Liberty University John W. Rawlings School of Divinity

A Model for the Pastor Search Process for Free Will Baptist Churches

A Thesis Project Report Submitted to
the Faculty of the Liberty University School of Divinity in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Ministry

by

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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Liberty University School of Divinity, 2022
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This project sought to help the pastor shortage in the National Association of Free Will Baptists by creating and implementing a tool to assist churches in their search for a pastor and help pastors find a new church to serve. Each church in the association is autonomous and selects its own pastor. The tool is actually two surveys that mirror each other. The churches seeking a pastor completes the church survey. And the candidate seeking a church to pastor completes the pastor survey. The tool gives information and views of ministry roles, preferences, non-negotiables, and negotiables. It is designed to help with information like Bible translation preference, musical preference, the role of pastor, church polity, decision making processes, associational involvement, views on funding Free Will Baptist ministries, agreement on the interpretation of the Free Will Baptist Treatise, and more. After the churches and the pastoral candidates complete their portions of the tool, the responses are submitted to an independent committee that reviews the survey responses. After the review, three pastors are recommended to each church and three churches are recommended to each pastor candidate. After the recommendations, the churches are encouraged to continue with the process of choosing a pastor, but now the pastor candidates and the churches have much more information about the other.

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Abbreviations

FWB	*Free Will Baptist*
NAFWB	*National Association of Free Will Baptists*
Treatise	*A Treatise of the Faith and Practices of the National Association of Free Will Baptists, Inc., 2016*

Chapter 1

Introduction

The union between a pastor and a church is much like that of a married couple. Prior to the ceremony and marriage, it is always advisable for those being married to have premarital counseling. The goal behind the premarital counseling is both to receive advice and to get to know one another's thoughts about the longevity of the marriage. The same is true in the relationship of a pastor and the local church. There is a need for the two parties to get to know each other before there is a formal relationship.

An older couple came to a young pastor for premarital counseling. Both of their spouses had passed away the previous year. The young pastor felt inexperienced to offer much counseling because of the couple's last successful marriages. The couple was combining adult children into the marriage. This blended family began on a Sunday afternoon with the young pastor officiating. Everyone was happy. The newly married couple headed off for their honeymoon at the beach.

The couple returned home in time to be at the next Wednesday prayer service. Everyone was smiling and still so happy. They appeared to be the next couple to join the long list of happily married seniors in the church fellowship. The new groom was part of a large family within the church and the new bride was a lifelong friend of many in the church. Wednesday evening service ended with peace and hope for the couple's future and their time with the church.

The next evening, the phone rang at the parsonage right as the pastor and his family sat down for dinner. The pastor answered the phone; a man's voice said, "Preacher can you come to

our house right now?" The young pastor was in shock—it was the newly married groom. Without thinking, the young pastor said, "Right now?" The man, who was always soft-spoken, said in a loud and unkind voice, "Yes sir, right now." The pastor responded, "I'm on my way."

It was a 15-minute drive to the couple's home. While driving to their home, the pastor had a thousand thoughts about what caused this call. Was it sickness, injury, or did someone hurt their feelings at church the night before?

Upon arrival, the pastor quickly walked to the front door. Looking through the glass door as he knocked, he could see the new groom sitting in a chair at the dining room table with a bowl on his head. A female voice said, "Please come on in, preacher." At this point, the pastor walked into the home to realize the bowl on the man's head was full of spaghetti. There were noodles and sauce covering his hair, face, and clothes. They had their first and last fight over money given to an adult child who would not work. In the heat of the argument, the wife dumped the bowl of spaghetti on the husband's head.

The man looked at the pastor and said, "What should I do?" to which the young pastor said, "I would start by removing that bowl of spaghetti from my head." This disagreement was the end of the marriage. They could never come to an understanding of parenting adult children. They were happy together, but when others got involved, the union became a train wreck. The young pastor took from this experience the need to always do extensive premarital counseling to discover potential unseen and harmful marriage issues.

This project addresses similar potential pitfalls in a pastor and church relationship. If there is no thorough examination of a candidate’s ministry philosophy, a short-term marriage is in their future. For example, the Church of the Valley brings candidate Bob in for an interview. His personality reminds them of a former pastor who led the church to growth and excitement;

therefore, the committee does not continue to examine Bob to discover his overall approach to pastoring the church in its current condition. During the years of poor attendance and financial struggles, controlling members created an atmosphere that would stifle any future progress led by candidate Bob. Those of the leadership who remember the former pastor envision bright days for the future. There are times when the pulpit committee has a great experience with the perspective pastor, but when other members begin to be involved, problems start.

This project will aid Free Will Baptist (FWB) Churches with the pastoral hiring process. The process will help congregations and candidates understand how to develop a healthy relationship beginning with the election of the pastor. The author's long-term goal is to cultivate loving, understanding, and lasting relationships between congregations and new pastors.

Ministry Context

According to the 2020 National Association of Free Will Baptists (NAFWB) church directory, the denomination comprises 2030 churches divided into local and state associations.[1] In the 1990s, the denomination had 2500 churches and over 4000 ordained ministers.[2] Each church is autonomous, which means they elect their pastors, own their property, and govern by their documents. The benefit of the local churches' involvement in the National Association is fellowship and cooperation in denominational projects. The NAFWB officers and leaders have no say in a local church or individual association's affairs. The Treatise of the denomination gives suggestions for governing, but the local church, district, and state associations are all self-governed. The FWB Treatise, printed first on November 7, 1935, states, "This body adopted a

[1] *NAFWB Church Directory* (http://www.directory.nafwb..org, 2020)

[2] *1990 Free Will Baptist Yearbook* (Nashville: The Executive Office of the National Association of Free Will Baptist, 1990)

Treatise which set forth the basic doctrines and described the faith and practice that had characterized Free Will Baptists through the years."[3]

The following chart depicts the condition of Free Will Baptist churches in 2020. This chart provides data on churches without pastors and ordained ministers not pastoring. At the close of 2020, only two churches filled out the questionnaire.

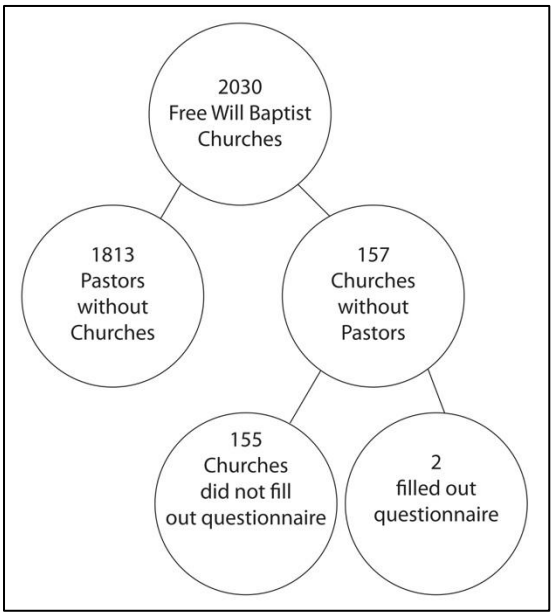

Figure 1: The Current Condition of the National Association of Free Will Baptist Church in 2020

The National Association of Free Will Baptist Treatise is the foundation of the Free Will Baptist organization. The National Association of Free Will Baptist is organized into state and district associations. The state and district associations are divided into smaller conferences and associations that are geographically or philosophically designed to meet the needs of local churches. The National Association has seven chartered boards that operate the ministries of the National Association. Note in the chart below the local church is at the top and is autonomous to make its own church government decisions.

[3] *Treatise of the Faith and Practices of the National Association of Free Will Baptist* (Nashville: Executive Office of the National Association of Free of Free Will Baptist, 2016), 1

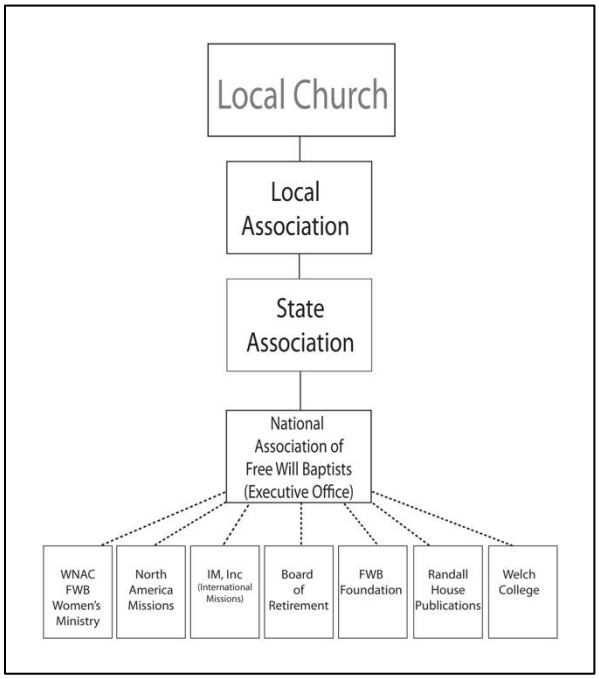

Figure 2: Flow Chart of the Free Will Baptist Denomination

Free Will Baptist churches use the Treatise as a pattern in electing their pastors, but the denomination can never appoint one. The introduction to chapter one, section one of this part of the Treatise establishes the local church's authority and independence:

> The following is a description of the organizational practices generally observed in the Free Will Baptist denomination. It is recognized that there is a considerably greater variety in actual practice than can be expressed in this section. It is not intended that the following description should require that every organization conform in every detail, so long as there is not variance from the basic principles which underlie these practices.[4]

Section four of this same chapter describes the process for officers' election, including the pastor, "All officers, including the pastor, are elected by majority vote of the congregation."[5] Some congregations have adopted these suggestions of operations as law, while others interpret

[4] *Treatise of the Faith and Practices of the National Association of Free Will Baptist* (Nashville: Executive Office of the National Association of Free Will Baptist, 2016), 37.

[5] IBID. 37

them as designated guidelines as they were intended. This author will adhere to the latter interpretation of the established organizational practices of the FWB denomination.

The pastor and church relationship are not that of an employee and employer. It is comparable to a marriage bond. It is a love relationship with unavoidable conflicts. If both parties do not fully understand each other in the beginning, divorce is inevitable. Most evangelical pastors would not consider marrying a couple without pre-marital counseling, and this project seeks to provide the counseling necessary for the election of a new pastor. A healthy hiring process will eliminate conflict areas such as preferences, terminology, pastor's authority, the role of deacons, church boss, business order, etc.

The problem is that FWB churches and pastoral candidates have no clear definitions or processes to get to know each other before a professional relationship begins. Much like a marriage that starts without detailed premarital counseling, real issues that are not addressed upfront become areas of conflict. The definitions and operations of a church in a pastoral relationship depend strongly on terminology and practices. Nine conflict issues to review in the following sections are the role of the pastor, worship, candidate recommendations, the church boss, doctrinal issues, theological issues, polity, and ministry practice.

The Role of the Pastor

Some people enter marriage with the idea of changing the other person into the image they want them to be. The same can be said of churches and pastoral candidates. Senior candidates tend to believe that the servant/leader role of the pastor is to do what the church wants. Most of the senior pastoral candidates are comfortable with the election process as it stands now. Younger candidates interpret the servant/leader role of the pastor to serve his people, but to do so with his own vision. The younger generation is now requesting a process that

clarifies the philosophy of the pastor's position. The candidate may view himself as a leader, overseeing the staff in hiring and firing. The church may view him as a manager and they (the church) as the final authority. During the first meeting between the search committee and the candidate, both parties consider their time together to be an interview instead of an honest evaluation of the possibility of a relationship. The philosophy of the pastoral role as manager or leader can become a conflict.

Neither party understands what the other is saying without clear definitions of terminology. A church may say they pay according to their ability. The word ability is subjective. Who decides on the church's ability to pay? The pastoral candidate may say he plans to make visitations. Does he mean he visits at the hospital, or does he also visit shut-ins? In an interview, the committee may tell the candidate that as the pastor, he will have the authority to start new ministries. However, the committee might define starting a new ministry as going through a process of presenting an idea to a board, while the pastor elect may define starting a new ministry as moving forward with no board necessary. Without clear definitions, many issues become areas of conflict in the future relationship of the church and pastor. This is particularly present in congregations that have gone without a shepherd for some time because those who assume leadership in the interim get comfortable with the authority of their new positions.

Congregation's previous experience with a pastor can also influence their interpretation of the term shepherd/leader. If a former pastor created an atmosphere of being a 24-hour chaplain and rescuing members from every situation, the new pastor is expected to do the same. He becomes Batman. When his phone rings, he puts on his cape (suit coat), jumps into his batmobile (preacher's automobile), and off to the rescue he goes. His rescue duties might include a hospital visit, home in distress, disgruntled member, and several other situations. In this type of pastorate,

church members judge the pastor on his activities rather than his pulpit delivery. Other churches only expect the pastor to call on their members when time permits but are far more interested in the sermon's content. Max Anders also comments on the biblical definition of the pastor, "The office which involves guiding, leading, and serving the church has honor and goodness in itself. It is a position that God desires for the local church and which he finds honorable because the pastor guides in matters of the spirit. Because the office has honor, the person who desires to do the job, who literally "reaches out" after it, must be honorable. Defining the role of the pastor is especially important for both the pastor and the church.

Worship Conflict

Music may become a divisive component if either party disagrees on preference. When a church and pastor disagree on music style, the relationship can suffer, typically ending in a deadly result. Music deals with emotion, and both sides are sensitive about their preferred genre. Dr. Vernon Whaley makes this observation calling the disagreement a worship war, "War is a state of open and declared hostile conflict. It is usually a struggle between opposing forces whose desired outcomes differ. At the heart of most war efforts is a wish to eradicate something or, in some cases, someone. The consequence is destruction—of property and life. And the devastation worsens with each battle."[6]

Candidate Recommendation Process

Another component is the method in which FWB churches receive the names of possible candidates. In some cases, NAFWB publishes a page on their website listing churches looking for a pastor and pastors pursuing a church. Other times, a state association makes candidate recommendations. When dealing with state-level recommendations, each state's executive

[7] Vernon Whaley, *Called to Worship* (Nashville: Nelson Thomas, 2009), Apple eBook.

director is frequently the conduit through which information flows between the church and the candidate. A third method comes from national denominational leaders. In that instance, NAFWB's executive secretary, department directors, national officers, and prominent pastors become the connection for providing recommendations with details on both churches and candidates.

Both systems, the NAFWB website and state or national recommendations, can potentially lead to a mismatch in philosophy and personality. There is a risk that denominational leaders recommend candidates of their own philosophical persuasion rather than someone more suited for the church. This may create an environment where the church's relationship with the new pastor-elect becomes more political than relational.

The Church Boss

Another component that FWB churches encounter in the election process is the cancerous *church boss*. The entire congregation is under the influence of this church boss, or bully. They might use impressive, spiritual vocabulary, but they are carnal, fleshly, and worldly. These individuals find themselves in positions of power in both the search committee and voting process. Nothing is more threatening to a church boss than a strong, spiritual, pastoral candidate with a conviction to do what is suitable for the entire congregation. He will not be a puppet on a string.

Doctrinal Issues

The pool of preachers who hold to its faith traditions is small for FWB because of doctrinal distinctives. NAFWB has distinctives that make it difficult for non-Free Will Baptist ministers to pastor one of its churches. The theological position of the denomination is Reformed Arminianism. FWB doctrine adheres to three ordinances instead of two. Most evangelical

movements practice baptism and communion, but FWB practices the third ordinance of feet-washing. These distinctives produce a barrier preventing those who do not accept FWB doctrine from pastoring one of its churches.

Theological Issues

Another limiting factor on the pool of available preachers is FWB differ in the view of Reformed Arminianism. These varying views between a pastor and church can create division when they disagree. The denomination's position regarding apostasy is that a believer who has truly been regenerated decides to forfeit their position with the Lord by their free will. This rejection of faith makes it impossible for the individual to return to the family of God. In his book *Quest for Truth*, Leroy Forlines states, "While I do not think the likelihood is high that a person who is saved will become an unbeliever again, I do believe that because we are persons, the possibility remains open."[7] Sometimes churches think they are following Free Will Baptist doctrine, but their view is one of repeated regeneration. This difference in doctrine causes conflict between the pastor and the church. This is another example of how understanding terminology before beginning the relationship is crucial.

