hear the excitement of the potential church planter and to hear their hopes and dreams. It is also an opportunity for leadership to ask clarifying questions of the potential planter. Any “red flags” are raised at this point in the process by either party. The MAC website states the following:

*“Step 3: Meet with your District Superintendent and/or the Director of New Church Development. Get their sense of whether you should pursue assessment for church planting. Their response:*

*YES: Receive that encouragement; keep praying and exploring!*

*MAYBE: Receive their cautionary concerns; keep praying and exploring.*

*NO: Pause. They may or may not discern rightly. Keep praying and exploring!”*

The fourth step in the recruitment process of the MAC is to take a formal assessment. While the interview in step three allows the MAC leadership to discern the passion of the potential church planter, it is not designed to be an assessment of the church planter. This formal assessment is not as in-depth as some assessments. However, it does screen out potential church planters who have not thought through the commitment they are about to make. One logs onto “churchplanterprofiles.com” and are prompted to set up a file and pay \$19.95. Once a file is set up, a potential profile is established that can be shared with other planter agencies. The assessment has the potential church planter taking a series of inventories that includes the following: “Initial Screening Assessment, Golden Personality Profiler, Portrait Predictor, StrengthsFinder TM, Spiritual Gift Inventory, 360 Survey” (churchplanterprofiles.com). Upon

completion of the application, you have the opportunity to share with the MAC and other Church Planting Agencies. It also connects you to the Gateway Leadership Initiative out of San Diego, California that provides the church planter profiles. The profile is not automatically sent to Ben Ingebretson, so this is an additional step.

*Step 4: Take a free online church-planter assessment. Send the results to Congregational Development Administrator Gail Johnson. What is your overall score?*

*GREEN (76-100%): Receive that affirmation; keep praying and exploring!*

*YELLOW (51-75%): Talk with the director of new church development to discern the next step.*

*RED (0-50%): Talk with the director of new church development to discern the next step.*

The fifth step in the MAC recruitment process is to take a more in-depth planter candidate profile. The one required by the MAC is the Lifeway Church Planter Candidate Assessment. There is a cost of \$29 for this assessment. Lifeway is a Southern Baptist publishing house and uses this assessment with all their church planting candidates. After completion of this in-depth candidate assessment, the results are sent directly to Ben Ingebretson.

*“Step 5: Follow the steps listed below and complete the Lifeway Church Planter Candidate Assessment. This will cost you \$29.*

*APPROVED TO CONTINUE: Move to the next step.*

*NOT APPROVED TO CONTINUE: Reflect on your assessment experience and where you need to grow or adjust.” (Minnesota Annual Conference Web.)*

The sixth step is to procure personal references from others. The purpose behind obtaining five personal references is to hear from those closest to the potential church planter. While surveys and assessments get general information about a planter’s personality and skills, it does not reveal character. Personal references are actual character references that allow MAC to

discern next steps. They also ask those writing the references if they have seen the potential pastor in ministry settings so they can assess how well a pastor preaches and leads. These are turned in to Ben Ingebretson along with a DISC personality profile.

*“Step 6: Obtain references from 5 individuals who know your character and have seen you in ministry as a communicator/preacher, as a leader and as a team builder. Submit those along with a recent DISC assessment and preaching clip to Gail Johnson.”* (Minnesota Annual Conference Web.)

The seventh step in the recruitment and assessment process is a behavioral interview. The behavioral interview questions move from assessment to skill application. Ben Ingebretson, the Minnesota Area Director of New Church Development, has developed questions that help assess potential church planters using the similar characteristics developed by Charles Ridley. Although Ridley’s characteristics are observable, according to Ingebretson, a thorough “cross examination” of the facts is needed to vet potential church planters. The Director sends out the following questions in advance and then spends a day with a potential candidate going through the questions in detail. If the potential church planter is married, most of the interview will be conducted as a couple. The Director will often have a second observer also interview the potential planter to be certain that there is more than one perspective in reviewing a candidate. Ben Ingebretson believes strongly that vision casting abilities are critical to the new church start and lists it first on his criteria for interviewing.

“The church planter will be a man of vision. He will see possibilities where others only see obstacles. He will be highly motivated and persevere despite discouraging setbacks. His vision is backed up by a solid faith that God has sent him to do this work and will see him through. Most churches are established because of the vision, spiritual burden, sacrifice, and perseverance of some individual who gave himself to the task of church planting” (Organic Church loc. 789).



The current MAC church planter assessment starts with vision capacity, but also looks at eleven other knowledge and skills of a potential church planter.

Before 2016, the questions asked were not published on the MAC website. The assessments were given to the potential planters at the time of the interview and some who interviewed did not feel there was adequate time to reflect on the questions. Having the questions public on the website allowed church planters (applying after 2016) to prepare ahead of time for their church planter assessment.

The MAC website states the following for Step 7 of the church planter recruitment process:

*“Step 7: Schedule a full day for you and your spouse to engage in a behavioral interview. Relax with the process and let things unfold. What are the results?”*

*APPROVED: Receive that affirmation, keep praying and exploring!*

*CONDITIONALLY APPROVED: Work to address the conditions, pray and seek counsel.*

*NOT APPROVED: Pause & receive feedback from wise counsel. Your gifts may lie elsewhere.”*

The eighth step in the recruitment of potential church planters is to go through a formal psychological profile. The psychological assessment is known as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory. It is a standardized psychometric test of adult personality and psychopathology. This test is not only taken by church planters but by any clergy entering the Board of Ordained Ministry Process. The planter will receive the results and they will be interpreted by a psychologist that will share insights into your profile. The MAC website states the following:

*“Step 8: Contact Gail Johnson requesting her to register you for a psych assessment/MMPI.*

*Sign the release to give the Director of Church Development access to the results. Move to the next step.” (minnesotauc.org)*

The ninth step in the recruitment process for potential church planters is to meet with the Director of Church Planting to put together an official plan that includes details of the new church start. As part of the plan the finances and timelines would be established. This step includes a formal launch plan that would need to be approved by the MAC Cabinet to move forward. This would be the stage where the potential church planter would be approved for an appointment by the MAC Cabinet. The MAC website states the following:

*“Step 9: Meet with the Director of New Church Development to draft a preliminary business and launch plan. Request the approval of a District Superintendent and the Cabinet. Their response?”*

*APPROVED: You are off and running. Proceed to Step 10.*

*CONDITIONALLY APPROVED: Receive the conditions and work with District Superintendent and Director of New Church Development to manage the conditions.*

*NOT APPROVED: Receive the wisdom of the Cabinet and seek further direction.”*

(minnesotaumc.org)

The tenth and final stage of the recruitment process is to set up a potential church planter for training and support. The MAC has online “Bootcamp” training and in-person training events. CROSSROADS UMC has sent 55 potential pastors through the CROSSROADS Internship Program and the MAC Bootcamp Church Planter Training through the years. The following went through recruitment and training in chronological order:

Paul Marzahn, Deb Marzahn, Greg Strock, Eric Price, Cathy Townley, Michael Berg, Stephanie Birkholz, Samantha (Lewis) Evans, Andrew Montpetit, Nathan Snodgrass, Ty Stewart, Caroline Stewart, Gordon Deuel, Melissa Deuel, Ryan Terpening, Phil Emerson, Derek Harvey, Shauna Heule, Jeremiah Lideen, James Coffman, Rebekah Marzahn, Steven Bortey, Jay Jung, Gary Gottfried, Bendu Diggs, Nehil Bejarano, Lewis Whitehead, Michael Rivera, Laura Rand, Mike Armbrust, Ron Zenefski, Russ Christianson, Mike Lee, George Gipson, Garth Heckman, Becky Canny, Derek Wassell, Dominique Ubel, Keanu Krech, Jason Balster, Caitlyn Stenerson, Patrick Hoban, Krissy Cameron, Anthony Perry, Craig Mattson, Grace Dietz, Jason Oehrlein, Gary Blanchard, Mark Olson, Terry Olson, Judy Hart, Mark Schlasner, Xander Calverley, Jesse Pederson and Keagan Smith.

Of the 55, 10 former CROSSROADS interns or leaders chose to plant churches outside the UMC movement, 15 former interns or staff chose to plant or assist with planting Minnesota UMC Churches, and 7 churches affiliated with CROSSROADS were started outside the United States. Several more are working with mission churches that are incubating church planters outside of the United States. Other leaders on this list have become ordained United Methodist clergy, missionaries, youth pastors or chaplains in existing ministries. The MAC website states the following about Step 10:

*“Step 10: Attend Church Planting Boot Camp, convene your first stakeholder team, and begin fundraising.”* (Minnesotaumc.org)

Ingebretson posted several other resources other than the “pathway to church planting” to enable church planters on the MAC website to assist in identifying, assessing, recruiting, and training. The articles are targeted to three groups for resourcing: Resources for Future Church Planters, Resources for Current Church Planters, and Resources for Parent Church Leaders. The articles related to Future Church Planters were: “Fundraising for A New Church Start Up,” “Thirteen Characteristics of Successful Church Planters,” and “Online Bootcamp” (Minnesotaumc.org).

Ingebretson realized that a lot of potential church planters and existing church planters ask the same questions of their District Superintendents, planting coaches, and colleagues. To streamline the information, and for all involved to be well informed, Ingebretson posted the following informational literature to support the church planter movement in the MAC. The articles related to resources for current church planters include: “Church Planting Timeline, Pre-Launch Metrics Worksheet, Stewardship Video Series, 10 Networking and Evangelism Strategies, Smart Thinking about Plant Sustainability, Simple Steps to Reproducing Small

Groups, Step by Step Guide to Your Initial Budget, Increase Your Local Giving, Launch Partnership Brochure, Steps to Financial Independence, Internal Financial Controls, End Of Year Finances Checklist, Conference Funding and Benchmarks Covenant, Plant Stakeholder Report Form, MN Planter Cohort Information, Making The Most Of Coaching, and Responsibilities For Fiscal Agents” (Minnesotaumc.org).

Ingebretson also provided resources on the MAC website for Parent Churches to help them understand the commitment they would be making in helping start a church. One of the most important articles was the one that made the case for church planting and how a parent church is supportive in the process. The resources for a parent church leader include: “The Case for Planting, Multiplication Values Assessment, Multiplication Models to Fit Any Church, Parenting Field Guide for A New Service or Site When Not Hiring A Church Planter, Parenting Field Guide when Hiring a Planter, and Responsibilities for Fiscal Agents” (Minnesotaumc.org).

The last section of literature examined the Minnesota Annual Conference Theology of Church Planting and reviewed the church planting scorecard of the MAC. The Scorecard basically looks at the goals set by the Cabinet of the MAC and sees how they met their goals during the last six years since prioritizing church planting as a strategic initiative. As a reminder, the goal of the Reach, Renew, Rejoice Campaign literature claimed that the MAC wanted to: “Each year for the next seven years, we will start one new church where demographics and opportunity align, assist 20 existing churches in revitalizing their ministries, and partner with a vital parent church to multiply its ministry beyond its current site.” Ingebretson developed a higher goal in 2016 than the one originally suggested by the Cabinet in 2015. He moved that to make up for the 3% decline rate of churches per year in the MAC, the new goal is effectively starting 10 new churches a year for the 10 churches on average that are closing each year in the

MAC. There is one year left in The Reach, Renew, Rejoice Campaign has one year left to go..