Polity

The battle over the biblical organization of a church is also a struggle. Most FWB fill the office of deacon with laymen from the church. The term deacon is used for the position, but the definition of deacon is vastly different from church to church. Some churches consider the deacon board to be the board of directors, while others, like Larson Knute, interpret 1 Timothy 3:8 to mean servant.[8] In those churches that believe the deacon board to be the church's

[7] Leroy Forlines, *Quest for Truth* (Nashville: Randall House, 2001) https://books.apple.com/us/book/the-quest-for-truth/id502921667..

[8] Larson Knute. *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, vol. 9, Holman New Testament Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000, 182.

authority, the pastor must get approval to start new ministries and report on all he does. Those who value the office of deacon to be one of servants realize deacons operate their office under the pastor's leadership. Paul discussed the character, and lifestyle deacons are to maintain; he did not precisely define their tasks or duties. This unclear definition leaves room for flexibility in the position of deacon. A. T. Robinson defines the position, "Deacons (διακονους [*diakonous*]). Accusative case of general reference like the preceding with δει εἰναι [*dei einai*] understood. Technical sense of the word here as in Phil. 1:1 which see (two classes of church officers, bishops or elders, deacons)."[9] Kenneth Wuest adds to the discussion of the position, "The absence of the article before "deacons" shows that these church officers, charged with the temporal welfare of the local church as the bishops were with its spiritual welfare, are treated as a class."[10] John Chrysostom emphasizes the qualifications for all leaders, "Likewise the Deacons." That is, they should have the same qualities as Bishops.[11]

Ministry Practice

The ministry practice of a church can also hinder the pastor/church relationship. The practical function is best understood as a culture or community's everyday practices. One example of a practical function is office hours. A rural community may not expect 9-5 office hours, whereas a metropolitan community would. When the church and candidate move too quickly in the interview process, they fail to discuss expectations of practical matters.

[9] A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), 1 Ti 3:8.

[10] Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, vol. 7 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 59.

[11] John Chrysostom, "Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the First Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to Timothy," in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. James Tweed and Philip Schaff, vol. 13, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889), 441.

The Election Process: 3 Ways to Elect

The election of a pastor is a pivotal moment in a church's history. The future relationship between the pastor and church is a vital component in the spiritual health of both parties. The election process must have transparency and accuracy for a solid foundation in the future of this relationship. The election process must be practical and spiritual as decisions are made.

A local church within the FWB denomination will use one of three approaches for electing a pastor. These approaches are: a designated or appointed pulpit committee, a public audition of several candidates, or the predecessor choosing the successor. Traditionally, a FWB Church has a set of by-laws to govern the pastor election process.

Designated Pulpit Committee

In the first approach, when a pastoral vacancy occurs, the church leadership forms a pulpit committee. Committee members are either designated in the church by-laws or appointed by the church in a business meeting. In several cases, deacons comprise the entire committee; in others, the congregation will elect someone to serve with the deacons. Work experiences will influence the decision-making process of committee members. For example, a Walmart manager may serve on the committee, and their approach in choosing a pastor reflects how Walmart chooses an employee.

In contrast, a church leader with no hiring and interviewing experience will naturally be disadvantaged. They only know how to be the interviewee and not the interviewer. The committee will recommend a candidate to the church once he has a trial sermon, successful interview, and the committee feels he will be acceptable. Often a candidate's public speaking ability or his view of church growth makes him a good candidate.

People from a blue-collar background also bring employment expectations based on their

personal work experience. This experience creates a red flag for the candidate because he is an employee instead of a loving leader. This project provides an opportunity for all involved to evaluate each other's expectations before deciding. (See the questionnaire for churches and pastoral candidates.)

Public Audition

The second approach for the election of a pastor congregations use is to have several candidates preach for the congregation. The pulpit committee will poll the congregation for their favorite candidate and identify one as their recommendation. In most churches, this approach is divisive because some will like one candidate, and others prefer a different candidate. In this approach, the largest voting block will choose the new pastor.

Predecessor’s Recommendation

The third approach for electing a pastor is for the outgoing pastor to recommend the associate pastor for the lead position. This approach is both positive and negative. Positive in that the congregation already knows the individual, and the individual knows the congregation. On the negative side, the congregation expresses concern that there is a better candidate than the associate and does not have the opportunity to search for one. Churches with large congregations and healthy ministries use this approach effectively because the associate already understands the church's inner workings, such as running a Christian school.

Problem Presented

Churches find themselves in spiritually unhealthy conditions from years of conflict and division. Local churches perceive themselves as healthy when they are incredibly sick and in need of spiritual renewal. This sickness will eventually cause a church to close. As previously stated, in the 1990s, the denomination had 2500 churches; however, according to statistics from

the 2020 NAFWB church directory, 20 percent of those churches have closed.[12] The decrease in the number of churches creates a smaller pool of possible young men to accept God's calling to pastor. The second factor in the decline of the number of churches is that some of these closed churches were pastored by young men who no longer consider pastoring an option.

These conflicts create an environment that causes numerous pastoral candidates to leave the ministry. According to an interview with Dr. Brad Ransom, coaching director with North America Ministries of Free Will Baptist, an average of 40 churches per year are permanently closing their doors. FWB leaders no longer see this as a problem. It is now a crisis. This crisis will only continue to grow if the conflict between pastors and churches cannot find reconciliation and develop long-term pastorates.

The problem is that short-term pastorates occur within the FWB denomination because there is not a healthy mechanism in place to foster the church-pastor relationship from the initial stages of hiring. A better process needs to be developed for connecting churches with pastoral candidates that will result in a healthier, more stable leadership in the local Free Will Baptist church. This mechanism needs to clarify issues like music, conflict management, polity, organizational issues, leadership styles, doctrinal issues, etc. This foundational process will benefit the future of the church and pastor elect by allowing both parties to start a new relationship with information enabling decisions made from valuable data. This project is the development of a questionnaire and process to help wed the pastor with the church in a lasting relationship. Hopefully, this mechanism will aid in the longevity of pastors within FWB churches. According to research by NAFWB's committee on denominational research in July 2019, 25 percent of FWB pastors have pastored four or more churches; fifty-five percent of all

[12] *NAFWB Church Directory* (http://www.directory.nafwb..org, 2020)

Free Will Baptist pastors are 50 or older, and ten percent of that number are over 70.[13]

The apparent need is for FWB churches and candidates to have a way to evaluate one another because a resume cannot reveal everything about the candidate and church. A resume only states the historical practices of the candidate. It may disclose he has been at five churches for two years each but does not say why he moved so often. However, he may have the perfect gifts to help the next church become healthier and more robust. It is possible his previous churches did not have the same goals. The church and pastor must have common goals and philosophies if they are to dwell in unity. This project will attempt to provide the missing elements that a resume does not include.

The NAFWB executive office will have a questionnaire that will provide valuable data to help a church or pastoral candidate come to a decision about their possible relationship. This questionnaire will aid denominational leaders as they coach both parties in their future relationships. The questionnaire will provide essential information about preferences, philosophy, and other specific issues that often cause conflict. The pastoral candidate will fill out his part of the evaluation before reading any of the church's evaluation results.

The church and pastoral candidate will return the evaluations to NAFWB's executive secretary or someone he appoints who is responsible for charting the information. The executive secretary may need further clarification about some of the answers provided. The secretary must never assume or attempt to speak for either the church or pastoral candidate. Once the executive secretary understands all the data, he will draft a report to send to the church and the candidate. If the report accurately depicts both parties' responses, they will sign the document and send it back to the executive secretary. Once the secretary receives both signed copies, he will share the data

[13] Nafwb.org/https://nafwb.org/site/research/

with both parties.

The executive secretary will establish a review committee consisting of a national leader and a leader from both the state and district to which the church belongs. This committee will know the church's culture and community to help them decide on the three best candidates to recommend. Once the committee chooses the candidates, they will send the information from the church's questionnaire to the candidates. This part of the process will allow each candidate to become familiar with the church's personality without knowing its name, location, or former pastor. The candidate will be able to evaluate the information with an objective approach.

The review committee's goal will be to send the church three profiles who agree to move forward in the process. The pulpit committee of the church will follow its polity in the election process. The review committee will act in an advisory position until the election of a pastor. However, this evaluative tool needs to be developed.

The executive office of the National Association of Free Will Baptists formed a ministry entitled Refresh. The original purpose of Refresh was to pair a coach with a struggling church to help them revitalize their ministry. The goal of Refresh is to have 100 coaches by the summer of 2022 to accelerate meeting the need of the unhealthy Free Will Baptist church. Executive Secretary Dr. Eddie Moody extended the ministry of Refresh to aid churches without a pastor since the need is so great. Refresh allows the coach to aid in the aspect of church health and coaching the local church in search of a pastor.

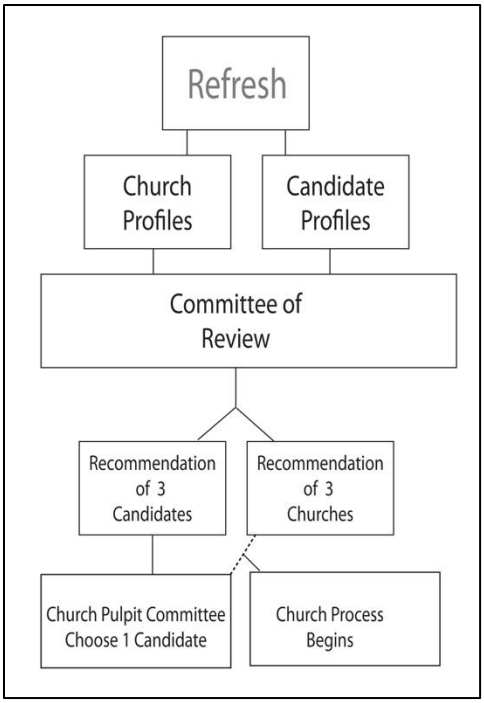

Figure 3: Refresh Ministry Plan for Aiding Churches Without Pastors

Purpose Statement

Most pastoral searches are equivalent to a blind date. The purpose of this research project is to provide a way for churches and candidates to get to know one another before the interview process begins. This research will attempt to use a tool for churches and pastoral candidates to define one another's perspectives and establish a clear understanding of the relationship before their connection becomes permanent. Establishing a proper foundation allows both parties, the pastoral candidate and the church, to go through an evaluation and deal with the tough questions before the initial meeting.

The tool will be on NAFWB's website and accessible to candidates and churches. When a local church searches for a pastor and contacts denominational or state leaders, the leaders should encourage the church to access the tool and define their current condition. The church

will submit to NAFWB information such as recent financial documents, by-laws, and other written, pertinent information to aid in helping build the relationship.

The project's goal is to lessen conflict between churches and new pastors by removing deception and undefined terminology. This conflict is dangerous for the local fellowship. The Apostle Paul said in 1 Timothy 5:17-20,

> Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves his wages." Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear.

This pastoral letter's warning clarifies that the relationship between pastor and church should be handled carefully and biblically.

A process that gives the church and candidate a more detailed interview vetting process could be helpful. Both parties need to go into the possible relationship with information, allowing them to evaluate each other honestly. Streamlining the process requires some type of committee to be confidential and accurate with the data. Another advantage to this approach is that information will be received before travel begins, potentially cutting unnecessary expenses for candidates.

Basic Assumptions

The concept of a love relationship instead of an employment relationship for a new pastor is based on both parties' honesty. The church and candidate must be truthful in their statements about each issue. Learning to speak the same language is especially important in a love relationship. This same language means having the same definitions for the words used in the conversation. Each answer must have transparency with no exaggeration of the terms.

The danger in the evaluation process is that parties may say what they think needs to be said instead of answering truthfully. For instance, a church might overstate authority given to a pastor but revert to their actual positions when conflict about his authority arises. On the other hand, a church might have the impression that the pastor agrees with denominational distinctives and later realizes he does not. There are numerous examples that illustrate the danger of failing to speak directly and honestly during the evaluation process.

Definitions

Sources provide context in which definitions are used. This project leans heavily on the definitions given in the scriptures, in free will Baptist documents, and in the broader evangelical community. The following vocabulary words are defined to aid in understanding the church and its leaders. Definitions are useful in understanding the roles and the authority given to each party.

Church

NAFWB defines the church in the following way:

> A Christian Church is an organized body of believers in Christ who steadily assemble to worship God, and who sustain the ordinances of the Gospel according to the Scriptures. Believers in Christ are admitted to this church on giving evidence of faith in Christ, obtaining the consent of the body, being baptized, and receiving the right hand of fellowship.[14]

Deacon

NAFWB also defines a deacon as a servant,

> Deacons are ordained—usually by the local church—to minister to the congregation and exercise general spiritual leadership. They assist the pastor in administering the ordinances and may have to conduct worship services in the pastor's absence. Regular practice insists that deacons be men who meet the qualifications outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.[15]

[14] *Treatise of the Faith and Practices of the National Association of Free Will Baptist* (Nashville: Executive Office of the National Association of Free Will Baptist, 2016, 14.

[15] IBID, 39.

Pastor

According to the Free Will Baptist Treatise, a pastor is the leader of a church in spiritual things: "The Pastor, who preaches the Word of God, ministers to the needs of the members, and exercises general leadership within the congregation. It is expected that he will unite with the local church if he is not a member when called. The church should not call a man who is not at least licensed to preach within the denomination."[16]

Review Committee

Review Committee will consist of a NAFWB national, state, and district (local) association leaders. This committee's role is to review the church and candidate's questionnaires, recommending the three best candidates that match the church.

Pulpit Committee

Pulpit Committee is the group appointed by the church to receive the three best candidate's information and proceed with the project's process until the installation of a pastor.

FWB National Leader

Free Will Baptist National Leader is an officer of NAFWB or director of a NAFWB's national department.

FWB State Leader

Free Will Baptist State Leader is an executive officer or moderator of the state association of Free Will Baptist, of which the church is a member.

[16] *Treatise of the Faith and Practices of the National Association of Free Will Baptist* (Nashville: Executive Office of the National Association of Free Will Baptist, 2016, 39.

FWB Local Association Leader

Free Will Baptist Local Association Leader is an executive officer or moderator of the district (local) association of Free Will Baptists of which the church is a member.

Project Director

The Project Director is the person who carries out the research and follows the process from beginning to conclusion. This person designed the questionnaire and made sure each church and candidate received the support they needed.

Preaching

Preaching is the proclamation of the Bible to feed the flock of God and provide spiritual teaching from the passage of Scripture.

Limitations

This project's scope is to work with Free Will Baptist churches seeking to fill the position of pastor. The project is limited to information provided by the church or pastoral candidate; it is not designed to investigate either the church or the candidate. The project is also limited to the integrity of the denominational leaders to provide unbiased candidate information. Before sending a tool to a candidate, he must be ordained or licensed with the Free Will Baptist denomination.

Delimitations

This project must work with pulpit committees; the tool will only get the process started. The church never loses its autonomy during this process. The autonomy of the local church is a biblical truth that must always stay fully intact. Free Will Baptist doctrine requires the local church to remain in complete control of its congregation. The local church will only accept the tool to help investigate possible candidates.

This project's design is not to act as a hierarchy or provide authority over a local church's process in its attempt to call a pastor. This project will not obligate or endorse the pastoral candidate by any function of the process. The tool and denominational leaders will always act in an advisory position and never in an authoritative role.

Conclusion

This research aims to resolve the issue of churches and pastoral candidates not having accurate information about each other. How does this work in a fellowship of churches that has no hierarchy? When a tool is developed, it will require all parties to agree to follow the process. The breakdown in understanding between churches and candidates must be addressed.

In the illustration from the introduction of this chapter, the older couple's marriage did not survive due to a disagreement on how to handle raising adult children. This could have been solved by knowing more information about each other. The same can be said for a pastor and a church. Imagine a middle-aged pastor accepts his second church. His first church loved him, gave charitably, and followed his lead. Even located in a rural community, they grew from an attendance of 40 to 300 in a few months.

His second church is in a major city and was once a large congregation with a successful past, but the last 20 years were filled with conflict and decline. The church talks of its desire to return to the place they were 20 years before in the interview. (Many people who were there during the good days saw the young and experienced pastor as an image of the man they followed 20 years ago and were excited about the future. At the beginning of the relationship, no one understood that an unhealthy culture had grown in the church leadership. If the old pastor had returned, he too would have struggled because the church's culture had changed so

considerably. Unhealthy people in a marriage and the congregation of a church can cause great division.

Dwindling churches in their best days experienced large crowds, an abundance of funds, and a spirit of excitement, but now long for a pastor who will take them back to those good ole days. But they are so spiritually unhealthy those prosperous days will not return without revitalization.

Chapter 2

Conceptual Framework

The past is often more glorious than the present, and the church at Ephesus was certainly no exception. Founded by the Apostle Paul, and later entrusted to his direct disciple Timothy, the early Ephesian church seemed to be indelibly marked by the piety of its leadership The Apostle Paul spent a great deal of time instructing this church throughout the book of Ephesians and the two letters written to Timothy.

In the book of Revelation, John mentions the Ephesus church again, telling them their past was more outstanding than their present. Through the Apostle John, Jesus told the Ephesian church they were still praiseworthy but condemned, for one thing, leaving their first love. Today, churches are actively seeking shepherds capable of guiding them back to their "first love." They sincerely long for times past when their Christian exuberance went unimpeded by the logistics of day-to-day governance, and the bond of Christian love was uneroded by church politics. In order to convert this yearning into a lasting reality, a thorough understanding of the pastoral search process is crucial.

Church leadership often faces complex realities in the fight to protect the healthy longevity of its local body. There is no shortage of literature on the topic of the congregation, its spiritual well-being, and the rejuvenation thereof; however, most of the given instruction rests on the assumption of an extended (or even lifetime) pastoral tenure which is no longer the norm within the FWB denomination. Prescriptions of this nature prove to be of little use to a local body that finds itself headhunting new pastors on a nearly bi-annual basis.[17]

[17] NAFWB Annual Letter

This project aims to identify and correct the root causes which often underlie this friction between pastor and flock. This chapter will offer an investigation into the literature regarding church health and the biblical foundations of a resilient congregation. The goal of which is: establishing expectations for both churches and prospective pastors, as well as removing the stumbling blocks that stand between the church and its first love.

This literary journey will not be effective unless there is a review of the books that address the purpose of the local church and the scope of a biblical pastoral role. Without the structure from this research, there is a strong possibility that both the church's function and pastoral position become more subjective than biblical. It is crucial for both parties to better understand church health concepts rather than blindly following the traditions that emerged from long bygone dysfunctions. Biblical scholars have debated the pastor's function and how the congregation should be involved in the church's life. The fact that there is so much emphasis in Scripture on the local church gives a biblical perspective for knowing the steps needed to obtain church health.

Literature Review

The church needs resources to aid in framing a healthy mindset. FWB churches searching for a pastor every two or three years cannot be spiritually healthy. This lack of spiritual health creates a toxic atmosphere of power struggles and disunity. A pastor's relationship with a local church needs to be a love relationship that can only be built with healthy people desiring to bring God glory. This need for health in the relationship between pastor and church should be addressed with a tool or interview to discuss the condition of both parties. This project deals with helping the right pastor get to the right church while recognizing the need for spiritual health.

The NAFWB Treatise

The *Treatise* of the Free Will Baptist movement has foundational views about the pastor and church relationship.[18] The *Treatise* is critical to the FWB pastoral candidate search. While the document is more suggestive than legislative, it still becomes the pattern most FWB churches use to operate their local assembly and is a resource most ordained FWB ministers use to understand the denomination's government in a local church.

The *Treatise*, divided into five parts, covers different aspects of the views of FWB. The first two parts deal with the church and minister, and the fourth part covers the "Practice of Free Will Baptists."[19] The *Treatise* gives the local church full authority to make its own decisions, clearly stating the local church is independent. "The local church is an independent and self-governing body, with full authority to transact its business, choose its pastor and officers, receive, discipline, and dismiss members, hold free title to all its properties, and conduct all its internal affairs."[20] This statement gives full authority to the local church in choosing a pastor. This project in no way violates the sacred trust given to the local church. The process described in this project will only enhance the local church and pastoral candidates in making a more suitable decision. The *Treatise* also defines four church offices: two are biblical, and the other two are practical.[21]

Conduct of Bishops by Dibelius, Conzelmann, Buttolph, Yarbro

This work provided an interesting emphasis on the qualifications of the pastor considering the New Testament teaching on discipleship. "In the catalogue of their duties, why are particular requirements for office not specified, but instead qualities which for the most part are

[18] http://www.nafwb.org/Treatise, 37
[19] http://www.nafwb.org/Treatise, 37
[20] http://www.nafwb.org/Treatise, 37
[21] http://www.nafwb.org/Treatise, 37

presupposed for every Christian?"[22] The modern day church's idea of these qualifications are often that the pastor or overseer is to live higher than the rest of the congregation. The biblical goal of discipleship is that all believers should live to the teachings of scripture. The oversee or leader raises out of the community of believers with the spiritual gift of shepherd. This ties the pastor shortage and the spiritual health of churches together. Churches that are not spiritually healthy will never produce pastors or leaders because their fellowship does not train anyone to be raised up with qualifications of pastorship.

Notes on the New Testament by Albert Barnes

Barnes helps with the interpretation of I Timothy when dealing with ordination. The duty of the pastor is to preach the scriptures. "Some have understood this of laying on hands to heal the sick (Koppe;) others of the laying on of hands to absolve penitents; but the obvious meaning is to refer it to ordination. It was usual to lay the hands on the heads of those who were ordained to a sacred office, or appointed to perform an important duty."[23] The laying on of hands is evidenced when the congregation sees the spiritual maturity and giftedness to do the work of the ministry. The importance of ordination is a factor in the storage of pastors, because local churches are not providing worthy candidates for ordination.

I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon by Larson Knute

Knite brings a very interesting thought as to why the office of pastor is so emphasized. The leaders of the church were being imprisoned and martyred. This insight gives context to the reason Paul was so encouraging and emphasizing the role of overseer. "In the

[22] Dibelius, Martin, Hans Conzelmann, Philip Buttolph, and Adela Yarbro. "Conduct of Bishops." In *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, edited by Helmut Koester, 50–57. 1517 Media, 1972. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvb6v81c.15.

[23] Barnes, Albert and Christian Classics Ethereal Library. *Notes on the New Testament, Explanatory and Practical*. Enl. type ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949

days of the early church, a couple of things may have made the office of pastor seem less than desirable"[24] Peter writes his first epistle about suffering saints. He concludes the letter with teaching about the duties and function of the shepherd. The shepherd is to oversee the flock and feed them, while preparing them to suffer for the cause.

Opening up I Timothy by Simon J. Robinson

This book addresses the motive of those who seek to fill the office of bishop. "There is no doubting the importance of good leadership. Men who can 'shepherd' God's people in a Christ-like way bring great stability to a local church, while those who abuse their position can inflict terrible damage. Sadly, the latter was happening in Ephesus"[25] The pastor is not just the leader in church, but he must be a leader in lifestyle. God's people follow the leader in spiritual health and discipleship. The consequences of leading with wrong motives is the same level of punishment as the blessings to those leaders whose motives are right. Among other commendations he reckons this one, "for it is no light praise to devote to God those children which are given them of God. For if the basis, the foundation which they lay be good, great will be their reward; as great, if they neglect it, will be their punishment."[26] Pastoring God's flock requires both right motives and godly living.

Commentary by Matthew Henry

Matthew Henry provides a context to understand the portion of the scriptures where much of the doctrine of the church and pastor relationship is taught. It is this context that helps

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[24] Knute Larson, *I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, vol. 9, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 182.

[25] Simon J. Robinson, *Opening up 1 Timothy*, Opening Up Commentary (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2004), 52.

[26] John Chrysostom, "Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the First Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to Timothy," in *Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. James Tweed and Philip Schaff, vol. 13, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1889), 436.

develop the biblical role of the relationship. "The two epistles to Timothy, and that to Titus, contain a scripture-plan of church-government, or a direction to ministers. Timothy, we suppose, was an evangelist who was left at Ephesus, to take care of those whom the Holy Ghost had made bishops there, that is, the presbyters, as appears by Acts 20:28, where the care of the church was committed to the presbyters, and they were called bishops"[27] He also says that the Holy Spirit is the one who calls the bishop into the work.

Commentary by Warren W. Wiersbe

Dr. Wiersbe clearly states that the different terms used in the New Testament for the positions of the church's leaders are one and the same. "According to the New Testament, the terms "bishop," "pastor," and "elder" are synonymous."[28] Many have debated this subject and have interpreted these words to be different offices, but Wiersbe makes it extremely evident that this is one office. This aids the project by defining the office from the New Testament preceptive.

The Bible Panorama by Gerard Chrispin

Chrispin teaches the function of the pastoral office. "The word 'bishop' means overseer or supervisor. Such a man in the church must have well-defined spiritual and practical qualities about which Paul reminds Timothy. No one should be the leader in a church unless God has worked in his heart to give him a mature Christian character."[29] The emphasis of the function is based on the maturity of the individual holding the office of bishop.

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[27] Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2353.

[28] Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 219.

[29] Gerard Chrispin, *The Bible Panorama: Enjoying the Whole Bible with a Chapter-by-Chapter Guide* (Leominster, UK: Day One Publications, 2005), 525.

Commentary by Paul M. Zehr

Zehr aids in the understanding of the word 'bishop' and its meaning. "In the Hellenistic world, the term *bishop* was used to describe those who held various official positions in respect to their office and work (*TDNT* 2:611)."[30] This historical understanding gives insight to Paul using different terms for the same office. To divide the office into different position violates the cultural context of the author.

Reading Galatians, Philippians, and I Thessalonians by Charles B. Cousar

This work provided a picture of the relationship that the church and its leaders should enjoy. This relationship should be filled with hard work from the leader and deep respect from the congregation. The emphasis upon the love relationship is the core foundation of this project. The relationship between the church and its leader must have a foundation a biblical love. "The initial exhortations of this section (5:12–13) speak of acknowledging and honoring leaders within the congregation. Determining whether the three activities listed designate three types of leaders or whether they characterize three activities performed by a single group of leaders is uncertain."[31] The uncertainty that is addressed does appear to be an issue in the text. The Free Will Baptist denomination as a whole has historically held to a single pastor with helpers instead of a plural eldership.

Commentary by Cecil E. Sherman

Sherman address one of the most difficult subjects since the Reformation when it comes to the function or the practice of the local church; that is, the question of authority. This project

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TDNT Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G. W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. 1964–76.

[30] Paul M. Zehr, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottdale, PA; Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 2010), 78.

[31] Charles B. Cousar, *Reading Galatians, Philippians, and 1 Thessalonians : A Literary and Theological Commentary*, Reading the New Testament Series (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2001), 232.

addresses this issue by allowing the local church and the candidate pastor to describe their view on the authority of the leader. "Since the Reformation, the Protestant part of the church has struggled as the question about authority has grown into near rejection of authority."[32] Each local church and pastor need to evaluate the scriptures to come to a clear understanding of the authority of the pastor and the authority of the church prior to beginning their relationship.

The Pauline Letters by David S. Dockery

Dockery adds to the discussion of the authority of the local church by emphasizing the responsibility which each member of the local church must carry out in the Christian community. "The concluding section stresses the responsibilities to the different people in the Christian community. Paul told them they were responsible to church leaders. Leaders were to guard against abusing their authority.[33] The leaders must guard against abusing the authority that God has given them to oversee his people. His people must make sure that they practice the Christian disciplines, while not taking the authority that God has given to the local leader or leaders.

A Practical Guide for Pastoral Ministry by Stan Toler

Stan Toler, in his book *A Practical Guide for Pastoral Ministry,* provides a broad detail about how a candidate should pattern his life. Tolar, the former General Superintendent of the Church of the Nazarene, walks through the characteristics a pastoral leader should exemplify in his personal life, family life, and ministry. Tolar makes the following observation, "a multi-member church doesn't make a great pastor. A multi-million-dollar church campus doesn't make a great pastor. A multi-degreed seminarian doesn't make a great pastor. Many pastors are great

[32] Cecil E. Sherman, *Cecil Sherman Formations Commentary: Romans - Revelations.*, vol. 5, Cecil Sherman Formations Commentary Series (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Pub., 2006), 130.

[33] David S. Dockery, "The Pauline Letters," in *Holman Concise Bible Commentary*, ed. David S. Dockery (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 598.

pastors despite all that. There is something more, something far deeper and far wider."[34] The stage is set for a high goal of Christian living for those who desire to be a pastor, and this book provides a clear path for a local church to evaluate what they are looking for in a pastoral candidate. It also offers day-to-day expectations for a pastoral candidate in developing solid pastoral leadership. A recommendation to read Toler's book could be given to a church's leadership and the pastoral candidates during the selection process to provide context for discussing a pastor's position and to set goals.

Re: Vision The Key to Transforming Your Church by Malphurs and Penfold

Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon Penfold in their book, *Re:Vision The Key to Transforming Your Church,* adds to this project by providing insight into church health, "The authors have observed over the years that there are two essential elements for church renewal. The primary need is for the right pastor. The second factor is a willing congregation. When these two dynamics come together, a vibrant, renewed ministry is the outcome."[35] Evaluating the health of a local church is painful, but vital. It requires a deep dive into emotions, reasons for service, and even one's abilities for the pastorate. Malphurs and Penfold give further insight into what the American church is facing, "in the mid-1960s, church leaders began to notice a disturbing trend, something hereto unnoticed in America: many major denominations had ceased growing."[36] This decrease in church growth may appear to have no connection with the pastoral selection and church condition on the surface, but it does.

[34] Stan Toler, *Stan Toler's Practical Guide for Pastoral Ministry* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2007), 15-16.

[35] Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon E. Penfold, *Re:Vision The Key to Transforming Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: bakers Books a division of Baker Publishing Group), 21.

[36] Ibid.

According to Malphurs and Penfold, "Troubling signs do appear at every juncture."[37] These two writers also make further observations about the conditions that FWB churches are facing, "Church planting and church closure can be likened to a truck at the loading dock. Forklifts on one side of the truckload of the freight—that's church planting. On the other side of the truck, some forklifts unload it—that's the effect of church closures. The truck never gets loaded! Church planting alone will not solve the problem of the decline of the church in the United States."[38]

Churches are often in hospice care but expect a new birth. If there is no turnaround in the hospice situation shortly after the new pastor arrives, dissatisfaction and bitterness from the congregation sets in. At the beginning of this new relationship, the church saw themselves as a young married couple preparing to give birth when, in reality, they were a dying corpse in need of resurrection. This project can help a local church evaluate its spiritual condition honestly while they are in the pastoral search. The pastoral candidate needs to understand his spiritual health before the two are joined together for life. The evaluation of the spiritual health of both parties is not often seen as necessary, but it is vital for the local church to have a revitalized, turnaround ministry with the new pastor.

Malphurs and Penfold's book plays a significant role in the project's research connecting church health with pastoral candidates. The book gives the reader an overall view of the American church's condition at a point in history before the 2020 global pandemic caused by Covid-19. All the information is pre-pandemic. The condition of the American church in 2021 is

[37] Ibid.

[38] Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon E. Penfold, *Re:Vision The Key to Transforming Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: bakers Books a division of Baker Publishing Group), 25.

in even further decline than it was when this book was written.[39] This resource provides a snapshot of the local church's thinking and functionality in America before the pandemic that caused churches to shut down and some to never reopen. The tool that will be used to help the local church must include that local church's current spiritual health condition. The pastor and church relationship will always be significantly affected when the spiritual health of both is not evaluated. Complex questions like non-negotiables, the future vision for the church, and the spiritual gifts approach used by the church and pastor must be asked.