According to records from the Minnesota Annual Conference yearly journals, and verified by the Area Director of New Church Development, the scorecard from 2016-2021 thus far demonstrates seven successful new church starts. Success here is defined as being in existence for over five years, being self-sustaining financially, and being stable in pastoral leadership. The “wins” in the Minnesota Annual Conference are as follows: Embrace UMC located in St. Croix, CROSSROADS located in Elko New Market, CROSSROADS Uptown UMC (now Uptown Church) located in Minneapolis, Roots UMC located in Anoka, Centennial UMC located in St. Anthony Park, and Vineyard UMC located in Hutchinson. Based on the goal of 10 churches per year for 6 years, the MAC is behind in accomplishing its goal. Many churches are still “under development,” which is discussed in the next area of the Scorecard. If all churches under development become successful, it would mean  $7 + 11 = 18$ . That concludes that the best success is  $60 - 18 = 42$ . The MAC was 42 church starts short of its goal.

Currently there are eleven churches that have started and are currently under development. They are not at the point of sustainability and are still being supported by the MAC. This list includes: Recovering Love UMC meeting in Richfield, New City UMC meeting in Minneapolis, The Planting Project located in Cottage Grove, All People’s UMC located in Eagan/Inver Grove Heights, Made New located in Anoka, Iglesia Piedra Viva located in Minneapolis, The Beloved located in St. Paul, Community UMC located in St. Michael, Rapha Temple located in St. Paul, First UMC located in Le Sueur, New Community UMC located in Lino Lakes, and the Vietnamese Fellowship located in Minneapolis.

While the MAC experienced some successes, they also experienced some losses. Three major new church starts were funded and ultimately did not prove sustainable in the past five

years. No new church start “fails,” since each of the new churches started, have produced disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Yet despite discipleship making efforts, the ministries did not meet the goal of being financially sustainable and/or producing stable, ongoing leadership. The list of churches includes Christ UMC located in Canon Falls, Vitality UMC located in Newport, and The Well UMC located in Apple Valley.

The MAC introduced a new concept in church planting this year due to Covid-19. They focused on investing in Digital Campuses. The MAC funded 37 projects and 13 successfully produced high results. Seven were unsuccessful and were not sustainable without additional funding or new leadership. Nineteen digital new church starts are still undecided and in process. This was not a part of the original plan introduced in 2015 as part of the Reach, Renew, Rejoice Campaign initiative, but an innovative adaptation later added.

The last section of literature examined under the section of The Minnesota Annual Conference Theology of Church Planting, is to review material of The Discipleship Ministries of the United Methodist Church. The Discipleship Ministries has a subdivision called, “Path One,” which is designed to help annual conferences with identifying, assessing, and recruiting church planters. Path One is a “team of leaders drawn from national, regional and local levels of the United Methodist Church whose mission is to train and equip new church planters who will start congregations throughout the United States” (United Methodist Discipleship Web.)

Rachel Gilmore is the Director of Recruiting, Assessing, and Training for Church Planting with Path One. She and other discipleship leaders realized that there exists a recruitment problem in the United Methodist Church. Potentially gifted church planters are available, but many United Methodist Annual Conference leaders are not strategically looking for and identifying church planters. She cited six places where an Annual Conference will find church planters if

they network correctly. She states: “Look at your laity, look at those entering the annual conference Board of Ordained Ministry system, look at local college students, look at seminarians from United Methodist and Wesleyan based schools, look to offer a summer field education placement for those discerning a call to plant a church, look at youth pastors who have a thriving ministry.” Gilmore argued that talented, gifted leadership is all around us in the United Methodist Church, but we are not looking in the right place and taking the time to develop meaningful relationships with potential church planters.

Path One has a variety of resources available for the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Some of the resources are being utilized and many are not. During the literature review of Path One, they sourced information on “Funding Church Plants, Church Planting Training, Developer Resources, Church Planting Media and a large number of resources for Ethnic and International Church planting” (United Methodist Discipleship Web.) The resource of Path One is one of the specific resources designed by United Methodist Church Planters for United Methodist Church Planters. The literature regarding “Strategies for Planting New Churches and Faith Communities in the United States” was especially helpful since the definitions of various church plants fit the United Methodist system.

Path One is also doing difficult research to help Annual Conferences with systemic issues related to lack of evangelism and church growth. “The Minnesota Annual Conference (MAC) is leading all other conferences in the U.S. in decline” (Vanderwerf “Abstract”). The research looked at the lack of leadership among denominational staff and, in particular, cabinet structure as one of the contributing factors. “Many planters and developers suspect that cabinet structure and relational dynamics have an impact on church planting effectiveness” (Agtarap).

In summary, literature review of the Minnesota Annual Conference’s Theology of Church

Planting demonstrated the specific way that the MAC identifies, assesses, and recruits new church planters. The first section of the MAC literature review examined how The Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church believed strongly in the biblical foundation of church planting and examined their six biblical values. The second section of the literature review of the MAC examined how the Reach, Renew and Rejoice Campaign helped to create awareness for new church starts, as well as raise financial resources. The third section of the literature review of the MAC examined how the Church Planter Assessment Pathway was introduced by Ben Ingebretson in 2016, and changed the methodology for identification, assessment, and recruitment of Church Planters. The fourth section of the literature review of the MAC focused on other resources offered to assist church planters on the MAC website in identifying, assessing, recruiting, and training. The literature was targeted to three groups for resourcing: Resources for Future Church Planters, Resources for Current Church Planters, and Resources for Parent Church Leaders. The fifth section of the literature review of the MAC examined the recent scorecard of church planting efforts during the last 6 years. The sixth section of the literature review looked at denominational insights and information offered by the General Board of Discipleship and Path One. All six sections of the literature review of the Minnesota Annual Conference's Theology of Church Planting demonstrated the specific way that the MAC identifies, assesses, and recruits new church planters.

### **Research Design Literature**

As a pre-intervention, qualitative research, this project is designed to produce data that is specific to the design of planting churches. "Qualitative research systematically seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings. Qualitative research is grounded in the social world of experience and seeks to make sense of



lived experience” (Sensing loc. 1636). The project identified common themes and anomalies in the qualitative data for analysis. The completed project also delved into what data is not present to infer findings as well.

This study is also a pre-intervention project. As a pre-intervention project, it allows for the findings to be further studied. It also allows for implementation of new ideas or processes in church planting identification, assessment, and recruitment in the MAC to occur. The completed project can make recommendations to the Cabinet of the MAC for discussion and possible adoption to increase effectiveness.

The questions on the questionnaire were unstructured. The questions were open ended so a variety of responses could occur. It allowed for the respondent to share as little or as much as they desired. The research focused on studying the Minnesota Annual Conference Cabinet and their knowledge of the church planting process as overseers of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. All data was received through a confidential electronic questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to the Minnesota Annual Conference Cabinet members engaged in assisting in the research.

### **Summary of Literature Review**

The literature review demonstrates how God calls a group of people to follow him and be in relationship with him. The literature review examines the calling of Abraham to demonstrate how his election became a blessing to the nations. Through his descendants, Jesus came as the fulfillment of this blessing. Through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, God’s redemptive plan comes into focus. The calling forth of a group of people extends to all nations through Jesus Christ. The early church disciples extend this blessing of the people of God by planting churches to call even more people into relationship with him.

The theological foundation reviews literature of ecclesiology and missiology as it pertains to the functions of the church and the importance of church planting. The literature reveals that church planters are needed to start and grow healthy churches that will become a formidable force in the world. The survey of literature demonstrates the importance of character, but also demonstrates that character alone will not produce a successful new church start pastor. The literature review examines specific non-United Methodist church planting organizations that selected church planters. The literature examines their criteria for identifying and assessing planters. It also examines literature that discusses ways to recruit potential church planters. The last section of the literature reviewed, examines the identification, assessment, and recruitment strategies of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

This chapter describes the research methodology of an online questionnaire used to understand the process of identifying, assessing, and recruiting potential church planters from within the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. It examines current understandings of the group known as The Cabinet of the Minnesota Annual Conference, who are ultimately responsible for determining who will be appointed as church planters to new church starts. This Chapter examines suggestions for improving the process of how the Minnesota Annual Conference Cabinet can identify, assess, and recruit potential church planters. This analysis, alongside the literature review, forms a basis of analysis to critique the current system and offer best practices of how to identify, assess, and recruit potential church planters in the Minnesota Annual Conference.

#### **Nature and Purpose of the Project**

The purpose of this study was to improve the process of identification, assessment, and recruitment of potential church planters from within the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. “The Minnesota Annual Conference (MAC) is leading all other conferences in the U.S. in decline” (Vanderwerf “Abstract”). Church planting and church planter identification, assessment, and recruitment are the most effective ways to turn around this rapid decline.

#### **Research Questions**

The research has three major questions that are trying to be answered. These questions look at identification, assessment, and recruitment in the Minnesota Annual Conference of

United Methodist Churches. The Questionnaire given to the MAC Cabinet members had a total of 5 questions to answer these 3 major research questions. Research Questions (RQ) #1 and #3 have two sub-questions that are asked in the electronic questionnaire. The sub-questions help clarify the major question more fully.

**RQ #1 What are the current practices of the Minnesota Annual Conference to identify potential church planters?**

Research Questions for the Minnesota Annual Conference Cabinet were designed to explore The Cabinet's understanding of their role in identifying, assessing, and recruiting church planters. The first question was designed to better understand how potential church planters were identified. Finding a potential church planter is a challenge and the questionnaire was designed to discover what processes were in place for the MAC to readily find persons to start churches. Does the Cabinet have any strategic plans for how to identify church planters and if so, what are those plans?

Questionnaire Question One. *What is the current identification process for potential church planters in the Minnesota Annual Conference?*

The sub-question for Research Question #1 (Questionnaire Question Two) was designed to clarify if the Cabinet understood the importance of early identification of a potential church planter. Do they understand some of the potential strengths of early identification and why some denominations focus on identifying young church planters? Are they aware that potential church planters have multiple career options and to discover them early puts them on a trajectory to plant churches, rather than choose another career path? Are there processes in place to help with early identification rather than wait until a person has already completed their university and seminary education?

Questionnaire Question Two. *What are the strengths of identifying a potential church planter early in the church planting process?*

**RQ #2 What are the current practices of the Minnesota Annual Conference to assess potential church planters?**

The third question on the questionnaire was designed to get feedback regarding the assessment process of a potential church planter once they were identified. Resources should not be wasted on a potential church planter if they do not have the potential to be successful in church planting. It would be better to have them pursue another form of ministry. Church planters need specific character traits, knowledge, and skills different from other clergy serving churches. This question was designed to see if those selecting potential church planters understand the character traits, knowledge, and skills necessary to be a successful church planter.

Questionnaire Question Three. *What is the current assessment process for potential church planters in the Minnesota Annual Conference?*

**RQ #3 What are the current practices of the Minnesota Annual Conference to recruit potential church planters?**

The fourth question on the questionnaire was designed to get feedback regarding the recruitment process of a potential church planter once they were identified and assessed. Church planters are a highly sought-after commodity by most church denominations and are heavily recruited. The open-ended question discerned if there were specific strategies for recruitment in place. Is there a specific church planter mentoring option in place like clergy mentoring that takes place for the Board of Ordained Ministry? Is there a specific church internship program designed for potential church planters or other strategies that help identify, assess, recruit, and even train them?

Questionnaire Question Four. *What is the current recruitment process for potential church planters in the Minnesota Annual Conference?*

The fifth question on the questionnaire was a sub-question of Research Question #3 and was designed to get feedback regarding the identification, assessment, and recruitment process of a potential church planter to understand if there are new ideas to implement. The open-ended question discerned if there were specific strategies or ideas that could help what is currently in place. In their own self-evaluation, does the Cabinet of the MAC discern ways to improve?

Questionnaire Question Five. *How could the MAC more effectively identify, assess, and recruit church planters early in the process of church planting?*

### **Ministry Context**

The ministry context of the United Methodist Church in Minnesota is changing rapidly. United Methodism was considered a mainline denominational church that held political and social influence before the turn of the century, but has been in sharp decline. Minnesota's population according to the 2019 Census estimate was 5,639,632 (United States Government Web.) Mainline Protestants in Minnesota make up 29% of the population (Pew Research Center Web.) According to recent demographic studies, less than 3% of people who would claim to be Christian would consider themselves United Methodist in the state of Minnesota. In the Minneapolis/St. Paul greater area, the average worship attendance in 2019 for United Methodists was only 14,664. (Mayer 40) "The Minnesota Annual Conference (MAC) is leading all other conferences in the U.S. in decline." (Vanderwerf "Abstract"). The contemporary trend is that United Methodists in Minnesota are under rapid decline. The MAC atmosphere of decline makes church planting a difficult ministry context.

The decline of United Methodist membership is coupled with the fact that the United

Methodist Church is divided from within regarding polity and theological issues. Currently, the global denomination is not unified in purpose, which affects the MAC ministry context. The next General Conference will likely see the United Methodist Church divided into two or three factions or new denominations. As of the time of this research, alternative denominational spin-offs of the United Methodist Church are forming into possibly two other denominations. The Global Methodist Church has been formed to represent the more traditional or orthodox theologies within the United Methodist movement. Some refer to this group as the “traditionalists.” According to their recent website posting, they claim to be a denomination that will be “Making disciples of Jesus Christ who worship passionately, love extravagantly, and witness boldly” (Globalmethodist.org). The Liberation Methodist Connexion has been formed to represent the more progressive theologies within the United Methodist movement. They claim to be a “grassroots denomination of former, current, and non-United Methodist faith leaders working on the unfolding of the kin-dom of God” (Thelmx.org. Web). Those in the middle (centrists) call for unity and hope to hold the United Methodists together, while balanced between the two extremes. The General Conference gathering has been postponed until next year where more formal decisions will be made. The threat of division is part of the ministry context that makes United Methodist church planting difficult due to denominational uncertainty.

### **Participants**

#### **Criteria for Selection**

In determining whom to invite to participate in the study, I chose those who had the largest influence in inviting, assessing, and recruiting church planters in the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The leaders of The Cabinet, known as District Superintendents, determine who is assigned the role of a Church Planter. They are the

gatekeepers or decision makers within the church planting movement, who decide through funding, credentials, recruitment, and placement who can plant churches. The Minnesota Annual Conference Cabinet Director also has a strong influence in this decision-making process. Our current Minnesota Annual Conference Cabinet Director has also been a former District Superintendent; she has been a part of the inviting, assessing, and recruiting of church planters prior to her role as Cabinet Director. The Cabinet receives input from a variety of sources, but are empowered to make the final decision regarding appointments to new church starts. The research is focused on The Cabinet since they have the strongest influence over the process of whether church planters are identified, assessed, and recruited throughout the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

### **Description of Participants**

The sources of potential participants were the District Superintendents and the Director of Connectional Ministries of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. This group, along with the bishop, is sometimes referred to as “The Cabinet of the Minnesota Annual Conference.” The researcher contacted the Dean of the Cabinet to get permission and access to the leadership. The Dean of the Cabinet who is also one of the District Superintendents, is an African American female. Two of the other Cabinet members are white males, and three are white females. Therefore, of the six persons asked to participate, four were female and two were male. All participants were between the ages of 45-65 and hold graduate degrees. All participants were healthy mentally and physically. All of them were Christians and would be considered spiritually mature. Each received regular physical and mental well-being check-ups by their employer.

### **Ethical Considerations**



The study considered ethical practices in receiving data from the participants. Participants were informed of the transformational project and the impact it would have on the future of the Minnesota Annual Conference. Each participant in the project was given an informed consent agreement. They were also given several weeks to decide if they would like to participate. A copy of the Informed Consent Letter is attached in Appendix C. To ensure the confidentiality of each participant, the questionnaire was delivered and received electronically through a third-party online service with no ability for the researcher to discern which participant responded. The information received from each participant was anonymous and the questions were intentionally worded in a non-threatening language. All the raw data was maintained in protected files on the Asbury Seminary google drive. Electronic data was stored on a password-protected computer in a locked office. The researcher was the only one with access to the files protected on the computer and saved on the google drive. All electronic data was destroyed within one year of the completion of the transformational project.

### **Instrumentation**

This project was a qualitative, pre-intervention study. The research focused on studying the Minnesota Annual Conference Cabinet and their knowledge of the church planting process as overseers of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. An anonymous electronic questionnaire was sent to the Minnesota Annual Conference Cabinet members that gave them the option to engage in the research. The format used was an online process called Google Surveys. The electronic questionnaire is included in Appendix B.

### **Expert Review**

The researcher engaged two expert reviewers of the instrument employed in this project. In addition, Dr. Bryan Collier, my ministry transformation project coach advised on the design of

the instrument for this project. Though Dr. Collier's guidance, the researcher limited the questionnaire to the key leadership of the Minnesota Annual Conference. Dr. Collier and the other reviewers offered suggestions to clarify the questions. Asbury's Institutional Review Board approved the overall research project.

### **Reliability and Validity of Project Design**

The purpose of this study was to improve the process of identification, assessment, and recruitment of church planters from within the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The project used one instrument and had only six participants. The data collection was very focused, and the preferred method of triangulation was not used. However, other best practices of reliability and validity were used. The study measured the questionnaire data by a variety of means. The data was formulated to examine the literal data as well as extrapolate identifying themes from the data. This allowed for a convergence of the information. "The principle of convergence suggests that when things fit together, they will lead to a classification system for the data. What begins to emerge is a manageable and accessible package in which emergent themes move to the forefront" (Sensing loc. 4657). Along with identifying themes, the project design also examined incongruent data, silent data, and did pattern analysis.

The questionnaire asked the participants about their knowledge of church planting in the Minnesota Annual Conference. To help answer the question regarding indicators of church leadership, the questionnaire was designed to be open ended. The Minnesota Annual Conference Cabinet was tested on their knowledge of how to identify potential church planters and what criteria they used for making their determinations as mission strategists.

The questionnaire instrument provided open-ended questions, using qualitative research

methodology, that allowed the participants to introduce data not conceived by the researcher in advance. The strengths or weaknesses of the present system were identified through comments made, or lack thereof made by participants. The participants were asked about the three key areas in securing a quality church planter to serve in ministry. The researcher asked about best practices for identification since discovering church planters is not always an easy task without a strategic system in place. The researcher also sought information about assessment of church planters to determine if a process was in place that was effective and methodical. The third question asked about best practices for recruitment to ensure that there was an active process to invite and encourage church planters to join the MAC church planting network.

### **Data Collection**

The design of the questionnaire is critical to understanding the responses. This project was a qualitative, pre-intervention study. “Qualitative research systematically seeks answers to questions by examining various social settings and the individuals who inhabit these settings. Qualitative research is grounded in the social world of experience and seeks to make sense of the lived experience” (Sensing loc. 1628). This pre-intervention study focused the research on The Minnesota Annual Conference Cabinet and their knowledge of the church planting process as overseers of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The data collection was done to understand the missional context of each participant, and in particular their knowledge of church planter identification, assessment, and recruitment.

Once the Institutional Review Board of Asbury Seminary authorized the execution of the study, the participants were contacted via email. An anonymous electronic questionnaire was sent to The Minnesota Annual Conference Cabinet members participating in the research which asked five open-ended questions. They were already aware of the electronic questionnaire that

would be coming to each participant via email since the notification was given to them weeks in advance by the Dean of The MAC Cabinet. To take the electronic survey, each participant had to read the informed consent letter again and agree to the terms to proceed with the electronic questionnaire which was distributed via Google Survey. Once the data was collected, it was secured in Google Docs in a password protected file.

### **Data Analysis**

At the conclusion of the electronic questionnaire, the researcher processed all the received data from The Cabinet of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The answers were compared to determine points of commonality. The data was inspected for common words and themes. Special focus for the data analysis was given to current themes identified by more than one respondent. New insights were also processed in the data analysis by combining it with ideas from the literature review in Chapter Two. A thorough synthesis using the data of the questionnaire and literature review provided a list of best practices for the project findings.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

The problem addressed in this ministry transformation project is the difficulty in identifying, assessing, and recruiting potential church planters in the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. One of the major determinations for success or

failure in a church plant is its founding pastor. A church planting pastor has a unique apostolic gift and skill set. Only a few traditionally trained pastors possess the necessary character traits, knowledge, and leadership skills to successfully plant churches. Other church planters need to be identified outside of the traditional clergy selection and calling process. The Director of Church Planting is the primary leader driving the work of starting new churches in the Minnesota Annual Conference but is under the supervision of the Cabinet.

The Cabinet is made up of District Superintendents who also lead as district strategists. As the Book of Discipline states: “The superintendent will be the chief missional strategist of the district” (United Methodist Church 333). According to the guidelines of their job descriptions in the Book of Discipline, District Superintendents are primarily responsible for identifying, assessing, and recruiting church planters to appoint to new church starts. Without a major focus on early identification and assessment, many potential church planters are lost to other careers or assigned to traditional churches. Others who are identified are not recruited effectively, so they are lost to other denominations or church planting movements. Others who are recruited to start church plants are often not gifted to do so, but are asked by Superintendents because of their effectiveness in pastoral ministry.

The purpose of this transformation project is to improve the process to help identify, assess, and recruit potential church planters from within the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. This chapter identifies the selected participants in the study and analyzes their knowledge and experiences with identifying, assessing, and recruiting church planters. The data analyzed in this chapter consists of the responses of the surveys. Each survey was received by participants of the study confidentially. The data was taken from electronic google surveys consisting of five questions and there were six respondents. This chapter

concludes with a major summary of all findings from the data collected.

### **Participants**

The participants were the District Superintendents and the Director of Connectional Ministries of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. This group, along with the Bishop, were sometimes referred to as “The Cabinet of the Minnesota Annual Conference.” I contacted the Dean of the Cabinet to get permission to receive access to the leadership. The Dean of the Cabinet, who is also one of the District Superintendents, is an African American female. Two of the other Cabinet members were white males, and three are white females. All six participants are between the ages of 45 to 65. The persons filled out the questionnaire were all Christians and spiritually mature in their faith walk. They were all ordained clergy. The electronic questionnaire provided qualitative data which was sent via email back to the researcher. Each of the six participants had an opportunity to share their knowledge about the MAC process for identifying, assessing, and recruiting potential church planters. The data was assembled, different patterns occurred regarding knowledge of the MAC process. By analyzing the data, the researcher sought to understand current practices. The data was examined through a literal reading of the data, identifying themes of the data, and examining incongruent data. The silent data was also examined as well as pattern analysis.