Re:Vision gives insight into the behavior of the pastoral candidate. Malphurs and Penfold state, "temperament or type is your unique, God-given (inborn) behavioral style. Your temperament is a combination of preferences you choose when taking the Personality Profile (DISC) and/or Meyers-Biggs Type Indicator (MBITI).[40] The emotional makeup of a pastor gives excellent insight into where and how he will lead the flock of God in a local fellowship. Using tools like DISC and Myers-Biggs allows the church to know the individual's personality they are about to join in a loving relationship to advance the Kingdom work. Pastoring a church is a people business and learning who you are as a pastor is essential in understanding one's gifts and abilities. When a church learns the pastor's personality, it allows the church to understand the makeup of the pastor. While it is impossible to do a personality test for the entire church, it could be beneficial if those in leadership would be willing to take the test to see how they match up with the new pastor. This will also help with conflict resolution; when conflict arises, they can share the results of their personality tests and realize that often it is the personality, not the issue, that causes the problem.

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[39] Chuck Carter, https://churchanswers.com/blog/five-lessons-i-am-learning-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/

[40] Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon E. Penfold, *Re:Vision The Key to Transforming Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: bakers Books a division of Baker Publishing Group), 69.

Malphurs and Penfold also instruct a church about the need to embrace the characteristics of a pastor who will lead them from a hospice bed to a productive and enjoyable spiritual life. [41]This project encourages the local assembly to search and locate a pastor who will take the church to the next spiritual level. Several churches working with this project are in decline. Part of the pastoral search is to encourage the church's leadership to seek a candidate to help them revitalize the church. The project is not just premarital counseling for the new pastor in the church; it must be continued coaching to work out the most problematic areas and keep everyone on the same page.

The Free Will Baptist Church Directory

The *FWB Church Directory* adds to this project by providing statistics that show an overall decline in the local church. The average membership in a FWB Church in 1990 was 83 members; in 2020, the FWB Convention reported an average membership of 65.[42] In the reporting years of 1990 to 2019, the convention lost 440 churches.

Resilient Ministry by Burns, Chapman, and Guthrie

On the journey to spiritual health, the pastor must not neglect his own condition. This is crucial to be effective in spiritual warfare. Bob Burns states, "It is easy to assume that pastors are always on a clear unintentional spiritual growth trajectory in his book *Resilient Ministry*. After all, when was the last time you heard someone ask pastors how are you doing in your walk with the Lord? You might think it is rude to bring up the issue."[43] During the interview process of a

[41] Aubrey Malphurs and Gordon E. Penfold, *Re:Vision The Key to Transforming Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: bakers Books a division of Baker Publishing Group), 143.

[42] NAFWB.org/Church Directory

[43] Bob Burns, Tasha D. Chapman, and Donald C. Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books), 19.

pastoral candidate, the church is permitted to investigate and know the candidate's practices to stay on a path of spiritual maturity.

One of the most uncomfortable things for a pastor and a church is conflict resolution. Burns makes a profound observation many pastors have faced, "Avoiding conflict will inevitably result in a failure to face and address emotions. And by not addressing them, these emotions can begin to control us."[44] The interviewing church and the prospective pastoral candidate need to discuss the importance of conflict resolution. The pastoral candidate needs to know it is not acceptable to ignore people on Sunday or refuse to answer a text or email because of conflict. He must have the skills and tools to deal with conflict in a biblical way.

The Emotionally Healthy Leader by Peter Scazzer

A pastoral candidate's past personal experience with conflict can also influence their leadership. When disputes arise within the church, this can trigger unexpected emotional responses. Peter Scazzero refers to past experiences with conflict as shadows. In his book, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader,* Scazzero addresses the shadow as, "The shadow is the accumulation of untamed emotions, less than pure motives and thoughts that, while largely unconscious, strongly influence and shape your own behavior. It is the damage but mostly hidden version of who you are."[45] Shadows of a pastor are often the results of an experience (or experiences) of troubled family life, church conflict, and personal emotional battles. A pastor may have experienced rejection as a child by his parents, and that rejection is a *shadow* that continues to prevail anytime there is a possibility of rejection. The church needs to be aware some pastors have battle scars that are not visible; they can be deeply wounded on the inside.

[44] Bob Burns, Tasha D. Chapman, and Donald C. Guthrie, *Resilient Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books), 111.

[45] Peter Scazzer, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 55.

The wounds will affect decision-making, conflict resolution, and general duties. Every individual, including the local pastor, has emotions that must be factored into their daily operation as the shepherd of God's people.

Small Church Essentials by Karl Vaters

Karl Vaters adds to the project a diagnosis that applies to many small churches dealing with conflict. Vaters says, "small churches do, unfortunately, tend to attract control freaks. A small pond meets the big fish. Sure, there are passive audience members in small churches too. The less healthy the church, the more there are."[46] This is where many small churches find themselves, with no pastor and an unhealthy congregation. This issue manifests in the vacancy of a pastor and often creates a situation where the "big fish" does not really want a pastor or another leader.

The Pastoral Epistles by Alfred Plummer

Plummer gives light to Paul's teaching in the book of Titus when it comes to pastoral leadership. He ties the teaching from the book of Titus to the instructions that the apostle Paul gives to his son in the ministry, Timothy. Both books emphasize the qualification and functions of a pastor. "This passage is one of the most important in the New Testament respecting the Christian ministry; and in the Pastoral Epistles it does not stand alone. Of the two classes of ministers mentioned here, one is again touched upon in the Epistle to Titus (i. 5–9), and the qualifications for this office, which is evidently the superior of the two, are stated in terms not very different from those which are used in the passage before us."[47] Plummer further investigates the question as to why there are different officers defined in the New Testament with

[46] Karl Vaters, *Small Church Essentials* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2018), 111.
[47] Plummer, Alfred. *The Pastoral Epistles*. Toronto: Willard Tract Depository and Bible Depôt, 1888.

similar qualifications. The pastor and the congregation are the only two that are relevant to this project.

Paul and His Letters by John Polhill

Polhill's work adds to this project by examining the importance of church health and the identification of disorderly individuals within their fellowship. Disorderly people inside the fellowship of a local church will erode the love for a pastor and create conflict that is both difficult and painful to deal with.

> The word translated *idle* literally means "disorderly" and could refer to some in the church who, though dependent on the church, were doing their "own thing," neither following the leadership of the church nor bearing their own share in providing for the church's common life. The problem seems to have increased by the time Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians, and Paul addressed it in more severe terms there (2 Thess. 3:6–15).[48]

It is interesting to note that the problem has accelerated because it has not been dealt with completely in the New Testament church as Paul had told them to do. Lack of discipline in a local church can become the core issue to why pastors cannot stay with longevity.

The Biblical Illustrator by Jospeh S. Exell

Exell expounds upon I Thessalonians 5:12-14 about the four components in a healthy church and pastor relationship.

> **1.** The due proportion of that respect: esteem them in love.
> **2.** The motive which should influence: "for their work's sake." A high valuation of the ministerial office.
> **3.** The evidences which prove it is genuine. Attention to the comfortable support of a minister. A regular, devout, conscientious attendance on his ministry. A tender regard for his character.
> **4.** The mode by which the text enforces the duty.[49]

[48] John B. Polhill, *Paul and His Letters* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1999), 195.
[49] Joseph S. Exell, *The Biblical Illustrator: Thessalonians*, vol. 1 (New York; Chicago; Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.), 219.

Apostle Paul ends this passage by talking about the need for duty. Other resource referenced in this project have said that the importance of duty both in the Christian fellowship and leadership is crucial.

New Testament Text and Translation Commentary by Philip W. Comfort

The context of 1 Thessalonians 5 is clearly defined in *The New Testament Text and Translation Commentary*, with a direct emphasis on the purpose for writing, which is to have unity and every believer practicing spiritual disciplines. The spiritual disciplines provide the atmosphere of spiritual health and a great relationship between the congregation and the leadership.

> The first reading presents a general call to corporate peace and unity among all the members of the church in Thessalonica. Though the second reading could mean the same thing, it also allows for the interpretation that Paul was calling the Thessalonians to be at peace with the leaders in their church (see 5:12, where προισταμενους ["the ones exercising leadership"] is the most natural reference for αυτοις ["them"]).[50]

One interesting truth that is expounded upon in this work is the need for peace inside the body or the fellowship of a local church. Peace leads to an atmosphere where the congregation practices spiritual gifts and the leader fulfills his responsibilities.

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[50] Philip W. Comfort, *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary: Commentary on the Variant Readings of the Ancient New Testament Manuscripts and How They Relate to the Major English Translations* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2008), 648.

Holman New Testament Commentary

This commentary provides the structure of a healthy and visionary church. The minister's spiritual gifts cannot be employed or bought; rather, those gifts must come supernaturally from the Holy Spirit. The church's work is spiritual, not natural. "Spiritual gifts are at the heart of Christ's strategy for building his church. The gifts are ministers (or ministries) for the church."[51] Paul, in the book of Ephesians, does lay out that the spiritual gifts of the pastor are for the upbuilding and strengthening of the local church. It is impossible to talk about the local church and pastor relationship without a strong study of spiritual gifts.

Ephesians, Believers Church Bible Commentary by Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld

The Believers Church Bible Commentary further explains the context of spiritual gifts in the choosing of a pasture by making it clear that gifts are distinctive and individual. Not one person has all the spiritual gifts. "Careful comparison with Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 allows the distinctiveness of our text to emerge (chart in TBC). In Ephesians, the list is of persons rather than ministries. Further, the list is much shorter than even Romans 12:8–10."[52] A healthy functioning church is one where spiritual gifts are emphasized and practiced. This is evidence that the Holy Spirit is working in the midst of the congregation.

Reading Colossians, Ephesians, and 2 Thessalonians: A Literary and Theological Commentary by Bonnie Bowman Thurston

This text provides instructions and enlightenment on understanding the importance of Christian unity. Unity is very important in the body of Christ. This becomes crucial in the life of a local church. "In the light of his understanding of Christian unity, the writer must account for

[51] Max Anders, *Galatians-Colossians*, vol. 8, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 152.

[52] Thomas R. Yoder Neufeld, *Ephesians*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2001), 179.

the differences among Christians. Unity, he explains, is not sameness; each Christian has received grace through the generosity of Christ the giver (cf. 2:5, 8), and each has a measure of Christ's gifts, a share, but a unique share."[53] The church must operate under the power of the Holy Spirit by allowing the pastor to use spiritual gifts in the oversight of the local church. The local church belongs to the savior; therefore, he will gift his church to carry out the mission.

The Eerdmans Companion to the Bible

Eerdmans provides a warning to a local church on the importance of theological training and biblical practice for the church to experience God's goal for that local assembly. "The task of the church as a whole consists in growing up theologically for effectiveness in further building itself up (vv. 13–16). Leaders and laypeople share responsibility for this task as they perform their variously vital ministerial functions (vv. 11–12)."[54] This warning is clear that if God is going to use a pastor or a local church there must be a building up and a growing atmosphere. This growing atmosphere comes from being willing to be a true disciple or follower of Jesus Christ in a local church.

Pastoral Epistles in the Bible

The books of Thessalonians, Timothy, and Titus are considered pastoral epistles. While these books do not provide exclusive content of the role of a pastor in the local church, they give us deep insight into the God-directed position of the pastor. The word pastor, from the biblical perspective, means to shepherd. Shepherding is depicted throughout the Old and New Testaments. The Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:11 describes the pastoral office or gift of a

[53] Bonnie Bowman Thurston, *Reading Colossians, Ephesians, and 2 Thessalonians : A Literary and Theological Commentary*, Reading the New Testament Series (Macon, GA: Smith & Helwys Publishing, 2007), 124.

[54] Gordon D. Fee and Robert L. Hubbard Jr., eds., *The Eerdmans Companion to the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), 671–673.

shepherd as one who teaches. Another word used in the New Testament as a description of a church leader is a bishop. Paul tells Timothy in I Timothy 3:1, "a man who desires the office of bishop wants a good work." John Gill makes this observation,

> If a man desire the office of a bishop: which is the same with that of a pastor or elder; and so here the Syriac version renders it, if a man desires presbytery, or eldership; and it lies in preaching the word, administering the ordinances of the Gospel, and taking care of the discipline of the church, and in the visiting, inspection, and oversight of it; as the word επισκοπη, episcopacy, here used, signifies; and this work and office may be lawfully and laudably desired, with a view to the glory of God, and the good of immortal souls.[55]

The office of pastor is the idea of leadership in all aspects of developing and caring for the flock of God. God gifts a man to shepherd or oversee His people. The pastoral role is a spiritual discipleship that makes disciples and cares for the people's needs.

Titus

The Apostle Paul leaves Titus at Crete to lead the church in discipleship, leadership, and spiritual instructions on church leadership. The book of Titus gives a picture of a pastor being both a leader, defender, and one who feeds the people of God. Interestingly, the pastor and local church relationship is a loving relationship revealed in some elders' qualifications both in Titus and in I Timothy. Paul describes some of the qualifications of an elder as one who has hospitality, a lover of good, and one who is not to be arrogant and does not have a quick temper; all of these are characteristics of building a loving relationship with people. Gloer mentions the tradition behind this passage, "It suggests the possibility that those "overhearing" the letter would assume that the elders would serve in ways similar to those who served in the synagogue."[56] Paul's concern here is not with defining the duties but with describing the

[55] John Gill, *An Exposition of the New Testament*, vol. 3, The Baptist Commentary Series (London: Mathews and Leigh, 1809), 288.

[56] W. Hulitt Gloer, 1 & 2 Timothy–Titus, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Leslie Andres, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Incorporated, 2010), 34.

character of prospective elders. The character of the individual who fulfills the office of the overseer or a pastor must have spiritual maturity.

Timothy

Paul instructs Timothy that those who want to be a leader must not be a novice or undeveloped in their faith. The depth of the spiritual leader will be revealed and displayed in the life of the shepherd as he deals with his sheep. Jesus taught that the shepherd gives his life for the sheep. This calling on an individual's life to provide oversight and protection to those who are Jesus' followers leads those followers into a deeper relationship in their faith. This relationship must be carried out not with manipulation or rudeness, but with tenderness, kindness, and love.

I Thessalonians

Toward the end of the first epistle to the Thessalonian church, Paul instructs the body of Christ on how they are to respond to spiritual leadership. The Apostle uses three words in I Thessalonians 5:12 to describe respecting those who lead a congregation.

The first word Paul uses to describe the expected response to the pastor is "labor." While Paul describes three aspects, they are to be understood as one office. Brown says,

> The Thessalonian church being newly planted, the ministers were novices (1 Timothy 3:6), which may account for the people treating them with less respect. Paul's practice was to ordain elders in every church soon after its establishment (Acts 14:23). them which labour among you, and are over you … admonish you. Not three classes, but one, as there is but one article common to the three (Greek). "Labour" expresses their laborious life: "are over you," their pre-eminence as superintendents ("bishops," i.e., overseers, Phil. 1:1; them that have rule over you [proistamenous, leaders], Heb. 13:17; "pastors," Eph. 4:11): "admonish you," their leading function [nouthetountas]; "put in mind:" not arbitrary authority, but gentle, though faithful, admonition (2 Tim. 2:14, 24, 25; 1 Pet. 5:3). in the Lord.[57]

[57] David Brown, A. R. Fausset, and Robert Jamieson, *A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Acts–Revelation*, vol. VI (London; Glasgow: William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited, n.d.), 468.

Bridges gives context to this concept of labor, "Paul is calling for an attitude of appreciation for the manual workers in the congregation. The men living in the worshiping community work very hard. Paul challenges the others in the community to respect, appreciate, and acknowledge those people." [58] Pastoral work as seen in Scripture is hard work, even causing an individual to become weary. The congregation is to respect that kind of hard work and embrace the leadership of one who serves in that capacity. This word labor applies to the word pastor or shepherd in its true sense.

Secondly, Paul describes responding to the pastor with the word "over." The modern-day concept of the pastor/church relationship has been greatly flawed by the words "hiring a pastor." In most cultures, if someone hires you, they are your supervisor, and you must answer their demands. The New Testament teaches something far different when it comes to the election of a pastor; the pastor is over the congregation instead of the congregation over the pastor. The word "over" in I Thessalonians 5:12 gives the idea of being a superintendent, or one who gives directions. When Paul uses the term "over," it appears he had the word bishop in mind due to the emphasis of the overseer. One must keep in mind that Paul has already dealt with the pastor's character and attitude. This overseeing must be done out of a spirit of love, not out of manipulation or rudeness.

The third word in this passage about responding to the pastor is "admonish." This word applies to both the shepherd component of pastoring and the teaching component of pastoring. The warning of false teachers is why Paul had written to Titus, and the early church battled with false teachers like all ages of history. In 2 Timothy 3, Paul warns of congregations going to teachers who would please them instead of warning them. The word admonish will emphasize

[58] Linda McKinnish Bridges, *1 & 2 Thessalonians*, ed. Leslie Andres and R. Alan Culpepper, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing Incorporated, 2008), 158.

that the shepherd is to teach and preach the truth of the Gospel and the congregation is to honor that hard labor in speaking truth instead of what they want to hear. In this context, the New Testament places a grave responsibility on the pastor to preach the truth and on the church to not just receive the truth but to honor the man who preaches the truth of God's work. In all cultures, it is easier to allow the culture to set the standard than the Word of God. God has placed a relationship in His man's hand and His people where the truth is to prevail and be understood.

God has given the pastor the authority to live, teach, guide, and oversee the people. The pastor and church relationship is not a social or secular opportunity; rather, it is a spiritual endeavor. The biblical model in this relationship is built off love, respect, and a desire for each other's spiritual, emotional, financial, and domestic well-being.

1 & 2 Thessalonians, MacArthur New Testament Commentary

John MacArthur tells the importance of a hard-working pastor. The labor is to hard or one is not to lazy in the ministry.

> To preach a sermon, I think, is not the hardest part; and yet what skill is necessary to make the truth plain; to convince the hearers, to let irresistible light in to their consciences, and to keep it there, and drive all home; to screw the truth into their minds, and work Christ into their affections; to meet every objection, and clearly to resolve it; to drive sinners to a stand, and make them see that there is no hope, but that they must unavoidably either be converted or condemned—and to do all this, as regards language and manner, as beseems our work, and yet as is most suitable to the capacities of our hearers. This, and a great deal more that should be done in every sermon, must surely require a great deal of holy skill. So great a God, whose message we deliver, should be honoured by our delivery of it. It is a lamentable case, that in a message from the God of heaven, of everlasting moment to the souls of men, we should behave ourselves so weakly, so unhandsomely, so imprudently, or so slightly, that the whole business should miscarry in our hands, and God should be dishonoured, and his work disgraced, and sinners rather hardened than converted; and all this through our weakness or neglect! How often have carnal hearers gone home jeering at the palpable and dishonourable failings of the preacher! How many sleep under us, because our hearts and tongues are sleepy, and we bring not with us so much skill and zeal as to awake them![59]

[59] John F. MacArthur Jr., 1 & 2 Thessalonians, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 2002), 171.

This is the goal for the church to see the pastor's work as labor and the for the pastoral candidate to understand the expectation.

Theological Foundations

The pastor and local church relationship is rooted in the New Testament. This relationship is designed to reflect God working through gifted individuals for the church to experience spiritual development. Jesus prayed in John 17 that those who follow Him would be one. A foundation of the Christian faith is that believers are to love one another. This theological foundation means the sheep and the shepherd are to love one another. Jesus instructed His followers to love God and to love one another. This love must become the anchor of the pastor and church relationship.

Local Church

Local church is emphasized in much of the New Testament, especially in the epistles. The local church is described also in the Book of Revelation. Revelation chapter two and three describe seven local churches with several different spiritual issues both positive and negative. The local church is described in the Free Will Baptist Treaties, "*A Christian Church* is an organized body of believers in Christ who statedly assemble to worship God, and who sustain the ordinances of the Gospel according to the Scriptures."[60] The denomination has held that the local church is the foundation of all relationships within the denomination. It is the place where all functions of spiritual growth and ordinances are exercised. The Treatise identifies the relationship of the local church, "Believers in Christ are admitted to this church on giving evidence of faith in Christ, obtaining consent of the body, being baptized, and receiving the right hand of fellowship"[61] This is the anchor of the Free Will Baptist connection is the church

[60] Nafwb.org/treatise
[61] Nafwb.org/treatise

membership. Richard B. Vinson brings to light the importance of the local church in the New Testament by emphasizing the connection between John and Peter's writings, "Revelation was addressed to Christian congregations in seven cities in Asia and was likely written within a few years of 1 Peter."[62]

The Office of Pastor

The New Testament describes the office of pastor as an elder, bishop, and shepherd of God's flock. Paul, in Ephesian 4:11-12, gives insight into the spiritual gift. The one who holds this office is a teacher. Paul tells the qualifications of a bishop in I Timothy 3. One of those is the ability to teach. Peter gives more emphasis to this in I Peter 5, with the teaching that that the shepherd is to feed the flock.

The church is to recognize that teaching and leading of the pastor as labor (I Thessalonians 5:12-14). The office is a laboring function of the local church, this work is reproving, rebuking, encouraging, and preaching (II Timothy 4:2). The pastor is to be skilled in the scriptures (II Timothy 2:15). E. Y Mullins adds to the discussion of the office of pastor "Pastors and teachers are coupled together, since they were the same officer. The pastor tended the flock and looked after the wandering, and a part of his duty was to teach." [63]

This office is given a high level of respect to the point of being obedient to their teaching (Thessalonians 5:14, Hebrews 13:7,17). The one who desires the office of pastor must meet the qualifications by living them. The pastor preaches the Word as a student of the scriptures. Then, those who are under his oversight can follow and obey him in the doctrines of the Bible. Thomas

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[62] Richard B. Vinson, Richard F. Wilson, and Watson E. Mills, *1 & 2 Peter, Jude*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Leslie Andres, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Incorporated, 2010), 230.

[63] E. Y. Mullins, *Studies in Ephesians* (Nashville, TN: The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1935), 95.

B. Slater describes the task of the pastor, "The ministers endowed and selected by Christ shall bring the rest of God's Church to maturity. These ministers shall enable the lay members to fulfill their spiritual calling. Their calling is defined in general as "the work of service." This service is self-giving." [64]

Dr. Robert Picirilli, one of Free Will Baptist most noted authors and theological leaders, says, "Feed" (Greek *poimaino*) refers not simply to finding grazing for the sheep but to all the duties of a shepherd who tends a flock. It is the verb form of the noun for shepherd (Greek *poimen*), and the noun "flock" (Greek *poimnion*) is another on the same root. It is another of Peter's "decisive" imperatives (Greek aorist) and thus means that they are to set themselves in this work.[65]

Theoretical Foundations

The theories approached in this project are directly tied to the pastor relationship in a Free Will Baptist Church. One theory is that there is a need for long term pastorals in the FWB movement. The Committee on Denominational Research continues to report the average age of pastors as above sixty years old, placing churches with a future where there are less pastors in the pool of possibility.[66] The questionnaire used with churches and pastoral candidates allow some research to find the length of time churches had a pastor and their history, but also to see what men had moved from pastorate to pastorate. The churches participating had average 18 pastors in the last 20 years and the average tenure was 1.5 years. One church in the participating churches

[64] Thomas B. Slater, *Ephesians*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2012), 113.

[65] Robert E. Picirilli, "Commentary on the Books of 1 and 2 Peter," in *James, 1, 2 Peter, & Jude*, ed. Robert E. Picirilli, First Edition., The Randall House Bible Commentary (Nashville, TN: Randall House Publications, 1992), 204.

[66] https://nafwb.org/site/research/

served a 13-year tenure. This theory will need to be watched by the Free Will Baptist leaders in the next 10 years.

The second theory was the need for Free Will Baptist churches to have a more knowledgeable interview process. Instead of focusing on first impressions, experience and preaching style, the emphasis would be on day-to-day functions, taking a premarital style approach. This theory cannot be tested until years of research can be completed on the churches who are a part of this project.

A third theory was that a questionnaire needed to be developed to guide the conversation between the parties involved. The project coordinator met with pulpit committees during the project and found little to no direction on how to do a pastoral interview. Committees knew how to hire someone but not how to develop a loving relationship for the future. This theory was confirmed when working with pulpit committees. Learning to get away from the idea that change can come after the relationship is established is a big step for both parties to be honest with each other.

Conclusion

The church and pastoral relationship can be bright and powerful if people will deal honestly with their conditions. If the pastoral candidate provides a clear direction, this can bring revitalization to the church and provide a wonderful future of ministry for the new pastor.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Working among a Baptist organization with autonomous churches can be complicated and highly offensive if not handled with great wisdom. Keeping the local church's autonomy while trying to aid them in a pastoral search requires more of a mediation relationship than a top-down approach. This project attempts to use a methodology to help both parties understand their spiritual health. This project also addresses the issues that divide the pastor and the church.

The researcher investigated the 50 years that local churches reported to the National Association of Free Will Baptists (NAFWB). Researchers look at church membership, ministries, pastoral tenured, and financial history. This material highlighted the importance of establishing a healthy relationship between the pastor and the church in the infancy of said relationship instead of waiting until they joined in an agreement for life.

The initial idea of this project came from the Executive Committee of the NAFWB while meeting in Nashville, Tennessee, in July of 2020. The states and associations reported a loss of churches and many open pulpits needing to be filled.[67] In his first year of being the executive leader of Free Will Baptist (FWB), Executive Secretary Eddie Moody called the vacant pulpits a crisis in his report to the General Board of Free Will Baptist.[68] Although the reports given during that meeting were preliminary, they showed a trend that the pastoral pool was

[67] 2020 Digest of Reports https://nafwb.org/site/2020-national-convention/
[68] Ibid.

diminishing. This was largely due to the pandemic, which only added to the already present plethora of issues causing pastoral vacancies. That same year, FWB colleges were reporting a decline in students in the pastoral ministry programs. In some cases, their ministerial student body was larger than previous years, but many were studying for other top ministries rather than the pastorate.[69]

Analyzing the Reports

The project started with research to analyze the FWB Church Directory to understand the condition of FWB churches. The 2019 Digest of Reports chart showed the continual decline of churches in this culture and the need for pastors to fill the existing vacancies.[70] In the fall of 2020, Dr. Eddie Moody sent an email to all state leaders requesting the number of churches without pastors. Within 30 minutes, 126 churches reported vacancies.[71] At this point in the project, the Executive Office of the NAFWB became a partner in providing materials for this project. This partnership was valuable for gathering data and comprehending the profundity of the need for this project.

Dr. Moody and his staff aided in gathering vital information for the project. They also communicated to the denomination that this project would seek to aid churches without pastors. Information from individual churches was collected via a form. The Executive Office of NAFWB promoted the form on their website, the Executive Secretary's podcast Better Together, and in seminars at the national convention of FWB. This exposure was vital in gathering data from the churches. The denominational church directory provided the number of churches

[69] NAFWB.org/2019 Digest
[70] Ibid.
[71] Moody, Edward. "The Nehemiah Challenge". *Better Together*. January 3, 2022. January 3, 2022. https://www.facebook.com/BetterTogetherNAFWB

without pastors, and this also revealed that only two of the churches without pastors had a valid email address.

Research was also completed on the broader universal church to establish whether this was simply a FWB issue or if it was a persistent issue across all church movements. Research revealed that FWB churches were not alone in the matter of pastor and church relationships. Thom Rainer says,

> Though no two churches are alike, we are seeing common patterns and themes in these high pastor turnover churches. Here are five of the most common themes: 1. They think it's the pastors' fault. 2. They see the pastor as a hired hand for the church members. 3. They have a power group that desires to retain power. 4. They see those in the community as outsiders. They have established traditions and methodologies they refuse to give up.[72]

The available data suggests that North American church is struggling with the pastor and church relationship. A great deal of information has been gathered on the relationship between pastors and the church, but the data on the candidate process is scarce and vague. Little attention has been given to the relationship that is built during the pastoral search.

The project quickly learned that there were common issues in churches that had a frequent turnover in pastors. Rainer has completed a great deal of research on pastoral tenure, which aids in the understanding that issues of spiritual health exist in many churches with large pastoral turnovers. Every church has its own culture that is heavily influenced by its community. If a pastor moves from rural Alabama to Appalachian Eastern Kentucky, he must understand that there will be a culture shift. While the cultures may seem similar in some areas, they are far different.

[72] Thom Rainer. Five Common Themes in Churches with High Pastor Turnover, https://churchanswers.com/blog/five-common-themes-in-churches-with-high-pastor-turnover/

Analyzing the FWB Research Committee

Two years before this project was initiated, the national moderator of the NAFWB appointed a seven-person committee to research different aspects of the FWB Convention.[73] This research committee's findings confirmed their fears about the spiritual health of FWB churches and the need for new pastoral candidates. According to the data, the crisis had accelerated at a vast speed.[74] The pastoral need was in crisis mode due to the aging nature of the pastors serving the local churches. While the numbers are a little less than 10% of the existing churches, age alone necessitated a crisis. What was even more concerning was that denominational leaders, both state and national, expressed that age alone was not the only cause of the crisis. The lack of pastors was also being influenced by the global pandemic, which was taking the lives of existing pastors. There were also fewer pastoral candidates. The denominational leaders called a meeting of all state leaders, promotional directors, and moderators, to discuss the crisis of the availability of ministers for FWB churches

One of the NAFWB research committee issues is that many NAFWB churches have not responded to data gathering. Getting the right person in a local church to do the analysis is challenging and unlikely. The seven-person committee has served the denomination well. However, communication and isolation have created a hurdle that the NAFWB must overcome in gathering needed data for future research. The research committee and the Executive office have had a difficult time because of inadequate reporting from the churches. Research is the key to understanding the condition of the denomination at a particular time in history.

[73] NAFWB.org/minutes
[74] NAFWB.org

Meeting with National Leaders

Next step in trying to diagnose the problem and search for solutions states as well as give possible solutions. This was the first meeting of this type for national and state leaders to gather and discuss the pastor and church relationship. State leaders revealed their frustration and concerns for the local church and the lack of possible candidates to pastor local churches. They suggested a standardized questionnaire for the church and pastoral candidates to begin a process much like premarital counseling to aid in the longevity of a pastorate. This meeting ended with the same frustration the executive committee meeting had expressed: there were more problems than solutions.

In this meeting, the discussion was primarily focused on connecting churches without pastors with possible candidates, but other issues and solutions were also addressed. The state leaders discussed merging smaller churches, as well as the difficulty of convincing said churches to merge. One possible solution was to have a single pastor pastoring multiple churches at one time. This would mean an individual would pastor a church in one community as well as another in an adjoining neighborhood. The participants of the meeting agreed to continue discussing this multi-faceted approach in a future meeting.

The License Minister Pool

In the FWB structure, an individual cannot be ordained until first being licensed. The license period is different with each association; it can be as short as one year to as long as three years. A licensed minister's requirements will vary according to the traditions of his association's presbytery board. NAFWB has seen a significant decline in licensed ministers over the last two decades. In 2000 there were just over 550 licensed ministers; in the report of 2019, that number

had drastically fallen to under 400.[75] Over the last two decades, there was an increase of licensed ministers to almost 700 in 2009. So, in the previous decade, there was a deficiency of nearly half of the licensed ministers from 2009 to 2019. This makes for a bleak future for those churches that are currently looking for pastors. The current pastors are aging, and the numbers of future pastor candidates are narrowing. NAFWB must analyze the small number of licensed ministers in 2019 for the coming crisis the denomination will face.

How many of these numbers never moved beyond the licensing process? Some may have decided they do not have a call to ministry, others may have left the denomination, and still, others could be in their licensing process and not reached ordination yet. Several have been ordained and are pastoring larger churches and have become part of a more extensive pastoral staff. With 157 churches without pastors and (only 375 in the pool of future pastors) this number is staggering, because as noted earlier in the project, so many of the church's pastors are in the retirement years of life. Local ordination councils, state leaders, denominational colleges, and denominational leaders need to be prudent in observing this trend.

The trend of licensed ministers has experienced waves of highs and lows. In 2000 Free Will Baptist had under 600 licensed ministers. At the peak in 2008, there were almost 700 Free Will Baptist licensed ministers. From 2008 to 2019, there was a drastic drop in licensed minsters. Many of the licensed ministers representing the numbers on the below chart are now ordained and pastoring churches, the alarming reality shows a drop in the number of Free Will Baptist licensed ministers to almost half of those in 2008.