### **Research Question #1: Description of Evidence**

*What indicators help church leadership to identify potential church planters in the Minnesota Annual Conference?*

Questionnaire Question

*One - What is the current identification process for potential church planters in the Minnesota Annual Conference?*

The first question on the questionnaire was designed to better understand how potential church planters were identified. Finding a potential church planter is a challenge and the questionnaire was designed to discover what processes were in place for the MAC to readily find persons to start churches. Does the Cabinet have any strategic plans for how to identify church planters and what are those plans?

**Questionnaire Responses:**

Response #1 - "I think the initial identification can be a collaborative process - or may originate at several different points. Sometimes a person is lifted by their pastor, sometimes through the Eli program, sometimes the cabinet, or the pastor him or herself, asks for a planting assessment. Often a planter is first identified because they are already active in starting activities - gathering a group."

Response #2 - "Networking with DS leadership as they see younger leaders coming up through the system."

Response #3 - "Honestly I think we take a myriad of approaches. 1. The Director of Church Planting seeks to keep the high goal of planting at a rate of 3% each year (approximately] 10 new starts). We do not reach that mark, but without the goal we don't even aim. 2. Events like Reach, Incubator, ministry multiplier, also help "expose" who might have a special interest in planting. 3. Through many conversations with clergy, seminary recruiting visits, and other general networking. 4. Shaking the trees of known churches or networks that have generated many for ministry. Because of point number 1, I am always mindful that we need planters and since I spend a lot of time with people at various points on their ministry journey, I keep an open ear for someone who might need to consider planting.

Leaders have eyes out for clergy and lay folk who might have gifts for church planting and encourage them to explore more if that is their calling. Sometimes planters approach us about a vision they have for a church plant."

Response #4 - "The entire appointive cabinet recruits year-round."

Response #5 - "Primarily through recruiting conversations, inquiring clergy and referrals."

Response #6 - (No response from the sixth participant to this question.)

**Literal Data:**

A literal reading of the data shows that five of the six respondents made a response of some kind. Another literal analysis of the data depicts that three of the six respondents gave one-sentence responses and two of the respondents gave more than one-sentence responses.

Another literal reading of the data shows one respondent sharing several sentences and 4 ways to identify potential church planters.

**Identifying Themes:**

These identifying themes seem to suggest that identifying potential church planters is accomplished through a variety of methods that include a variety of people. Examples of the data include the terms “many,” “myriad,” “entire,” “collaborative,” “network” and “networking.”

Another identifying theme is the word “conversations.” Conversations with potential church planters seem to be an effective method of identification. Examples of the data include-Through many conversations with clergy...” “Primarily through recruiting conversations...”

Another identifying theme is that the potential church planter is found by approaching a member of the cabinet or by self-identifying as a church planter. Examples of the data include - “Sometimes planters approach us.” “Inquiring clergy” “The pastor him or herself asks for a planting assignment.”

**Incongruent Data:**

Some of the data is incongruent. For example, some of the respondents see younger leaders as possibilities for church planting and others are looking for existing leaders or clergy. Those looking to identify young leadership answered, “Networking with DS leadership as they see younger leaders...” “Through the Eli Program (program for college interns), “I spend a lot of time with people at various points on their ministry journey.”



Those looking to identify existing clergy responded, “Through many conversations with clergy,” “inquiring clergy,” “eyes out for clergy.”

More data is incongruent around the terminology of identification and recruitment. In response to the first question, some of the respondents did not either understand or differentiate between “identification process” and “recruitment process.”

Respondent #6 made no comments regarding identification of church planters. Respondents #4 and #5 both used the term “recruit” instead of identifying. For example, “The entire appointive cabinet *recruits* year-round.” “Primarily through recruiting conversations.”

External heterogeneity might suggest that the definitions of identification and recruitment are distinct and clear. The data received suggests that the respondents have difficulty separating these two distinct categories.

### **Silent Data:**

The silence of what is not said is deafening. The fact that one respondent said nothing could infer that they had nothing to say. They may have been unaware of how the MAC is identifying potential church planters. The respondent may have also not been passionate about the question or the topic and chose not to respond. Others who wrote only one sentence also left a lot unsaid. They also may have been unaware of all the MAC is doing to identify potential church planters.

### **Pattern Analysis:**

It is too early to see patterns between Research Questions 1, 2, and 3. No consistent patterns have yet emerged between the respondents, except for those already identified in the identifying themes.

Questionnaire Question Two - *What are the strengths of identifying a potential church planter*

*early in the church planting process?*

The second question of the electronic questionnaire explores the identification of church planters from another perspective. The first question is open ended, and the second question focuses on determining whether the respondents understand the significance of early identification of church planters. The purpose of this question was to determine if the respondents not only understood the significance of early identification but could list possible advantages.

### **Questionnaire Responses:**

Response #1 - "I would think that identifying a potential church planter early in the process gives some identification and leadership to the process. An identified person with planting gifts will not only use those gifts, but will also receive coaching, feedback and support throughout the process."

Response #2 - "NA" (No Answer)

Response #3 - "The strengths of identifying a church planter early on is that they are a majority stakeholder in the plant itself, it seems they would want to have something to do with its launch - shape core values, guiding principles, strategy, and relationship onboarding."

Response #4 - "Definitely helps to know if someone has the church planting mindset and gift set. Also important is affinity fit to the context in which they are planting."

Response #5 - "Unable to answer"

Response #6 - "Not sure how to answer this question."

### **Literal Data:**

A literal reading of the data shows that three of the six respondents gave an answer of some kind. Three responded with "unable to answer" or "not sure how to answer".

Another literal analysis of the data depicts that two of the six respondents gave a one-sentence response and two gave more than one-sentence responses.

### **Identifying Themes:**

An identifying theme found by the data is that identifying a church planter earlier in the process will help build ownership into the new church start.

Examples of the data include - “early in the process” and “early on”.

Another identifying theme by the data was that early identification led to finding a church plant that had a greater connection to, or affinity with the church planter.

Examples of the data include- “affinity fit to the context” and “strategy, and relationship onboarding”.

### **Incongruent Data:**

The response data does not seem to be incongruent other than only half answered the question and half did not.

### **Silent Data:**

The silence of three of the respondents demonstrates that this question was either misunderstood or seemed redundant with the previous question. The respondents may not have been passionate about the question or topic. The respondents may also have been uninformed about what the MAC is doing for early identification and the benefits to early identification of church planters.

Examples of the silent data include – “Unable to answer,” “Not sure how to answer,” and “NA”

### **Pattern Analysis:**

After two questionnaire questions, a pattern started to emerge regarding the data. Respondent six did not answer question one or question two. After two survey questions, a

pattern started to emerge that respondent four gives short responses.

### **Research Question #2: Description of Evidence**

What personal practices and qualities do potential church planters of Minnesota United Methodist churches need to possess?

Survey Question Three - *What is the current assessment process for potential church planters in the Minnesota Annual Conference?*

The third question on the questionnaire was designed to get feedback regarding the assessment process of a potential church planter once they were identified. It is important not to waste resources on a potential church planter if they do not have the potential to be successful in church planting. It would be better to have them pursue another form of ministry. Church planters need specific character traits, knowledge, and skills different from other clergy serving churches. This question was designed to see if those selecting potential church planters understand the character traits, knowledge, and skills necessary to be a successful church planter.

### **Questionnaire Responses:**

Response #1 - "Potential church planters participate in some written assessments for planting as well as a lengthy behavioral interview. I believe there would also be background checks, references, etc."

Response #2 - "We have a robust online screen using 3 instruments plus a behavioral interview." "Once we identify someone who shows interest - this could be a current clergy person or someone outside our system - I direct them both to Ben and to the planter assessment pathway page on our website. Once Ben gets the name and some background from me, he typically calls the planter, and together they discern what step would be a good next step on the "pathway".

This often means taking some online assessments that Ben has familiarity with. As I understand it these assessments are meant to help the planter discern but also to show Ben and coaches what support will be needed if the person is identified and appointed to a new plant.”

Response #3 - “The process is managed by our Director of Church Planting. It starts with an online quick inventory, and then depending on that, there is a deeper assessment process with the Director. We also do a starter incubator on regular intervals to help plant seeds for folks of what starting new things can look like.”

Response #4 - “See conference website and information from Ben.”

Response #5 - “The Director of New Church Development uses various assessment tools and processes.”

Response #6 – “Potential Church Planters are assessed on two tracks: potential for a planter-driven new ministry in a geographic mission field of high potential and affinity for a target-specific new ministry such as recovery church or population with English as a second language. These individuals are referred to our Director of New Church Development who screens with a written skill and personality assessment tool followed by an in-person interview of the planter and spouse.”

### **Literal Data:**

A literal reading of the data shows that six of six respondents made a response of some kind. Another literal analysis of the data depicts that two of the six respondents gave one-sentence responses and four of the respondents gave more than one one-sentence responses. Another literal reading of the data shows one respondent sharing “to view the website of the MAC.”

### **Identifying Themes:**

An identifying theme found by the data is that behavior interviews and written assessments are essential for assessing potential church planters. Examples of the data include - “written assessments”, “behavioral interviews”, “three instruments.” Another identifying theme by the data was referring people to the Director of New Church Development. Four respondents agreed that the Director of New Church Development should be doing the assessment. Examples of the data include- “Direct them to Ben,” “Direct them to the Director of Church Planting,” “Direct them to the Director of New Church Development.”

**Incongruent Data:**

Some of the data is incongruent. For example, some of the respondents called the main person who does assessments the “Director of New Church Development” and some called him the “Director of New Church Planting.” Others refer to him by his first name, “Ben.”

**Silent Data:**

There were no silent responses to this question.

**Pattern Analysis:**

After three survey questions, a pattern started to emerge regarding the data. Respondent number five did not answer question one or question two and gave a short response to this question. After three survey questions, a pattern started to emerge that respondent number four gives short responses.

**Research Question #3: Description of Evidence**

*What barriers keep potential church planters who have been identified and assessed from becoming Minnesota United Methodist Clergy or Church Planters?*

*Survey Question Four - What is the current recruitment process for potential church planters in the Minnesota Annual Conference?*

The fourth question on the questionnaire was designed to get feedback regarding the recruitment process of a potential church planter once they were identified and assessed. Church planters are a highly sought-after commodity by most church denominations and are heavily recruited. The open-ended question was meant to discern if there were specific strategies for recruitment in place. Is there a specific church planter mentoring option in place like clergy mentoring that takes place for the Board of Ordained Ministry? Is there a specific church internship program designed for potential church planters or other strategies that helps identify, assess, recruit, and even train them?

**Questionnaire Responses:**

Response #1 – “I think the MAC is always on the lookout for church planters. The Director of New Church Development holds several incubator events for potential planters, provides a REACH event on evangelism every couple of years. Planters are identified by their pastors, by DS's [*sic*] and sometimes they self-identify to us.”

Response #2 – “Word of mouth. Ad hoc. Example: The digital campus initiative cast vision for digital campus and then asked pastors to recruit a campus planter in their churches. 10 were recruited. We need a more robust plan going forward.”

Response #3 – “I feel I answered this in question one.”

Response #4 – “Not as effective as it could be! Ideally every church would be raising up planters...but for now it is every leader looking out for people who have planting gifts. We have also partnered with Embrace church to start a residency program for planters hoping that would help us cultivate more.”