[75] NAFWB Data Base

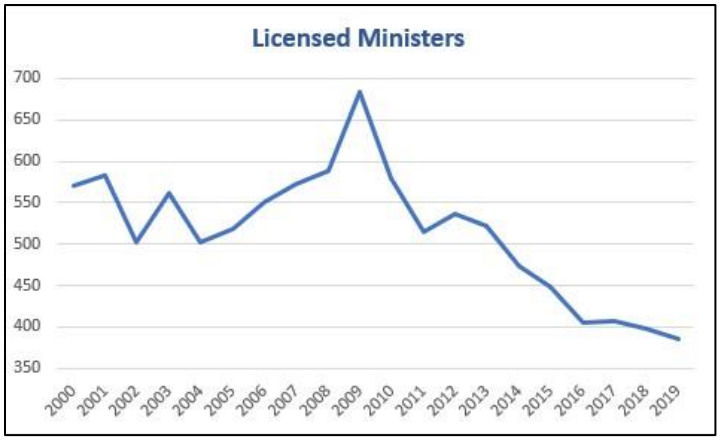

Figure 4: Free Will Baptist Licensed Ministers from 2000 to 2019

Intervention Design

This project's original goal was to resolve the crisis of short-term pastorates in FWB churches. As previously stated, one of the most challenging things about the project was taking autonomous Free Will Baptist churches and aiding them in the most difficult decision most of them will make. What was the process, and what information was needed to call a pastor for a loving, lifelong relationship? This question had to be answered because of the status and condition in which many of the 2,000 Free Will Baptist churches found themselves.

National and state leaders expressed a desire to have an instrument or tool that would aid in helping them connect with pastors who desired to lead churches. Meeting with national, state, and local church leaders, they expressed the desire for a tool to be developed to allow churches and pastoral candidates to see each other's profiles. The thought was that this would help both parties understand each other at the beginning of their relationship.

This project identified that healthy churches typically experienced extended longevity with the position of pastor. This project aimed to find a tool that would aid in a solid marital relationship between the pastor and the church. The Apostle Paul told the church at Thessalonica

that they were to give great respect to their leaders, and the goal of this project is to build that relationship for spiritual obedience on both sides.

All relationships must be built on love and trust. This project identified that the role of the pastor is not an employer-employee relationship but a loving one. This love relationship is built off trust and the well-being of each other. Until a relationship progresses to this point, there is little hope it can survive for an extended time, but with love, longevity is easy.

At a wedding, a bride and groom will pledge their love for each other and then vow to fulfill that love. At that same moment, they will sign a document called a marriage license. If the license becomes more important than the love relationship, the marriage will not thrive to a happy ending. But if the license stays in the drawer and they spend a lifetime of experiencing each other's care for one another, they will have a lasting relationship. The Lord wants His church to express His love in every way, and it is never more accurate than in the shepherd and sheep relationship. Scripture is clear that a shepherd lays down his life for his sheep; this is the love that is displayed between a pastor and a church. While driving through the countryside, there will never be a group of sheep gathered talking negatively about the shepherd, and there will never be a shepherd neglecting his sheep. May God help His church and His man to love one another in a loving, long relationship.

The idea of being dysfunctional in a relationship is offensive; therefore, many will take a path of resistance to healthiness to maintain the status quo. The design of the questionnaires used for the interview of both the church and pastoral candidates is for vision, reflection, and honest evaluation.

The 2,030 churches affiliated with the National Association of Free Will Baptists (NAFWB) worked with local associations, state leaders, and national leaders. Once the churches

and pastoral candidates completed the questionnaire, it instantly went to the NAFWB's website. The administrator of the website immediately emailed all profiles from both questionnaires to this research project director.

Personal Demographic Information

The project director formed the ideas of national and state leaders into a questionnaire that would complement the church and pastoral questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire was simple general information like addresses, phone number, email contact information, etc., that would be needed to contact each other.

Church and Candidate Background

The second section of the questionnaire was designed to allow the church to articulate its history. This would enable a candidate to understand the background of where the people had come from. In telling their history, they would also reveal what was important to them in the past. The project also requested the local church give a copy of the church's legal documents and financial reports. The pastoral candidate questionnaire provides the candidate with the opportunity to share his personal story of conversion and a testimony of his call to ministry.

Ministry Data and Statistics

The third section of the questionnaire would include general information about each party’s current ministries. This section was useful in gathering data such as average attendance of specific ministries, church membership, and number of deaths and baptisms in the previous year. This allowed both parties to analyze each other's current situation according to numerical statistics.

Compensation Packages

The fourth section requested each party to show their proposed compensation package. The church was asked to disclose salary, parsonage, housing allowance, utilities, and vehicle expenses. This section also asked if the church intended to pay the candidate's moving expenses. As for the candidate, the fourth section requested. As for the candidate, the fourth section required him to disclose his current salary and benefits. Both parties were asked to share expected cell phone allowances, medical insurance allowances, and any paid conventions or travel.

Organizational Structure

The fifth section dealt with other paid staff. This section asked the church to unveil all current positions and compensation. The pulpit committee needed to identify influential individuals inside the local church. This would allow the prospective pastor to get to know these individuals before the relationship began. It was important that the prospective pastor understood that these individuals would influence his ministry once he arrived in his new pastorate. Therefore, he needed to be aware of their impact on the congregation. This section would be pivotal in avoiding potential conflicts due to personality differences. The fifth section would also give the candidate an opportunity to share his experience overseeing a pastoral staff and any paid church employees. This was designed to help each party understand the importance of the day-to-day operation of the local church and how it would function with others on staff that require managing abilities.

Pastoral History

The pastoral history of the church was to be listed separately from the general history of the church. The local church talks about history, but there is a specific question about recent

pastors' longevity. The pastoral candidate must also reveal his recent pastorates and their longevity. The church and the candidate are asked to share about their present ministry, the attendance of different ministries, and what they are doing now. One factor that affected the project in these areas was the global pandemic of the coronavirus, where many ministries were shut down for long periods, and some have not returned to total capacity at this point in the project.

Negotiables and Non-Negotiables

While gathering data, it was discovered that negotiables and non-negotiables were of significant concern. All survey participants agreed on the importance of discussing preferences. Non-negotiables are standards that people are unwilling to forfeit; preferences are things they prefer but could be negotiable in practice. The discussion of negotiables and non-negotiables can include topics such as translations of Scripture, styles of music, or the next steps in ministry. It was prudent for those filling out the questionnaire to be honest and transparent with their answers. This segment of the questionnaire addressed the music issue as to what style of music the candidate's current church used. It also asked for the involvement of who selected the music for worship services. In some regions, it is culturally acceptable for the pastor to have complete authority in the music program, while in other geographic regions of the denomination, music is entirely selected by a worship minister or someone else appointed by the church or pastor.

Pastoral candidates were deeply appreciative for an opportunity to explicitly discuss these non-negotiables. For example, there exists a strong division on Bible translations in the FWB denomination. One church may strongly believe that the pastor should preach from the King James version only, while another church may not hold to such a strong stance. The candidate may be accustomed to another translation. If this were a non-negotiable, the candidate needs to

state that very clearly on the questionnaire, so the church is entirely aware of his views upfront. These kinds of non-negotiables need to be discussed at the beginning of the relationship.

As far as preferences, in one church, the deacons had emceed the service until time for the pastor to preach. If the new pastor thought it best to make the announcements and introduce the singing, that was a preference for which the church was willing to negotiate.

Role of the Pastor

Another crucial area the questionnaire addressed was how both parties viewed the role of the pastor. Was the role viewed as administrative only and preaching on Sunday, or was it a role expected to include active visitation and other duties? In some regions of the area among the FWB denomination, the local pastor becomes the community chaplain; he is required to visit his parishioners and all the other individuals in the community. In other areas, the pastor is viewed as the only individual who can reach the unchurched in that community, or he just preaches on Sunday and provides spiritual counsel throughout the week. These definitions or descriptions of duties can become very divisive once a pastor is in the position of the church, so the questionnaire allowed both groups to express what they thought about this job before anyone accepted the position

Ministry and Decision-Making Process

A pastoral candidate may have the impression that he would be the sole decision-maker of who fills the pulpit or the sole originator of ministries. This impression could be based on assumptions or prior experience. The questionnaire asked the church to describe how it would start a new class or new ministry. The pastoral candidate was also allowed to share how he viewed beginning a new ministry. There will always be variances of opinions and traditions involved in this discussion. The project did not intend for them to agree on every position before

receiving each other's profiles, but it did intend that they discuss issues early in the process of getting to know each other. This discussion will often end in them growing closer together or in deciding they cannot agree.

Local Church Polity

The church was asked to list all the boards and committees and their functions when they met, the names of those serving on the committee or board, and the terms of their office. This could be very revealing to a pastoral candidate as to the structure and organization of the church. Is it a board-run church or a pastor-led church? Could it be blended in its leadership style? The candidate was also asked to provide a description of boards and committees he had been accustomed to working with during his ministry. This view of church structure could reveal how the future relationship of these two parties might move forward.

The questionnaires then lead both parties to discuss the idea of welcoming visitors to their church. Sometimes the pastor hides in his office until the time of worship and stands in front of the church after the service, waiting for people to come and talk to him about spiritual matters. Other times, a pastor greets people as they enter the front door and greets the congregation as they depart the service. Some churches may expect the pastor to be a part of the greeting team made up of several individuals. It was the hope that all parties filling out the questionnaire would consider the importance of greeting visitors and would think through the expectations of the pastor in this new relationship. Discussing these expectations could help a pastoral candidate show vision in leadership and help the church to grow.

This tool also allowed for an analysis of the fellowship and unity of the church. This is the ideal point where the pulpit committee could be honest about a troublemaker or disclose if the church was divided on any issues. The answers from the pastoral candidate could reveal his

ability and thought process in solving division in the church. There is no physical gauge or standard to judge true spiritual unity in the body of Christ. The New Testament gives clear teaching that believers are to love another, forgive one another, and be kind to each other (Ephesians 4:32). Paul gives further instruction to the divided church at Galatia that they were to have the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5). The fruit of the Spirit is love, from this comes the rest of the fruit. The physical gauge is the fruit of those who displaying the truth of the love and the fruit of the Spirit. These answers would give excellent insight into the discernment of the leadership and their understanding of the spiritual analysis of the congregation they are representing. A divided congregation would need clear instructions and strong leadership from both the pastor and the other leaders to heal. There would not be a genuine loving relationship with the new pastor until there was a healing of unity in the hearts of the congregations and pastoral candidate.

FWB Practices

FWB practices three ordinances. One is baptism, and it is not scheduled in churches until there have been conversions. The questionnaire asked about the other two, communion and feet-washing, when they are practiced and how they are practiced. Regional areas have different traditions, allowing the church and the pastoral candidate to express their traditions about these two ordinances of communion and feet washing. This is an essential discussion of practicality that the two parties need to understand as they move into this new loving relationship.

Polity Process

The questionnaire also addressed business meetings and who would preside over those meetings. The church's constitution should express that both parties need to understand how often there are business meetings and who will preside over them. Some churches have a business meeting every month, while others meet in that capacity only once a year. These

answers would reveal a lot about the church's thoughts regarding control and trust during power struggles in the local church.

Preaching

Preaching style is vital to the pastoral candidate and the church. It is worth noting that all the churches that filled out the questionnaire emphasized they wanted biblical preaching. Style does matter. Churches who are fed a steady diet of expository preaching will struggle with a topical preacher. Vice versa, the same is true of a church who is accustomed to a topical preacher and then who hires an expository preacher. Addressing preaching style on the questionnaire allowed the pastoral candidate to express his conviction about preaching style and provide details as to how he approached Scripture.

Outreach

Outreach is often talking in general terms in an interview process with a pastoral candidate. The questionnaire asked the churches and pastoral candidates to express what outreach they were currently doing as they filled out the questionnaire. This allowed no room for pontificating or exaggerating what they might do in the future. Usually, what people are doing at present will be what they do in the future. This question gave both parties the opportunity to express their hearts for the unchurched and their plans to reach the unchurched.

Expectations of Pastor’s Family

The research found that many of the misunderstandings between pastors and churches were regarding the involvement of the pastor’s wife and children in ministry. The tool that the church filled out allowed them to express their expectations for the pastor's wife and family. The same is true for the pastoral candidate to express his expectations of the involvement of his wife and family.

Church's Giving and Generosity

The church was asked to describe their giving to causes both within the denomination and to outside ministries. The denomination is divided into two camps when it comes to financial giving. One is designated giving, and the other is the cooperative plan. Churches are often interested in a missions program, a local crisis pregnancy center, or in supporting specific missionaries. The pastoral candidate could express his views of outside giving at this point in the conversation. It allowed the candidate to reveal what his current ministry was doing and who the church was supporting. This was very important for both parties because outside giving can become very divisive if there were a financial crunch. Everyone involved must understand the heart of the other when it comes to giving to outside causes.

Spiritual Gifts

Spiritual gifts are significant to the body of Christ. The questionnaire requested the church and candidate to share how they aided their members in finding their spiritual gifts. In this part of the questionnaire, the pastoral candidate was allowed to firmly explain his views and his process of helping his congregation discover and practice their spiritual gifts. Likewise, the church could describe its ministry in aiding its congregation in understanding and practicing spiritual gifts. This could also be a conversation starter for both groups if they were not already assisting their congregations in understanding their spiritual gifts.

Implementation of Intervention Design

Interviewing Churches Looking for Pastors

Wooddale Free Will Baptist Church

In November of 2020, the first church working with this project that needed a pastor was interviewed. Wednesday evening, November 11th, the pulpit committee of the Wooddale Free

Will Baptist Church met to discuss a new way to search for a pastor. The project had advanced enough from the meeting with FWBs national and state leaders to design a possible questionnaire for the church and the pastoral candidates. Wooddale became the first church to embrace the project's research as a viable way to call a pastor. The pulpit committee shared ideas and possible questions they had, which added significant value to the project. The Wooddale Church is in Knoxville, Tennessee. It is a church with a long history of FWB tradition. One of its long-term pastors had served as moderator of the NAFWB. This church's traditions and history provided valuable, verbal information that aided in the advancement of the project. Once the pulpit committee engaged with this project, they worked very diligently on the questionnaire they received. This questionnaire was a precursor to the finished product. The Wooddale Church got discouraged in filling out the questionnaire and returned to the old system of gathering resumes. They interviewed one resume and decided to return to the project because the first candidate was opposite to their church's views and practices. Leaving the project and returning to the project validated the necessity of the tool. Once the church finished the questionnaire and profiles began to come in, a review committee was formed for them. It consisted of the project director, the Tennessee State Director, and a local pastor from the local association.

The committee reviewed the profiles of those who best matched the church; the review committee only recommended one profile because of the small pool of pastoral candidates. There were only two who filled out the questionnaire at that point in the process. The church's pulpit committee began their process, which lasted for a couple of months with the candidate given the profile. The project director met with the entire church on a Sunday morning and used a PowerPoint to inform the church of their profile so they could all agree that this was the condition of their church. This was a very tough reality check for that local church. When

meeting with the pulpit committee, the director of the project asked if they were fairly represented. One committee member felt that the church was better than the PowerPoint represented. The project director then asked if they were not fairly represented in the PowerPoint. All five members agreed that, while it was hard to admit it, the church was fairly represented.

The first profile turned out not to be the candidate the church wanted or the church the candidate wanted. The review committee reassembled and recommended another profile; the church then began the process again with the pulpit committee and the new pastoral candidate. In the fall of 2021, the church is now preparing to call the second profile for a pastor. This year-long process made the church confident that their new pastor would be in a long-term, loving relationship.

Bright Light Free Will Baptist Church

The second church interviewed in this project was the Bright Light Free Will Baptist Church in Bryan, Texas. This church also had a long traditional history in FWB, but its constituents' landscape was different from the church in Knoxville. The Bright Light Church liked the questionnaire as it was and immediately filled it out. This church had eight members who regularly attended, and they had gone four years without a pastor. Their Sunday morning worship service consisted of live music, Scripture reading, announcements, and a video sermon from the Internet. Rick Bowling of the North American ministries of NAFWB and the project director met with this church on a Wednesday night in May of 2021. This meeting consisted of a lot of fellowship and a few moments of explanation as to how this process could work. The idea of forming a review committee for this church was almost impossible because of its location and lack of participation in its association. The church had two deacons and one other man; these

men and five women were solely responsible for keeping the church together. Due to the demographics of the church community, this church was encouraged to seek a bilingual pastor. The church did receive a profile for one bilingual candidate. However, once they began the process, the pulpit committee rejected the idea of a bilingual pastor. Bright Light is still in the process of locating a pastor.

First Free Wil Baptist Church of Jessup, Georgia

Another church that aided in the project was the First Free Will Baptist Church of Jessup, Georgia. This church was considering the idea of closing its doors and dissolving. Its leadership decided to participate in the project but found it very difficult to determine who would fill out the questionnaire and check the information for accuracy. Once the questionnaire was filled out and returned, the first candidate to receive Jessup's profile was elected pastor. The church is now looking to join a revitalization program called Refresh and willing to be coached on matters of spiritual health.

Interviewing Pastors Looking for Churches

The NAFWB placed the project's questionnaire for churches and possible candidates on its website. Candidates filled out the questionnaire and submitted the results of a personality evaluation. Many candidates who completed the questionnaire were interviewed for this project. The pastoral candidates displayed no negativity toward the project, except for one individual who refused to take the personality evaluation. It seemed to be accepted and appreciated because many of the challenging topics that come up during an interview with a new church were already addressed.

One candidate expressed frustration during an interview about his election process. Neither he nor the church had participated in this project. He had spoken to the church twice, and

they still had not discussed a financial package with him. Had he and the church completed the questionnaires, this frustration could have been prevented. All the uncomfortable information regarding financial packages would have been available at the beginning of their discussion.

With these steps, this project attempted to allow churches and pastoral candidates to learn a great deal more about each other to pursue a lasting relationship. The steps outlined in this chapter had a goal to remove the unknowns from the relationship so each party could make an informed decision based on clear and accurate information disclosed upfront.

Chapter 4

Results

What did the research reveal? The results are analyzed based on the topics that were outlined and discussed in chapter 1. The research was gathered from the questionnaires provided by the five churches and eight pastors who participated in the project. Upon examining the questionnaires from the five churches, one observation is that church health has a connection to the relationship between the pastor and the congregation. The churches involved unanimously perceived themselves as controlling who the pastor would be and what the pastor should do. The four churches will be identified as Church A, Church B, Church C, church D, and Church E.

Church B and Church C have an average attendance of 100 people, while the other two churches average 30-50 people. At one point in the history of four of the churches, none had a pastorate term of ten years. Church B has two former pastors attending and one is acting at interim pastor.

Worship

All participants engaged with opinions on the music or the style of preaching. Churches had the strongest preferences on music and how they did not want to change the style or direction of their music program. Also, all the participants were very decisive on what position and who should control the music program in their local church. One church included the pastor in helping to lead the music ministry. One interesting fact is that the participants who were pastoral candidates all expressed the opinion that the pastor should have some say in the music program.

Church A wanted blended music. They identified a lady by name, not by position, who would work with the pastor on songs and themes. In another part of the questionnaire, they stated

that the pianist chose the songs. It would be advised of any candidate who considers this church to get this clarified.

Church B preferred blended music and placed the song selection solely in the hands of the Praise Team. They identified the individuals who serve on the Praise Team by name. One member of the team is the former pastor's wife. It would be advised to any candidate to be aware of the situation

Church C chose a blended style of worship and did not give an office or person to lead the music ministry. They identified the name of the person who selects the songs but gave no reason as to why this was the individual.

Church D was a traditional hymn only congregation. This church gave the positions and names of those who fill these positions. When answering the question on being open to change, church D stated that they would be open to changes if it was scriptural. Music might be changeable if a song or selection was speaking a scriptural truth to the church.

Church E had no preference regarding music. The church has 6-8 people attending. Presently they are watching videos for music and sermon.

Out of the eight pastoral candidates, two preferred traditional music, five preferred blended music, and one had no preference. One of the candidates addressed music in his preferences. He stated that he opposed Christian rock and the church looking like a concert. Six of the candidates believed the pastor should have say in the music, one left this blank, and another thought it should be done by a team of leaders. The reason music is addressed first in the results is because music and polity revealed the biggest divide between the church's view and the candidate's view in the questionnaire.

Polity

All four churches have a system of government that is a traditional local church congregational government format. These churches have boards and committees that are in place as part of the leadership. One church only has deacons who do not act as a board.

Church A, B, and C have a standard deacon committee, trustee committee, and general board. Church D has only a financial committee that oversees the church business. Church E has only deacons who are not a board but are separate offices. Two of the churches have a monthly business meeting, two have a quarterly business meeting, and one has no planned business meeting.

Only two of the candidates have experience in overseeing other paid staff. Two of the churches have paid staff positions. The churches or candidates neither discussed the issue of who hires staff and what the scope of overseeing paid staff is for the Lead Pastor. This issue will need to be discussed with the two churches who have paid positions in place.

Organization

Seven of the eight candidates who participated in the project are Free Will Baptist ministers and one had credentials in the past but had turned them over to his association. The candidate who had forfeited his credentials could not reinstated because of lifestyle he has chosen All the churches are in good standing with their local association, state association and national association. This is important to note since this is open to the public. In the past, unassociated churches and preachers have attempted to participate in association-initiated avenues of connecting churches and pastors. The Executive Committee of the National

Association of FWB voted in December 2021 to only use this project as a means of connecting churches and pastors who are connected to an association.[76]

Expectations

The expectations of the project were set by both state and national leaders. The total issue needed to be addressed for the future of the movement to proceed in growth. The local church is the foundation in the organizational structure of the Free Will Baptist. Without solving some of the issues the churches the movement cannot grow or see future success.

This project is birthed from a heart to help Free Will Baptist as a movement come up with a measurable way to help churches who are autonomous elect pastors that can have a long ministry. This research aims to help local, state, and national leaders in their efforts in aiding the local churches in finding good candidates. The past efforts were falling short of getting the church average pastoral tenor up, and there was a continuing spirit of division. State leaders and national leaders were finding themselves frustrated and then unable to connect the right personalities to the right local church to produce a longevity of ministry. The questionnaires fulfill the expectation because there is now a way to begin the conversation between the church and the proposed candidates.

The expectation to see churches and pastoral candidates interact before they meet was achieved with Church D. The church in the project who agreed not to hear the speaker before they had gone through the full questionnaire process appears to have found a more fulfilling and productive relationship with their new pastor. Church D followed the process and now elected a pastor. Their church attendance has tripled, and they are building the foundation to add new leaders and disciple believers.

[76] Minutes of the Executive Committee of the National Association of FWB, December 8, 2021

Although it seems the expectation results are positive, the true results of this project will not be known for several years. The project has resulted in the discovery of a tool that allows Free Will Baptist congregations and pastoral candidates to objectively view one another's thoughts and ideas before meeting in any official capacity. While the tool is still being edited from time to time, it has proven to be a valuable resource introduction of local churches to candidate pastors.[77]

The questionnaire addresses subjects like years of the pastorate, which reveals the pastoral background of both the church and the candidate. For example, it's important to know how many churches the candidate has pastored and how many pastors the church has employed, as well as their tenure. Both parties can express their deepest concerns and issues that could cause conflict and harm to the relationship. Reading through the questionnaire requires thought, reflection, and the ministry of philosophy (see Appendix A and B).

During the project, feedback was obtained that pointed out that divisive doctrinal issues are missing from the questionnaire. The questionnaire will be edited in the days ahead to reflect this change. Some of these divisive doctrinal issues were not initially put in the questionnaire because of the drastic change in direction the questionnaires brought to the denomination.

Logistics

The questionnaires are designed to begin the conversation. They are not the completion of that conversation. Each church has its own culture, and each pastor has his own personality. The two parties must work out the details once they have seen each other's opinions. It was observed that it is a challenge for candidates to be totally transparent if they guess that churches may view them in a negative light. Therefore, it is important for them to fill out the information

[77] Nafwb.org/refresh

as accurately and transparently as they possibly can because the result is an attempt to do away with the conflict before the marriage or the hiring of the pastor takes place. Addressed earlier is the concern that churches and pastoral candidates feel forced to be deceptive to be attractive to each other. No one would suggest this in marriage counseling, therefore the same should be true in a loving pastor and church relationship.

To implement the questionnaire into the entire denomination, there has to be a method to include all parties who have previously been involved in the older systems of connecting churches and pastors. Most of the churches who participated in the project are connected to local, state, and national leaders. Once the questionnaires were received, the project director would ask an individual from the local, state, and national associations to serve on the recommendation committee. This committee reviewed the questionnaires from both the churches and the candidates who submitted their names.

One thing became quickly apparent. Some pastoral candidates would not submit their questionnaire until a particular church came open that they might have interest in. The project director shared with the pulpit committee of that local church the individuals desire but encouraged the church to follow the process to find the best fit for their congregation.

Conflict Management

A positive result of this project was an increase in conflict management inside a local church. When a young couple gets married and participates in premarital counseling, they have the tools to address conflict when it arises. This project acts as premarital counseling between a church and pastoral candidate. They have each other's thoughts and ideas in writing upfront. They have done the work to address potential issues at the beginning of the relationship. When

conflict arises, they have the tools to manage it in a biblical manner. The challenge is for both parties not to revert to an old system or a political way of handling conflict.

Vision Casting

Vision casting is one of the most appealing things to a pulpit committee when a candidate is talking to them. The trial sermon can be filled with great vision of opportunities for the church to grow and ministry to take place. The issues with vision casting are that oftentimes the church wants to do things as they always have with no changes, while still expecting a better result. This is where the questionnaires can help both parties understand how ministry changes take place and who must guide them. Once the candidate has placed his vision in philosophy in writing the church now knows this is what they have adopted if they choose to hire him. Likewise, the candidate knows how the church views changes and the procedures they follow to enact it. It would be prudent for both parties if there are disagreements in this area to clarify them in writing before the permanent relationship has been started.

Communication Style

Learning to communicate with each other is very important. Often, in a pastoral interview the strongest personalities in the room have the say. This project provides equal time for the church and the pastoral candidate during the election process.

The questionnaire gives both parties the opportunity to see each other's communication style both in writing and in verbal communication. One of the concerns that each pastoral candidate must always keep in mind is that there are many people in the church and each one of them has a different communication style. The questionnaire allows the candidate the chance to see the communication styles of those leaders he will be working with. This also gives the church an opportunity to see the writing and verbal skills the candidate possesses. Reviewing

each questionnaire answer closely sets the agenda for the first two to three meetings between the pulpit committee and the candidate.

Preaching Style

Among the different cultures represented in the Free Will Baptist denomination, there exists different perceptions of an individual's preaching style and the spiritual expression between God and the preacher. Some cultures expect a certain style of preaching, whether it be expository preaching, topical preaching, or textual preaching. There is the issue of some laymen not being knowledgeable about these terms. Some churches express the desire for expository preaching, but they really mean textual preaching. The research revealed a spectrum of opinion among the churches who filled out the questionnaire. Some churches had strong opinions about preaching style, while others were less concerned about style; but all wanted biblical preaching. Church A and Church C expressed a strong preference for expository preaching style. Church B and Church D emphasized their desire for biblical preaching with no preference for a particular style. Church E was not concerned about style or content, but just wanted strong preaching.

Election Process/Hiring Process

Each church has their own hiring process. Church E wanted to question the individual in front of the whole congregation and vote after. The Project Director strongly advised them to revise this process and allow the leaders to do more private investigation of the candidate. The other four churches have a similar process in which they investigate the candidate through a pulpit committee, recommend the candidate to the officers of the church, and then pass the nomination on for a full vote of the church body depending on the requirements of their bylaws. The culture and spirit of the church will govern the process of electing the pastor.

Ministry Philosophy

Churches and pastors must be clear in their written and verbal communication when it comes to philosophy of ministry because this is where conflict can happen quickly. The project encourages and demands that each party explain their ideas and thoughts when it comes to the philosophy of carrying out day-to-day work. The method of how to accomplish the goals and vision of the church with the new pastor will guide the future.

Leadership Philosophy

Who is really the leader? Churches A, B, and C have a lot of steps to starting a new ministry. Churches D and E are open to the pastor just starting a new ministry if he believes God is directing him. This is evidence that three of the churches will have layers of leadership that will need to be considered with each discussion. These church changes will come slowly. This in no ways implies that change cannot or will not happen, but it will take time. The two churches who have no layers of leadership have had other layers in their past but because of their need for revitalization they have no one to put in leadership.

Role of the Pastor

Churches revealed in their written answers that their view of the role of a pastor is to study and preach; but when they spoke of the role, they revealed more expectations. As far as the family expectations, churches revealed that the pastor's wife is seen as a leader in some form of ministry. Some churches listed the expectation for the wife, while others only expected her support of her husband's work.

The major role that was described by churches and pastoral candidates as a student of the Word. Bible study is mentioned on all the questionaries. Most of the churches added expectations of pastoral visitation, as well as many other administrative roles in the local church.

One interesting note is that all of the pastoral candidates put major emphasis not only on their biblical studies but on the time they would spend leading and directing the ministries of the church. It is apparent that most of those who filled out the questionnaire for the church placed great emphasis on the Sunday morning public speaking. While the candidates realize Sunday morning is important, they had a broader view of the pastoral role in regard to the day-to-day operation of the local church.

Conclusion

The written questionnaire answers alone imply a consistent view that the local church pulpit committee sees Sunday morning as the only time the pastor is important. It must be understood they also expect that families inside the local church have access to the pastor during the week. The pastoral candidates have a much broader view of the role that they would play in the day-to-day functions of ministry life.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The research found a great need in local churches to discover a way to define and discover a loving relationship with their shepherd. The project designed a questionnaire that would give direction and aid to both the local church and the pastoral candidate to understand the parameters to build a loving relationship. The biblical design is motivated by love instead of employment.

Out of 157 churches without pastors in the summer of 2021, four churches filled out the questionnaire, and seven ministers filled out the questionnaire. At this point, one of the four churches filling out the questionnaire has called a pastor from the pool of candidates who completed the questionnaire. Another church is in the final stages of preparing to vote on one of the seven men whose profiles have been received by this project. Two of the churches are still searching, and all have received profiles but one. Thus far, no candidate profile comes close to matching the profile of that local church. One candidate of the seven who filled out the questionnaire has accepted a pastorate in a church that did not participate in the project. The rest of the pastoral pool does not match the church profiles well enough to begin the process at this time.

Factors That Affect the Results

Resumes Versus Questionnaires

One of the factors that affected research was the longstanding practice in Free Will Baptist churches of receiving resumes and checking references. The project encouraged the local church to approach the pastoral search as a loving relationship instead of an employment relationship. This was very foreign to the FWB culture. As stated earlier in this research project,

many FWB Church pulpit committees consisted of people used to hiring employees or being hired as employees. They incorporated this approach into the pastoral search. The idea of searching for a pastor, like a groom would look for his bride, made little to no sense to several who read the research. In their opinion, their employers did not treat them that way, and now they were employing someone to serve the church. Changing this culture will be a long and tedious process that must take place over many years and will begin at local and state associations. The leadership of all levels will need to start encouraging churches to seek a loving relationship with their pastors. The project received numerous requests from churches who wanted profiles of pastoral candidates but refused to fill out the profile themselves. Many churches in the FWB culture feel they need to hear the candidate preach before talking to him about being their pastor. This tradition was birthed many years ago when churches started having multiple candidates preach to see which candidate they liked best. This was a sort of public audition style process. This project is in direct contrast to that pastor search philosophy. The church should not build the pastoral relationship on the skill or style of the preacher but on the two parties understanding that the relationship is based on love. Churches must realize that problems are more likely to arise from day-to-day operations and a failure to agree on non-negotiables than from the pulpit.

Preaching as a Step in the Process

The tradition of hearing pastors and then deciding which one best fits the pulpit style for Sunday morning originated from of a lack of discernment among church leaders. While hearing the candidate preach is a vital part of the process, this step should be taken in the middle of the search, not at the beginning. In calling a pastor, church leaders must have spiritual discernment, which allows a pulpit committee to know the health of the church and the exact leadership it

takes to guide the church to the next level of its spiritual journey. The lack of discernment among spiritual leaders creates countless other spiritual issues, making the process of calling a pastor even more difficult.