Response #5 – “See answer to question #1.”

Response #6 – “Recruitment takes many paths including local church referrals and networking

conversations within and beyond the conference. Church planting is incorporated in our District Committee on Ordained Ministry candidacy exploration/discernment process. Referrals of pastors from other denominations are provided through clergy relationship networks. Within the United Methodist system, language ministry plans/caucuses are excellent resources for recruitment: National Asian/American and Hispanic/Latino Plans. First generation immigrant ministries often surface laity that can be cultivated for pastoral leadership. This has happened with the Hispanic/Latino, Hmong, Karen, Liberian, Vietnamese, Haitian, and Filipino communities.”

### **Literal Data:**

A literal reading of the data shows that six of the six respondents gave an answer of some kind. Two responded with “see answer to question one” or “I feel I answered this in question one.” Another literal analysis of the data depicts that two of the six respondents gave a one-sentence response and two gave more than one-sentence responses.

### **Identifying Themes:**

An identifying theme found by the data is that planters are recruited by their pastors and their churches. Examples of the data include - “Planters are identified by their pastors,” “Every church would be raising up planters,” “including local church referrals,” “referrals of pastors from other denominations.” Another identifying theme by the data was the realization that there is a diverse pool of potential planters not found in our traditional UMC churches. Examples of the data include- “Other denominations,” “First generation immigrant ministries,” “Laity cultivated for pastoral leadership.” Another identifying theme by the data was that special events or a recruitment system help to attract church planters.



Examples of the data include- “Reach Event on evangelism,” “incubator events,” “Residency program for planters,” “Board of Ordained Ministry candidacy exploration.”

### **Incongruent Data:**

More data is incongruent around the terminology of identification and recruitment. In response to the fourth question, two respondents did not either understand the question or differentiate between “identification process” and “recruitment process.”

### **Silent Data:**

The silence of three of the respondents demonstrates that this question was either misunderstood or seemed redundant with question number one. The respondents may not have been passionate about the question or topic. The respondents may also have been uninformed about what the MAC is doing for recruitment and the benefits to recruiting church planters. Examples of the silent data include – “see answer to question one” or “I feel I answered this in question one.”

### **Pattern Analysis:**

After four survey questions, Respondent #1 gave the most detailed responses to the questions.

*Question Five - How could the MAC more effectively identify, assess, and recruit church planters early in the process of church planting?*

The fifth question on the questionnaire was a sub-question of Research Question #3 and was designed to get feedback regarding the identification, assessment, and recruitment process of a potential church planter to understand if there are new ideas to implement. The open-ended question discerned if there were specific strategies or ideas that could help what is currently in place. In their own self-evaluation, does the Cabinet of the MAC discern ways to improve?

**Questionnaire Responses:**

Response #1 - "Since I don't often work with planters or in this area, I am not sure."

Response #2 - "Good question... we need a team to go after this more intentionally."

Response #3 - "1. One ROBUST congregation! Just one, that is knocking it out of the park, that is bursting at the seams, that is churching out ministers for the gospel - planters or otherwise. 2. a campus ministry with its chief aim to disciple young people and create a culture, a call for our future preachers, pastors, planters, and missionaries. (A farm system, so to speak). 3. Continue to develop an evangelistic culture in the local church where they think less about survival and more about the planting opportunity right next to them. 4. Every event lift planting as the norm of how we accomplish our evangelistic task rather than something we do on the side. Since hiring Ben, I see great shifts in this area (Bishop Bruce R. Ough's strategic leadership was also needed). However, in general, our churches are in survival mode, and so, except for maybe a couple churches, they do not think about how THEY can initiate the mission field. Instead, I think the mindset is, the conference will do something if they want to do something - my response is "they did do something! They put your church in the heart of people, now do whatever it takes to reach them."

Response #4 - "The identifying and recruiting is the harder part. We know how to assess. We could do more in our District Committee on Ministry, camping, youth, lay ministries processes to increase our culture of call and specifically encourage church planting. I think it would help if we had more multiplying churches that were raising up leaders from within as well."

Response #5 - "Unknown." "This question is best answered through the work of the Director of New Church Development."

Response #6 - "Continued work around cultivating a culture of call could increase effectiveness."

We could do much more on the front end of planter cultivation, like marketing our Minnesota Conference planting goals, opportunities, and resources so that people called to plant may find an attractive and supportive home within our tribe. In addition to evangelistic orientation, relational networks, and core pastoral competencies, it would also be helpful to develop a more robust behavioral assessment of a historically demonstrated ability to start new things, connect with people, raise money, build community, be a catalyst for energy and develop disciples of Jesus. The most lacking behavioral characteristic in our current planter pool seems to be building organizational systems that can sustain program implementation and growth beyond just the relational charisma of the church planter.”

#### **Literal Data:**

A literal reading of the data shows that six of the six respondents gave an answer of some kind. Another literal analysis of the data depicts that two of the six respondents gave a one-sentence response and two gave more than one-sentence responses. Another literal analysis of the data is that three of the respondents gave lengthy responses of three sentences or more.

#### **Identifying Themes:**

An identifying theme found by the data is that identification and recruitment are the hardest parts of getting church planters. Examples of the data include Identifying and recruiting is the harder part,” “go after this more intentionally.” Another identifying theme is that we need more robust congregations that develop church planters. Examples of the data include – “one robust congregation,” “I think it would help if we had more multiplying churches.” Another identifying theme is that we need to develop a culture of call with our MAC and our churches. Examples of the data include – “churning out ministers for the gospel,” “develop and evangelistic culture,” “culture of call.”

**Incongruent Data:**

The only incongruent data was one response which stated that since “I don’t work with planters or in this area, I am not sure.” All members of the cabinet work with church planters. The question is open ended and only asks for an opinion of what would be more effective.

**Silent Data:**

All the respondents answered the question.

**Pattern Analysis:**

After five survey questions, Respondent #6 gave the most detailed responses to the questions. In the last three questions, many lengthy suggestions were suggested.

**Summary of Major Findings**

The data resulting from this transformational project yielded significant data regarding best practices for identifying, assessing, and recruiting potential church planters. The data analysis has relevance for any church planting movement or denomination, but particularly for the United Methodist Annual Conference and other Annual Conferences. Four major identifying themes emerged based on the data analysis. They are listed here in summary form with only a few comments on each summary. The final analysis will be synthesized and discussed in detail in Chapter Five.

*1. No clear understanding between identifying church planters and actively recruiting gifted church planters.*

From the feedback of the questionnaire, there appeared to be some respondents who misunderstood that identifying and recruiting were the same thing.

*2. Lack of an intentional “farm system” or leadership development track for potential Church Planters.*

An intentional farm system seems to be missing for attracting regular clergy to the MAC as well as church planters. While some respondents understood that this is an important goal to achieve, it currently is not happening in an organized or systematic way.

*3. Encouragement of churches that are planting churches and recruiting church planters.*

Multi-site churches, parent churches, and catalytic church planters should be encouraged by the MAC. Churches engaged in planting should be systematically recognized as part of the identification, assessment, and recruitment of potential church planters.

*4. The Director of New Church Development is relied on by the MAC Cabinet, yet not fully supported.*

The Director of New Church Development was mentioned throughout the survey as one who has the answers or oversees the area of identifying, assessing, and recruiting church planters. The Cabinet members expected the Director to handle issues related to church planting, yet did not take ownership as missional strategists to identify and recruit church planters.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT**

#### **Overview of the Chapter**

The problem addressed in this ministry transformation project is the difficulty in identifying, assessing, and recruiting potential church planters in the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. One of the major determinations for success or

failure in a church plant is its founding pastor. A church-planting pastor possesses a unique apostolic gift and skill set. Only a few traditionally trained pastors possess the necessary character traits, knowledge, and leadership skills to successfully plant churches. More church planters need to be identified outside of the traditional clergy selection and calling process to meet the needs of the MAC. The Director of New Church Development is the primary leader driving the work of starting new churches in the Minnesota Annual Conference, but is under the supervision of the Cabinet. The MAC Cabinet is made up of District Superintendents who also lead as district strategists. As the Book of Discipline states: “The superintendent will be the chief missional strategist of the district” (United Methodist Church 333). According to the guidelines of their job descriptions in the Book of Discipline, District Superintendents are primarily responsible for identifying, assessing, and recruiting church planters to appoint to new church starts. Without a major focus on early identification and assessment, many potential church planters are lost to other careers or assigned to traditional churches. Others who are identified are not recruited effectively, so they are lost to other denominations or church planting movements. Some pastors are appointed to new church starts without proper assessment or training.

The purpose of this transformation project is to improve the process to help identify, assess, and recruit potential church planters from within the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. This chapter focuses on four major findings from the research project. The research describes best practices for identifying, assessing, and recruiting potential church planters by utilizing data collected from an electronic questionnaire, along with a review of the biblical literature and theological literature. Prior to my research, I observed that some of the best potential church planters were not going into church planting in the United Methodist Church. Leaders who had entrepreneurial gifts were not going into ministry in general, and especially not

into the United Methodist Church. Some potential church planters who managed to enter ministry in the United Methodist Church did not stay in the system long or were not allowed to plant churches as part of their appointment.

### **Major Findings**

#### **First Finding: Lack of an intentional “farm system” or leadership development track for potential Church Planters.**

The first major discovery is that the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church does not have an intentional development track for potential church planters. The biblical and theological literature review showed that the most impactful ministries had a leadership farm system in place. Most denominations, and organizations in general, are successful long term when they have in place a system for reproduction. The research data revealed that the reproductive DNA model is currently missing in the Minnesota Annual Conference of United Methodist Churches. The MAC does not have a strong leadership pipeline that is currently producing church planters. One survey respondent stated it well when they stated, “we need ‘a campus ministry with its chief aim to disciple young people and create a culture of call for our future preachers, pastors, planters, and missionaries. (A farm system so to speak).” Another survey respondent stated, “One ROBUST congregation! Just one, that is knocking it out of the park, that is bursting at the seams, that is churning out ministers for the gospel - planters or otherwise.”

Many successful church planting organizations get their church planters through a leadership farm system. Mentoring and recruiting from within an organization or denomination is critical to starting churches with a similar DNA. One advantage that some denominations or planting networks have is a leadership development system where leaders are being groomed to

start new churches or lead new campuses. Some call their leadership development system a “discipleship pipeline,” where the best disciples are identified to start new churches or ministries. “The Discipleship Pipeline is a means by which we can create an environment for discipleship that will clearly engage, integrate and mobilize every person in the church. In turn, those disciples can be mobilized and sent to continue multiplying new disciples in places, near and far, where the Gospel is not yet being proclaimed” (Wallar loc. 570-72).

In a church planting system that advocates for apprentice leadership, the vast majority are already serving as high potential leaders within the local church. “Prayerfully look around the pool of potential leaders. Who are those who naturally have an influence on others? Which of them demonstrate faithfulness, servanthood, teach-ability, willingness, and availability?” (Logan loc. 4836). Once a potential candidate for church planting rises to the surface, it is a matter of giving them an opportunity to serve alongside a gifted church planter. Having a pipeline of potential planters and seasoned leaders to mentor them allows for early identification, assessment, and recruitment. With a leadership pipeline in place, instead of trying to identify or find church planters, potential leaders are being mentored into ministry.

In the literature review, we learned the importance of seeking out young adults for potential leadership identification as part of the discipleship pipeline. The first place the Send Institute approaches are schools. They seek and approach teens and young adults. They look for a modern day “Timothy” or “Titus.” They understand that many young adults are looking to find a meaningful calling in their life. During their senior year in high school and through most of their first two years of college, young adults are exploring a variety of career options. Send Institute attends career fairs at schools, offers internships or networks with college deans to get access to potential church planters. The MAC should follow this model if they hope to identify



and recruit younger church planters into a leadership farm system. The research data suggests that the missional strategists for the MAC do not see an urgency for identifying potential church planters early in the process of ministry discernment. Early identification and discovery of young apostolic talent allow for more successful church plants. Many young adults decide early on their career path what they will study and what career they will seek.

It is important to keep in mind as we develop a church planting farm system to be certain that potential church planters are spiritually healthy. The Apostles chose church planters and leaders, who were able to exhibit healthy characteristics, to lead. In Scripture, the early church approved and sent out church planters as representatives of the existing churches. In Acts 13:1-3, the church in many ways assessed the early leadership and determined the best way for them to serve the church: “Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul.” In other words, they were being identified and mentored. They were part of a leadership farm system.

The potential planters were then assessed and sent to churches where there were community partnerships established to receive them. “While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ So, after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off” (Acts 13:1-3 NIV). Here is a great example of men who served alongside one another in the discipleship pipeline, now being chosen for ministry. The early church called leadership into church planting after a time of being mentored and approved.

The lack of an intentional “farm system” or leadership development track, for potential church planters, needs to be addressed by the Cabinet of the MAC. Local churches can produce

some mature disciples, but a strategic process allows all stakeholders to have input. A reproductive DNA allows the local church to partner with the MAC to raise up ongoing leadership in a discipleship pipeline fashion.

The biblical and theological literature review showed that the most impactful ministries had a leadership farm system in place. Most denominations, and organizations in general, are successful long term when they have in place a system for reproduction. The MAC also needs to start identifying potential church planters at a much younger age. We need to seek out more youth in high school where career paths are being decided. I look forward to when this reproductive DNA model is no longer missing in the Minnesota Annual Conference of United Methodist Churches. I look forward to when a robust church planting leadership pipeline is firmly established.

**Second Finding: Innovative Churches, Multi-Site Churches, and Catalytic Church Planters Are Needed.**

The biblical and theological literature examined how some organizations are looking for a pastoral church planter. A pastoral church planter is one who has the apostolic gift to plant one church. They often plant a church and then remain in the community they started. Other times, they plant the church and pass along the ministry when it becomes self-sustaining. The main goal is “to plant the church and pastor it until it is large enough to call and pay its own pastor” (Ott and Wilson loc. 1776). Organizations recruiting this church planter type are often looking to establish a church that can be passed on to a denomination or sponsoring agency. The MAC currently favors this type of church planting model and struggles to see the advantages of innovative churches, multi-site church planters, or a catalytic church planting model.

The data from the survey suggest that there is a need for more innovative churches, and

especially church planters who produce multi-site churches or help to start new churches. One respondent commented: “I think it would help if we had more multiplying churches that were raising up leaders from within as well.” The MAC system is not currently producing successful multi-site churches or churches that plant churches. A second respondent stated that catalytic leaders are needed: “a more robust behavioral assessment of a historically demonstrated ability to start new things, connect with people, raise money, build community, be a catalyst for energy and develop disciples of Jesus.” Catalytic leaders need to be cultivated within the MAC and supported differently than the pastoral model church planter.

The biblical and theological literature review discussed how a catalytic church planter can be effective in an organization or denomination if allowed to function with their unique spiritual gifts. The challenge is for the first church that is started to see their role as a church that plants churches. The leadership of the church and the denomination need to recognize how this style of church planter is different from a pastoral style church planter who plants one church.

“Essentially three types of church planters, corresponding to three broad approaches to church planting, can be identified: the pastoral church planter, the catalytic church planter, and the apostolic church planter. Each has a different understanding of the church planter’s role.” (Ott and Wilson loc. 1776). All three types of church planters are needed and should be recruited.

The catalytic church planter is highly sought after because of their uniqueness, but they can be challenging to partner with due to their entrepreneurial behavior.

“The catalytic church planter plants a church and remains as pastor in that church or serves as a resource person in the region to become a catalyst or facilitator for church reproduction. Considerable energy and resources are usually invested in establishing and strengthening the initial church plant with the goal that it will become a launching base for numerous additional church plants in the region. Like pastoral church planters, the catalytic planter may remain in a pastoral role in the initial church plant. But catalytic church planters differ from pastoral church planters in that they have not only the vision for church reproduction but also the

ability and a strategy to realize that vision” (Ott and Wilson loc. 1776).

Catalytic church planters and multi-site church planters live out a theological framework taught by the Apostle Paul in the New Testament. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul presents a strategy for multiplication growth to Timothy: “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.” Church Planter Paul was teaching Church Planter Timothy to disciple other leaders. Paul was teaching Timothy to be a catalytic church planter that could start a church that starts churches.

Catalytic church planters and multi-site church planters also live a life that centers around the Great Commission. “Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age’” (Matt. 28:18-20 NIV). This commission is central to being a catalytic church planter. It is the driving force that planting a single church is not enough, because the call of the catalytic church planter’s heart is to make disciples of all the nations.

In responding to our second finding, the transformation project discovered that a catalytic church planter or innovative church does not fit well within the current MAC leadership structure. We also learned that catalytic church planters live a life that is centered around the Great Commission. The project literature review discussed how a catalytic church planter can be effective if allowed to function with their unique spiritual gifts. The challenge is for the first church that is started to see their role as a church that plants churches. The leadership of the church, and the MAC Cabinet need to recognize how this style of church planter is different from a pastoral style church planter who plants one church. When this style of church planter is

identified, assessed, recruited, trained, and empowered, it will be a catalyst for a church planting movement. I look forward to when the Minnesota Annual Conference of United Methodist Churches is filled with catalytic church planters leading innovative churches.

**Third Finding: Identification and Recruitment Need to be Given Priority Over Assessment.**

Identification and recruitment are not given priority over assessment in the Minnesota Annual Conference. Instead, assessment is given the highest priority. I started the transformation project in 2015 thinking that if the assessment processes were better, the MAC would have more effective church planters. After the project literature review, I realized that the MAC church planter assessment process changed in 2016 and is now quite excellent. I want to affirm Ben Ingebretson and the MAC for putting together the Church Planter Pathway that is clearly laid out on its website and all their printed literature. The assessment process is effective and well thought out for those who are already sure they want to plant with the MAC. For those who are still trying to discern if they want to be a part of the MAC, it can seem overwhelming.

The survey data demonstrates that the MAC has the wrong order in the process of identifying, assessing, and recruiting. We need to first identify and recruit potential church planters and then assess them and train them. One of the survey respondents stated: “We could do much more on the front end of planter cultivation like marketing our Minnesota Conference planting goals, opportunities, and resources so that people called to plant may find an attractive and supportive home within our tribe.” The respondent realized how important it is to cultivate planters by identifying them and recruiting them. Making a planter feel needed and wanted is of critical importance. A second survey respondent stated: “The identifying and recruiting is the harder part. We know how to assess. We could do more in our District Committee On Ministry, camping, youth, lay ministries processes to increase our culture of call and specifically

encourage church planting.” The second respondent was aware that the MAC needs to work harder at recruitment. They also understood that an invitation of call is a necessary part of the recruitment process. If the MAC does not get better at identification and recruitment, there will be no potential church planters to assess.

The biblical literature demonstrated that God’s call to mission comes through a strong relationship. When God called Abraham to leave his home, he did it through an ongoing relationship with him (Gen. 12:1-3). Jesus called his disciples by name and, through a relationship with them, commanded them to “Go and make disciples of all the nations...” (Matt. 28:19). When we disciple another leader, we are in relationship with them first. Assessment and training follow the relationship building process.

Being in a positive relationship with a potential church planter is of primary importance for recruitment. Teamwork and relationship building is needed more in the current MAC system to be effective in recruitment. Rev. Duane Sarazin was my District Superintendent in the early days of the CROSSROADS CHURCH startup. He came to help set up and tear down at the movie theater where we were renting worship space. It meant so much that he saw himself as part of our team and he came to every Administrative Council meeting our first year until we launched. It is a small thing, but it means a lot to the planter to feel cared about and supported by a team. I remember District Superintendent Duane Sarazin and other members of the cabinet offered the phones at 122 West Franklin to call over 3000 people for our opening worship service. Minnesota Annual Conference office staff stayed after hours and members of the Cabinet assisted with making phone calls on several nights. Our church was so encouraged by their support.

In the literature review, I examined books and websites of several church planting groups

and denominations. I learned that the ultimate recruitment of church planters is not WHERE you find potential planters, but HOW YOU TREAT THEM once they are discovered. No matter where a church planter is discovered, it is relationship-building that makes a church planter feel comfortable joining the organization or denomination. A church planter has keen relationship skills and knows if they are being recruited to meet institutional needs, or the needs of God's Kingdom. A recruiter must have the needs of the potential planter and the kingdom foremost in their heart. Ultimately, recruiting is about developing relationships. "Where you find your church planter doesn't matter, only that you find them and develop good relationships." (Send Institute 6). The Send Institute discussed a targeted, personal approach to finding church planters. Some church systems are very closed and only recruit within the system by word of mouth or minimal advertising.

As I learned in the literature review, the Association of Related Churches has one of the strongest recruitment strategies I have observed. Their recruitment strategy is based on being partners with a potential church planter. Their program is not ASSESSMENT driven, but RELATIONSHIP driven. ARC strongly appeals to those seeking a life-changing opportunity and not just a ministry job. If one joins the ARC organization, they will "help you reach a city with the hope of Jesus." They do not start with a church assessment process, but rather, they work to recruit a church planter before assessing them. They assume that if you are checking out their website, you are serious about planting a church and they want to help you. "We want to help you start a life-giving church. If you have a dream in your heart to start a church and reach the city with the hope of Jesus, ARC is here to come alongside you in the journey" (The Association of Related Churches Web.) While many church planting organizations start with assessment and profiling, the ARC team starts with building a relationship.

The Association of Related Churches (ARC) seemed to use a combination of techniques to actively recruit potential church planters. The MAC could benefit greatly if they could adapt some of these techniques. ARC promoted the strength of teamwork and supportive relationships. They had a video on their site called “Teamwork makes the Dream Work.” The video depicted how someone will be supported by a team cheering them on. They described in detail how they believe in the power of positive, supportive relationships. “ARC is named the ‘Association of Related Churches’ because we believe in the strength of relationships. We believe no one should do ministry or life alone and that we are better together. Church planting can have some tough days and you will need people who believe in you and want to see you win. With a strong “family” culture and solid network around the country, you will have the opportunity to build those relationships that are crucially for you personally.” (The Association of Related Churches Web.)

ARC used a journey motif to help recruit and support church planters. ARC discussed in their literature a heavy emphasis on “doing planting together.” Their recruitment technique is based on letting a potential church planter understand that the church planter will not be doing this alone, and that ARC is more like a friend helping them rather than an organization. “There are cities that are in need of life-giving churches and people in need of the hope and healing that can only be found in Jesus. We believe in you and are here to help your dreams of reaching those cities become a reality. Let’s get going!” (The Association of Related Churches Web.)

Church planters want those identifying, assessing, and recruiting them to have a similar DNA of community. If a potential church planter does not see the MAC leadership demonstrate doing life together, they will not feel that the denomination they are a part of is living out *koinonia*.

The third transformation project finding revealed that assessment is given priority over



identification and recruitment when looking for potential church planters. The project observed the MAC has the wrong order in the process of identification, assessment, and recruitment. We need to identify and recruit before we assess potential church planters. The project learned that the ultimate recruitment of church planters is not where you find potential planters, but how you treat them once they are discovered. No matter where a church planter is discovered, it is relationship-building that makes a church planter feel comfortable joining the Minnesota Annual Conference. When a potential church planter is identified and recruited, before being assessed, it will be greatly increasing the church planting movement in the Minnesota Annual Conference. I look forward to when the Minnesota Annual Conference of United Methodist Churches is filled with recruited church planters experiencing the power of teamwork and community.

**Fourth Finding: The Director of New Church Development is relied on by the MAC Cabinet, yet not fully supported.**

The Director of New Church Development was mentioned throughout the survey as one who has the answers or oversees the area of identifying, assessing, and recruiting church planters. The Cabinet members expect the Director to handle issues related to church planting, yet do not take ownership as missional strategists to identify and recruit church planters.

The survey data demonstrates that the Cabinet relies heavily on the expertise of the Director of New Church Development. One of the survey respondents stated: “I direct them to Ben (Director of New Church Development) and to the planter assessment pathway page on our website. Once Ben (Director) gets the name and some background from me, he typically calls the planter, and together they discern what step would be a good next step on the pathway.” The respondent realized how important it is to cultivate planters by identifying them and then

allowing The Director to follow up with assessment and relationship building. If the MAC does not get better at identification and recruitment, there will be no potential church planters for the Director to assess. Cabinet members need to prioritize identification and recruitment as part of their job as missional strategists. It is good to use the expertise of the Director, but District Superintendents need to continue to support potential church planters alongside the Director.

A second survey respondent stated: “The Director of New Church Development holds several incubator events for potential planters, provides a REACH event on evangelism every couple of years.” The second respondent was aware that the MAC needs to work harder at identification and recruitment of church planters and bring people to events sponsored by New Church Development. The third survey respondent recognized The Director’s important role to the point of abdicating their own responsibility. “How can we recruit more effectively? This question is best answered through the work of the Director of New Church Development.” This third survey respondent did understand that the Director of New Church Development had an important role. Yet they neither understood nor discussed in the survey how to help the Director in this area of recruitment. Many of the survey respondents struggled to take ownership of their responsibility in recruiting, yet it is critical in their role.

The biblical literature review demonstrated the importance of teamwork in the identification, assessment, and recruitment of church leadership. The Cabinet are a team that needs to work together more fully like the early church. The book of Acts states that the ministry of the church was expanding. The apostles worked together to commission leadership to expand the ministry. The early church cared for prisoners, widows, and orphans. As the early church grew, the leaders did not want to neglect this important task, but they also wanted to continue preaching and teaching. Acts 6 discusses how they commissioned special leaders to care for the

daily distribution of food to the widows. “So, the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and tables” (Acts 6:2 NIV).

The book of Acts also discusses how the apostles identified, assessed, and recruited church planters together. This pattern of sending out church planters in Acts 13 depicts an organized system of church planting and not just individual sharing of the good news. “Acts 13:1-3 is likely the best example of a church in the New Testament sending missionaries (church planters). As it relates to the role and responsibility of the church in sending missionaries, consider these three lessons from the church at Antioch: First, the missionaries were called by God to a particular task. In this case, they were called to preach the gospel to the unreached. Second, God confirmed this calling to the church leaders. This sending entity, the church, heard from the Lord directly and was instructed by God to set them apart for the task. Third, the church responded by ceremonially ‘commissioning’ them by fasting, praying, laying on of hands, and then sending them off.” (Wilson and Wilson 99) The MAC Cabinet is a team that needs to be more like the early church by working together alongside the Director of New Church Development.

The literature review also affirmed in detail how the MAC prioritizes the importance of church planting. The Minnesota Annual Conference made a renewed effort to plant churches over the last six years, yet the Bishop and the MAC Cabinet struggled to find qualified men and women to serve effectively in leading these new church starts. The Congregational Development Team and the MAC Cabinet worked together to determine best practices to move forward with identifying, assessing, and recruiting new church start pastors. In January 2016, the Dakotas and Minnesota UMC Conferences hired jointly a “Director of New Congregation Development for Dakotas and Minnesota Conferences UMC.” Since that time, Ben Ingebretson has been working alongside the MAC Cabinet to assist with implementing the Reach, Renew, Rejoice strategic

initiative. With more Cabinet support, the initiative can bear much fruit around identification, assessment, and recruitment of church planters.

### **Ministry Implications of the Findings**

The transformation project was done so that it could be shared with the Cabinet of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. The project was designed with recommendations that can be implemented to improve church planting in the MAC. The implications are also meant to be an encouragement to the MAC for the changes that have been made since the project was started in 2015. The goal will be for the MAC Cabinet to have meaningful discussions about how to sustain certain practices and how to improve others.

This ministry transformation project was designed to be a self-discovery, but was also written to help the Minnesota Annual Conference leadership with some new insights to help them in their difficult task of planting churches. It is the goal of the researcher to share this information with the MAC Cabinet in a work session to help them process best practices for future church planting. It might serve as an impetus for discussion and changes in procedures to identify, assess, and recruit potential church planters in the future. The researcher also intends to re-ignite the MAC Cabinet in pursuit of a strategic church planting farm system that produces results. More study may be needed to determine the best methodology to produce potential church planters in the Minnesota Annual Conference in a farm system context. The final recommendation is that planter recruitment should become the priority of the Cabinet and other key MAC leadership. The MAC must start “wooing” the brightest and best to its organization. It is not only crucial to the MAC’s institutional survival, but also a gospel imperative we need to live out to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Two future areas of research piqued my curiosity during this ministry transformation

project that I chose not to address. One was the link between new church starts and other community non-profits. I found many new churches and potential church planters were connected to other non-profit organizations that were doing some sort of social justice ministry. That seems to be a cutting edge to explore further. A second insight I discovered was the link between church planting and sustainability in a sacred space. I realized that even strong church plants of 10 years or more started to wane if they did not have a consistent gathering space or place to call home. It piqued my curiosity enough that in the middle of this ministry transformation project, I went back to school and received my license as a commercial realtor. As a church planting coach, I have now been able to help church planters find sacred space locations to call home.

### **Limitations of the Study**

I conducted this ministry transformation project so that the research could be repeated by other researchers who are looking to identify, assess, and recruit United Methodist Church Planters in the State of Minnesota. The project used one instrument and had only six participants who were the Cabinet members of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Reliability or validity are not possible to determine. Based on electronic questionnaires, others can analyze the data to develop their own best practices. Some factors may influence generalizability, such as cultural factors and mission context, but the data should be consistent in most situations. The basic formula for analyzing open-ended questions from denominational leaders should be reproducible. The project worked with formal institutional structures as well as informal structures. The research examined which institutions, ministries, and leaders help incubate church planters. The research chose not to work with all denominations within Minnesota for a more focused study on just United Methodist Churches. The research also chose

not to focus on equipping or sending church planters, but rather the early part of the church planting selection process. The research was limited since the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church has a non-resident, interim Bishop. Therefore, the interim Bishop was not a part the study.

### **Unexpected Observations**

One unexpected observation from the transformation project was the importance of recruitment. I had expected assessment to be the most important process to change in the Minnesota Annual Conference. Yet the research showed how much recruitment is needed in the Minnesota Annual Conference and in most church planting organizations. Getting a potential church planter is increasingly much harder to accomplish now than it was 20 years ago. So many more choices exist for potential candidates who are seeking to invest in the Kingdom. This awareness changed my perspective on the importance of relationships in recruiting church planters.

One positive, unexpected discovery was a review of the CROSSROADS Church internship program. During this research, in combination with our 25th year anniversary, we started re-connecting with our past staff and interns more intentionally. Our leadership development program has produced huge results for a relatively small church. We discovered 55 former interns or staff who have continued in ministry and another 40 plus who interned who are serving in other churches as volunteers who are now able to help their churches more effectively. This was a huge “aha” moment for me personally and a big encouragement for CROSSROADS Multi-site.

### **Recommendations**

#### **First Recommendation—Developing New Church Planters**

The first recommendation for the MAC is to move from simply recruiting church planters, to *developing* new church planters. A leadership pipeline, or as some call it, a “discipleship pipeline,” needs to be strengthened for the MAC to be able to have enough church planters. It is a long-term perspective that will reap, not immediate results, but lasting results. The Cabinet should review leadership and discipleship development systems that have worked in the past to attract pastors and especially church planters. The Cabinet and MAC leadership should put together a task force to develop new discipleship pathways that link strong local church leadership with the Minnesota Annual Conference.

### **Questions to Consider for The MAC Cabinet on Recommendation One:**

Very few churches in the MAC are raising up church planters. What do we need to do to make this a priority for the Cabinet and the MAC?

What would it be like to give out Denman Evangelism awards each year in the category of church planting at Annual Conference?

Could incentives be put into place for those churches willing to do the hard work of raising up new leaders for church planting?

Where are our existing church planters coming from and how can we increase those discipleship pipelines?

We invest a great deal of resources into the “Eli Internship Project;” could we start a similar program to attract and develop potential church planters year-round in an internship program?

What if the Board of Ordained Ministry made church planting internship a requirement for ordination, instead of programs like Clinical Pastoral Education?

### **Second Recommendation—Innovative Churches and Catalytic Church Planters**

A second recommendation would be for the Cabinet and key MAC leaders to focus more of their time and attention on supporting **innovative churches** and **catalyst church planters**, using them to multiply ministry in their districts. Innovative, recognized flagship churches can incubate new ministries and new church starts. Smaller churches partnered together may also be involved in planting new churches with the support of the MAC.

**Questions to Consider for The MAC Cabinet on Recommendation Two:**

Support in the system, to encourage innovative churches and catalytic church planters trying to start new worship services or plant new churches, seems to be lacking. Convincing an existing church, to be bold enough to start something new, can be difficult. How are these innovative churches and/or pastors rewarded or encouraged to take risks? If they fail, how are they encouraged to learn from their failures and try again? When an existing church fundraises to plant a church, how can that money not be assessed for apportionments since it is a mission outreach effort? Who are the catalyst leaders in the MAC, and can resources, training, and time be given to them to multiply their efforts?

**Third Recommendation-Ongoing Church Planter Relationships**

A third recommendation would be for the Cabinet and key MAC leaders to develop personal, ongoing *relationships* with existing church planters and potential church planters. Relationships are more important than assessment. Mentoring bears more fruit for recruitment. For the church planting climate to improve, the MAC leadership cannot rely solely on the Area Director of Congregational Development to build relationships. Church planters are joining a team and they need encouragement and support from their team leaders.

**Questions to Consider for The MAC Cabinet for Recommendation Three:**

When was the last time that a current member of the Cabinet went to a new church start



and helped the planter with set up and tear down at Sunday worship?

How often are the District Superintendents involved in the startup phase and planning of a new church start?

When was the last time that the Cabinet encouraged a church planter, or a new church start congregation by handing out advertisement door-to-door or assisting with an outreach event in some tangible way?

As a District Superintendent, how often do you have conversations with church planters in your district outside of the mandatory stakeholder meetings?

What could the Cabinet do to help with the morale of a church planter struggling to do a seemingly impossible task of starting a church?

What would it be like if it became a tradition that a member of the Cabinet started a new church when they resigned from the Cabinet?

#### **Fourth Recommendation-Support the Director of New Church Development**

The fourth recommendation is to *support* more fully the Director of New Church Development. The Director is working hard on behalf of the MAC to identify, assess, and recruit church planters. Most agree that the Director does the hard work of assessment better than most due to his expertise and experience. However, the Director needs more support with identifying and recruiting potential planters. As was mentioned in finding number three, relationships are a key factor to recruiting. Missional strategists that are spread throughout the state are needed for building relationships with potential planters so they may then be introduced to the Director for assessment and training. Ongoing support of identification and recruitment, by the District Superintendents, are necessary in connecting the Director of New Church Development with church planters and potential church planters.

**Questions to Consider for The MAC Cabinet for Recommendation Four:**

Are the District Superintendents in the habit of asking clergy or potential clergy if they have an interest in planting a church?

Do the District Superintendents educate other clergy, staff, or congregations on how to identify church planters and the MAC process for recruiting them?

As a District Superintendent, what potential church planter am I currently mentoring?

If they mentioned the Director of New Church Development by name, would they know who he is?

Have the District Superintendents taken an interest themselves in what church planting entails or gotten to know church planters in their context by attending any of the training events presented by their colleague, the Director of New Church Development?

**Postscript**

When I started my doctoral studies, the atmosphere for church planting was not very positive in the MAC. I was either not going to complete the doctorate, or contemplated changing the topic. I was not sure the MAC Cabinet would want to hear what I had to say or be willing to make any changes even if I presented information to them. Since I started writing in 2015, I have seen steady changes that have encouraged me as a church planter. Bishop Ough has made a concerted effort to focus on church planting as a priority in the last six years. Ben Ingebretson as Area Director changed the methodologies of assessment and worked harder as a recruiter to find skilled planters. Ben's starting of monthly gatherings and training has been a huge help to the morale and support of church planters. The coaching of planters is being done better and with more accountability now than when I started the research. The research and writing for this project have been a journey of discovery and reignited my passion for church planting. I have

once again started recruiting potential church planters and many leaders have sought me out recently for coaching to start new churches and new non-profit ministries. I see this as a work of the Holy Spirit.

During this project, I have been blessed by meeting many faithful disciples of Jesus Christ around the nation and around the world. I did not address it much in my dissertation, but I experienced tremendous insights through the eyes of my clergy colleagues. My wife and co-pastor, Deb Marzahn, has been a constant support through the process. She has been my sounding board, editor, and constant companion in this journey of discovery. Both of us traveled to worship in Nepal, India, and Thailand with our clergy colleagues. Many of my clergy colleagues from around the world preached in our worship centers as well. It was an incredible privilege to experience ministry in their context. To spend time with my African colleagues and hear their heart for Jesus was a huge blessing. To travel around the United States and learn about church planting in Tupelo, Mississippi and other locations helped me see a new perspective. My fellow classmates have become life-long friends that have impacted my faith and encouraged me in my journey of discovery. This process of writing and discovery has changed me, and I pray will help others as well.

## Appendix A: Letter of Permission



November 24, 2020

Rev. Cynthia Williams  
122 West Franklin Avenue, Suite 400  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55404

Dear Rev. Williams, District Superintendents and Director of Connectional Ministries of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church:

Greetings in Christ!

As part of my doctoral research I am requesting to do a questionnaire of the appointive cabinet of the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. I am working on the best methods to identify, assess, and recruit potential church planters for the United Methodist Church. As part of my Path One Coaching Certification instruction in Nashville, they taught Church Planter identification, assessment and recruitment is critical to the success of a continuous church planting movement. I am doing research to learn best methodologies and I appreciate your cooperation to help understand the current process of our appointive leadership. Thank you for your consideration of this questionnaire in assisting with my research.

The questionnaire will have five questions and will be sent electronically. I am asking Rev. Williams to send the responses back as a group so the surveys will be anonymous. After I have tabulated the results and finished my dissertation, I will be destroying the data collected. When I finish my research I would be glad to share the dissertation and results with the MAC Cabinet. I will also be sharing my observations with Ben Ingebretson, the DK-MN Area Director of New Church Development. If Rev. Williams will discuss with the MAC Cabinet this opportunity and either affirm or deny the request in writing it would be greatly appreciated.

As the Dean of the Cabinet of the Minnesota Annual Conference, will you please sign that you agree to give permission on behalf of the Cabinet.

In Christ's Love and Service,  
Rev. Paul J. Marzahn

I, Rev. Cynthia Williams, give permission to Paul Marzahn to conduct dissertation research by sending questionnaires to members of the MAC Cabinet

Dean of the Minnesota Annual Conference Cabinet  
District Superintendent, River Valley

November 24, 2020

## Appendix B: Questionnaire

# Dissertation Questions for the Appointive Cabinet by Paul Marzahn

\* Required

### INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Dissertation research to determine best method to identify, assess and recruit potential church planters for the United Methodist Church in the Minnesota Annual Conference.

You are invited to participate in a research study being done by Rev. Paul Marzahn from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you are an important part of the identification, assessment and recruiting of church planters in the Minnesota Annual Conference of United Methodist Churches.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to fill out a Survey Monkey questionnaire consisting of five questions asking about the current process for identifying, assessing and recruiting Church Planters in the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. There will be no payment for participating and the expectation is to complete the questionnaire within a two week time period. The feedback given will be collected anonymously through the survey monkey process. Therefore individual responses will not be identified. Once the study is concluded and the dissertation is done the raw data will be destroyed.

There should be very few risks involved in this study but leaders may not feel fully informed to answer the questions. The benefits should help the leadership of the Minnesota Annual Conference be better informed in how to identify, assess and recruit church planters in the future.

You can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time without penalty. If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Rev. Paul Marzahn at [pmarzahn@crossroadschurch.org](mailto:pmarzahn@crossroadschurch.org).

Signing this informed consent agreement means that you have read this and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study by Rev. Cynthia Williams and why it is being done and what to do.

1. I have read the above informed consent. \*

Select one option only.

*Mark only one oval.*

- I agree to participate in the study.
- I do not agree to participate in the study.

Dissertation Questions

Please answer the questions below.

- 2. Question One - What is the current identification process for potential church planters in the Minnesota Annual Conference?

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- 3. Question Two - What are the strengths of identifying a potential church planter early in the church planting process?

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- 4. Question Three - What is the current assessment process for potential church planters in the Minnesota Annual Conference?

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5. Question Four - What is the current recruitment process for potential church planters in the Minnesota Annual Conference?

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6. Question Five - How could the Minnesota Annual Conference more effectively identify, assess, and recruit church planters early in the process of church planting?

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## Appendix C : Informed Consent Letter

### *Dissertation research to determine best methods to identify, assess, and recruit potential church planters for the United Methodist Church in the Minnesota Annual Conference*

You are invited to participate in a research study being done by Rev. Paul Marzahn from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you are an important part of the identification, assessment, and recruitment of church planters in the Minnesota Annual Conference of United Methodist Churches.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire consisting of five questions asking about the current process for identifying, assessing, and recruiting Church Planters in the Minnesota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. There will be no payment for participating and the expectation is to complete the questionnaire within a two-week time period. The feedback given will be collected by the Dean of the Cabinet of the MAC, so individual responses will not be identified. Once the study is concluded and the dissertation is done, the raw data will be destroyed.

There should be very few risks involved in this study, but leaders may not feel fully informed to answer the questions. The benefits should help the leadership of the Minnesota Annual Conference be better informed in how to identify, assess, and recruit church planters in the future.

If something makes you feel uncomfortable in any way while you are in the study, please tell Rev. Cynthia Williams who can be reached at **Cynthia.Williams@minnesotaumc.org**. You can refuse to respond to any or all the questions, and you will be able to withdraw from the process at any time without penalty. If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Rev. Paul Marzahn at pmarzahn@crossroadschurch.org.

Signing this paper means that you have read this and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be upset if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study by Rev. Cynthia Williams and why it is being done and what to do.

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Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study

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Date Signed



## **Appendix D: MAC Church Planter Interview Questions**

This is the questionnaire used in 2016 for identification, assessment, and recruitment of church planters:

### *1. Visioning Capacity*

- Give examples of organizations, projects, or business that you started from scratch that were successful after you left.
- What have you done that gives evidence that you are a catalyst with a "go for it" attitude?
- What have you done to keep vision before others in innovative ways to engender participation?
- What have you done to envision medium to long range projects and then met those goals?
- How much funding or other resources have you raised to accomplish a major project?
- Tell about a time your vision was powerful such that you overcame major obstacles and grew in commitment.

### *2. Intrinsic Motivation*

- Tell of a time when you stayed energized despite a highly demanding schedule.
- What time management skills do you use to make the most of each day?
- What examples can you give from your life that show you are a self-starter?
- What have you done to excel above the performance of others?
- How have you shown integrity even when things have turned negative?

### *3. Creating Ownership in Ministry*

- Give many examples of inspiring others to commit to fulfill a leadership/ministry position.
- Tell of times you have pursued others to volunteer and given away responsibility generously.
- Give many examples of launching others into higher ministry.
- Give many examples of people you disciplined who went on to reproduce themselves.
- Tell about others whom you influenced to lead and make a sacrifice for the sake of your vision/ministry.

### *4. Reaching the Unchurched*

- Give numerous examples of unchurched people, you currently are in relationship with, who are at various commitment levels.
- Give multiple examples of bringing the unchurched to a decision for Christ and introducing spiritual conversations.
- What have you done to follow up on those you have led to Christ so they get assimilated into a church?
- Give past evidence to your comfort in being with non-Christians and on their turf.

### *5. Spousal Support*

- What do you expect from one another in terms of "roles in ministry"? Are you clear and committed as a couple in this area?
- What boundaries have you agreed to establish as a couple?

- What past evidence is there that your marriage is strong and dependable?
- What evidence is there that your communication is healthy as a couple?
- Are you united as a couple in the vision to plant a church?

*6. Effectively Builds Relationships*

- Give evidence in your ability to form successful relationships with a variety of people under many different circumstances.
- What have you shown to be your ability to handle criticism gracefully and constructively?

*7. Committed to Church Growth*

- What have you done to stay sharp in church growth practice?
- Give an example of using a church growth principle in ministry that has led to actual growth. How did you do it?

*8. Responsive to Community*

- What have you done to assess a community for needs, to develop a program to meet those needs, and then see growth as a result?
- Give evidence to your proactive style in community ministry?

*9. Uses the Giftedness of Others*

- What have you done to systematically evaluate others to discover their gifts and then move them into ministry?
- Give multiple examples of people you have equipped for ministry.

*10. Flexibility and Adaptability*

- What evidence is there of your encouraging others to share ideas that go against yours or to try new creative things?
- Tell of a time when you handled multiple priorities successfully.

*11. Building Cohesive Groups*

- What have you done to draw people from diverse agendas into a common effort?
- How have you leveraged small groups to assimilate newcomers?

*12. Resilience*

- Describe your biggest setbacks in life and how you bounced back.
- Give evidence to your ability to stay calm under pressure.”

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