Financial Privacy

Another factor is that churches do not always like other people knowing their business. Some felt the questionnaire was too detailed, asking for information they were not ready to give. One of the biggest hurdles was the pastoral salary. Often, churches want to obtain a new pastor for a lesser salary than their previous one, so they were hesitant to disclose previous salaries. Candidates struggled with the same thing because they were looking for a church with a more substantial pay package than the package they were currently receiving. Most pulpit committees work with all negotiable items much later in the process. They often do not talk about these items until the church or the candidate feels it is the right time to discuss them. The pushback came because the questionnaire asked the churches and candidates to reveal salary packages upfront.

Hesitancy of State Leaders

State leaders struggled with not being the person with all the information for the churches within their state. While state leaders wanted a tool to standardize the process, there seemed to be apprehension about bringing in local and national leaders to aid in the process. In a modern-day FWB church, under current circumstances, the state leader is the matchmaker in most cases between the church and the prospective pastor. State leaders were encouraged to use the questionnaire and incorporate a committee including local and national leaders.

Hesitancy of Candidates

Candidates were resistant to the idea of sending their profiles to churches that matched them instead of sending profiles to specific regions. One of the revealing parts for the candidates

in the questionnaire process was finding a way to, for lack of a better term, "make them marketable." Campaigning for a position in a local church is a prevalent practice in the FWB movement, often resulting in a conflict of philosophy and ideology. Sometimes people get what they want, but they want to change what they just received. This project is designed to aid a church and a pastoral candidate from having a year to an 18-month future conflict that often ends in a failed relationship. The old phrase, "we've always done it this way," is an idea that is hard to relinquish.

The Global Pandemic

As the implementation of this project began, many churches shut down because of the global pandemic, significantly affecting the results. The pandemic caused many churches to put their pastoral search on hold. Several candidates were unwilling to move during the uncertainty of the pandemic. Some churches were not equipped with virtual technology to conduct online interviews or stream services. Many churches chose to pause their decisions until the fall of 2020.

COVID-19 made it difficult for churches searching for a pastor to gain a consensus from their people. They struggled to physically bring their people together for the first time in modern history, causing a pause in worship and business meetings. Some churches were depending on this process for their entire existence. Many of them were faced with questioning their authority to move forward if their current pastors resigned or passed away. The pandemic had a significant impact on all worship gatherings, but it made the functionality of the church in need of a pastor particularly problematic. In some instances, churches in the project had by-laws requiring a vote by pulpit committee members. Various churches in the project shut down for six to eight months. One of the four churches that filled out the questionnaire and is currently still looking for a

pastor has been hit hard in recent weeks with the coronavirus. The church temporarily closed again because of the death of their pastor. The church is in a complicated place, and the search for the pastor is very crucial. Still, it is not the top priority because of the media and many in the hospital with sickness.[78]

One of the substantial factors affecting this research in churches without virtual platforms was their inability to congregate and deliberate under the current conditions to fill out the questionnaire. This struggle still continues at the end of this research. All the participating churches experienced a pause in their regular operations because of the pandemic. Toward the end of the project's research, it became apparent that the sickness and death of many local pastors left churches without leadership. Because of the danger of gathering local congregations together, the pandemic left churches with no structure and no way to restructure. This problem prevails in many rural areas where the pandemic has hit the hardest. For example, a church in Georgia lost its pastor a year ago to the pandemic. A few months later, they lost their new pastor to an apparent heart attack. These situations create an environment where the questionnaire is challenging to fill out because no one can accurately describe the condition of the local church at that moment in history. The pandemic caused the local church without a pastor to lean on local leaders who had no experience in such conditions, so their response was simply to pause.

The Unknowns

The unknowns that are discussed in this section also limit the pool of possible candidates. One unknown is the number of individuals who have gone for higher education in pastoral ministries, went into the pastorate for one tenure, and never pastored again because of

[78] Tim Stellah, After Murder Oklahoma Pastor's, wife and alleged accomplice in love triangle arrested, nbcnews.com

difficulties. Attempting to find this number was an impossible task at this point in the project, yet it would significantly impact the prospects of the local church if these individuals were still engaged. The church has no control over death, disease, and pandemics, but they can control their own spiritual health. This missing in action number could revolutionize the crisis of churches without pastors in Free Will Baptists. The researcher did request this information from the NAFWB research committee, but the committee was unable to find a way to obtain the information. It was determined that the questionnaires for the pastoral candidate and the local church could provide hope for those discouraged from pastoring again. Bringing those individuals back into the equation and dealing with problematic questions could encourage them to pursue their calling again.

A second unknown is the availability of the candidate's family. While the questionnaire did allow for the candidate to share his expectations about his family's involvement, it was too challenging to create a separate questionnaire or personality test for the candidate's wife. Such a test would be relevant for the local church. This information would help the church understand why the candidate's or pastor's wife was deeply involved or less involved in their local ministry.

Communication Issues

Communicating with FWB churches is very difficult, even in the age of advanced technology. All communication from a FWB church to a state or national work is done by a form letter from the church to the local association, then to the state association, and finally reaching NAFWB. Logistics alone means some information is inaccurate because there is no way to gather information from lay leaders other than a clerk or secretary. These communication channels are hard to keep open because, in a year, people become disconnected from the association; this was especially true during the pandemic because associations were not meeting.

This lack of clear communication made it even more difficult for the project questionnaire to be available since many churches do not visit the NAFWB website. Podcasts, social media, public announcements, and various other means of sharing the availability of the questionnaire with a church and candidate attempted to meet this challenge. The communication system in the FWB movement became a hindrance to the project instead of being helpful.

Authority to Complete the Questionnaire

Some churches struggled with the organizational side of filling out the questionnaire. In one such case, the church clerk felt it was vital that he be the one to fill out the information, but the pulpit committee disagreed. The clerk did the reporting, wrote the history, and sent the by-laws, while the pulpit committee filled out most of the questionnaire. This particular church struggled with the negotiables, non-negotiables, and preferences because everyone had a different idea of what those were. It should be noted that this is the church that called a pastor from the profile.

The Issue of Church Health

Church health is also a noteworthy part of the problem for both the pastoral and congregational sides. The spiritual health of churches made it very difficult to have unity for the congregation to go through the process of securing a pastor. So much spiritual unhealthiness creates an environment where unity is no longer welcome, and chaos can be the only outcome.

One church that filled out the profile in a public meeting in May of 2021 had eight people from the church, Rick Bowling, the Hispanic Director of North American Ministries (a FWB department), and an individual representing the project present. Once the participants presented how this project could help the church by partnering with North American Ministries, those eight individuals could not come to a consensus. It is this kind of unhealthy environment that makes an

already complicated process far more complex. FWB churches must evaluate their spiritual health; the church questionnaire addresses some of their spiritual health issues. The design of the questionnaire aids a church through the process of understanding the need for good spiritual health.

Refusal to Participate

It was a disappointing truth that a few churches in the pastoral search process refused to use the tool designed as a questionnaire. One of the critical complaints was that it required too much work to fill out the questionnaire and gather all the data. Pulpit committees are accustomed to gathering information through resumes hoping to identify the right individual. Most pulpit committees do not see the opportunity of spiritual assessments as a moment of revival that takes place without a leader.

During the process of filling out the questionnaire, one of the churches experienced a spirit of revival. This church reported that when they started the questionnaire, their attendance was 14; by the time they called a pastor, three months later, their attendance had increased to over 50. This church is still working with the project in avenues of spiritual health, and they have requested a revitalization coach from Refresh, an initiative of the NAFWB.

There was an expectation that churches would respond positively to a new pastoral search method because of the desperate need to find pastors. The NAFWB endorsed this project to be a good strategy for establishing a healthy church and pastor relationship. As stated previously, communication was challenging with churches and pastoral candidates. Websites and announcements made at local and state meetings and at National Association Convention still did not produce the number of churches and the candidates needed for this research to be effective. The numbers of participants were minimal, but the success rate was 50% at this stage of the

project. The questionnaire seemed to be effective for those who were willing to fill it out. It was perceived to be invasive to those who refused to complete it. This dynamic will be hard to deal with in the days ahead but must be addressed for the crisis that exists with FWB churches in locating pastors.

Communication Within the Local Church

Another area that made the project trying for local churches was removing the secretness of the process from the small group of a pulpit committee to the much larger group in the local church. It required the church clerk or someone with historical knowledge to give the history of the church. It also needed the treasurer to provide the pastoral salary information and the giving habits of the church to outside causes. A suggestion was for the entire church to endorse the questionnaire answers, especially in smaller churches, ensuring that the answers represented the broader view of the church and not just those of the pulpit committee. It was a risk that a small committee could be window dressing the church to make it look more attractive.

Several local churches opposed this area of accountability and transparency. The pastoral search usually took weeks or a few months, and it was more about the political atmosphere of the church than the spiritual atmosphere of the church. The questionnaire intended to establish a thought process for determining the church's past and present states and future goals as they prepare to join a relationship with a new pastoral leader. Change is always hard, especially during a time of uncertainty.

Next Steps

Marketing

The project will now need to engage more churches and more pastoral candidates to develop its success. There must be a much larger pool of churches and pastoral candidates for a

proper connection to be made. It will need to be promoted by the executive office of the NAFWB, the 100 trained coaches in Refresh, state leaders, and local association leaders. These leaders will need to make this project a priority in their promotional material for it to have the impact it could have on local FWB churches across North America. Doctor Eddie Moody, Executive Secretary for the NAFWB, includes the number of churches needing pastors and a link to the questionnaire in his newsletter sent from his office to churches in the denomination. Dr. Moody's promotion of the project is beneficial. Still, there must be a cultural change, an endorsement that a new way of searching for a pastor or church is acceptable and valuable to all parties involved.

A very important step that needs to be taken is a video and workbook provided by the denomination to help churches understand the role of the pastor and help candidates understand the role they seek. There may need to be a series of videos that go along with the workbook in assisting churches in the process of calling a pastor as well as the function of the office of pastor. One of the contributing factors to making this a necessary step is that many pastors are concerned about looking like they are self-serving if they teach about the biblical role of the pastor. A workbook will give pastors currently serving churches, candidates searching for a church pastorate, and churches needing a pastor to understand the role the pastor plays in the Christian community.

Willing Participants

Local associations need to recognize the questionnaire's benefit for the pastor and church, allowing them to deal with issues that cause conflict in a local assembly. These conflicts often end up in the hands of the local association because of a grieved minority. Still, if problems and issues are dealt with at the beginning of the relationship, all the pressure is taken from the local

association and given to the local church. This project delivers a means for knowing what the church is acquiring in the new pastor or what the new pastor is gaining in his new church.

Improved Communication

The communication breakdown in the denomination between the leaders and churches creates a crisis for this project and across the entire denomination structure. If the church, state, and local associational leaders become willing to work together to find the best way to communicate with one another, they will fix the breakdown. The communication problems that the project faces will require a multifaceted fix.

National and state leaders will need to perfect social media to be able to communicate with local churches. The power of social media is remarkable, and in an instant, you have direct access. Social media is the modern-day news bulletin that allows all generations to gather and receive information.

The Refresh Initiative

The Refresh initiative of the NAFWB needs to provide information and lead in instructing churches and candidates on the purpose behind the questionnaire and the new process. It takes a long time to change a process or a tradition of how people have operated over many years. Because of the autonomy of the local church, the FWB denomination has been very careful not to violate the principles of autonomy. The issue is when there seems to be a violation of autonomy or the NAFWB leadership's responsibility to encourage training that needs to take place and not overstep. This conflict between ideologies creates a culture that needs addressing. This project suggests it be addressed in the following ways:

1. When a church contacts a local, state, or national leader, that leader sends a packet to them with some general information. This packet should include the questionnaire, a

suggested path of procedure, a description, and an explanation of the questionnaire. The information inside the packet should produce understanding to help the local church think through the right process. Information will allow the local church to have a step-by-step path on how to structure the pastoral search. As Refresh continues to develop its ministry it would be advantageous to have a workbook designed allowing a pulpit committee to walk through different scenarios on how their committee can operate. A video would also be a unique tool to use with the workbook or manual to give both visual and audio to the committee.

One subject for the workbook and video to address is the need for the pulpit committee to be organized. Some committees operate from a perspective that each person on the committee has the right to be the voice of the committee. This can be very divisive and dangerous for a local church without a spiritual leader. The committee needs to understand that one person should be the spokesman to the church and the candidates. A second approach is for someone else to be the spokesman for the committee to the candidates. This item alone will give the pulpit committee great credibility and cohesiveness while searching for the new pastor.

Another issue for the workbook and video to address is how to carry on a consistent and unified process during the pastor search. Developing an outline or plan of action allows the committee to have the latitude to do their work with the security they are on the right track. A fatal mistake a pulpit committee makes is in thinking that the pastor's role is only seen on Sunday morning when he is preaching. This is one of the reasons pulpit committees quickly schedule a candidate for a trial sermon; most of them only view the pastor's role during as that of Sunday morning. Once a candidate has tried out at a local church and a portion of the congregation likes his preaching, it becomes almost impossible for the church to be unified if that candidate is not the one the committee feels is right for the local church. Understanding the

role of a pastor in the day-to-day operation is crucial if a pulpit committee is to fulfill the total role of their responsibility. The committee must take on this role with a full understanding of the biblical position that a pastor holds. A workbook or video can be very valuable to a pulpit committee in better understanding the pastor's role as they walk through the function of the pulpit committee.

This workbook and video should also give suggestions for questions and content for the interview that would help the committee stay focused on the task at hand. Sometimes questions are forgotten, or other questions may not even be seen as important at the time, but those questions can have great impact in the days ahead of that pastor and church relationship. Learning to frame the interview around a biblical principle of the pastoral role instead of framing it around the secular world view of hiring can provide great dividends for the local church and the future pastor.

The approach suggested requires that a pulpit committee do some homework before they begin the search process. Whoever is responsible in the local church for the financial reporting of what the church can offer in a pay package needs to be done before not during the pastoral search. The video will give clear instruction to the pulpit committee of those type requirements that need to be in place prior to looking at profiles. While the questionnaire does ask the question about the pay package, the video and workbook will re-emphasize that our research has shown how important it is for the local church to know what resources are available for the pastor's salary package before the process begins.

Giving instructions prior to the committee meeting will allow them to understand the significance of honesty. Honesty is a live or die condition when a pastor and a church are negotiating about the future when neither one of them know each other very well. Being truthful

about how the church really operates, exposing that the church has a bully or that the church is divided is extremely crucial for the candidate to know. These are hard subjects for a pulpit committee to address especially if some on the committee are a part of the bullying or the division. A video or workbook explaining the importance of being honest about the true state of the church or other unique details will hopefully give those who serve on the committee the courage and even permission to address the hard subjects both with the committee and with the new candidate.

2. When a candidate contacts a local, state, or national leader searching for a pastoral position, the packet of information he receives also includes a copy of the Treatise that outlines the FWB practices for pastors. The packet should include a clear, step-by-step explanation of what to expect once the questionnaire has been filled out and returned.

Just like the pulpit committee needs instruction on how to have an open and honest pastoral search it is just as important that Refresh provide the same type of information to the candidates who fill out the questionnaire. The local church pulpit committee and the candidates will have a much broader appreciation for the process if this workbook and video is offered before filling out the questionnaire. The research showed that candidates struggled with questions about their philosophy and views on pastoral ministry and leadership. Over the years, the denomination has been strongly local church driven and most candidates have been taught to appease the church and make slow changes. This thought is almost deceptive because one idea is accepted while trying to convert to another idea. The workbook and video will address the issue of how to approach the right spirit in the discussion so there's no deception, but the candidate can feel free to address the issues on paper and verbally. When filling out the questionnaire the

candidate needs to be given the encouragement and permission to put on paper what he really means.

Another area the research revealed was that pastors struggle when talking about their pay package. The Free Will Baptist denomination has strongly encouraged pastors to be humble and take whatever the church gives them without ever asking for a financial gain. This has left many Free Will Baptist pastor's families in great need. It is easy for a candidate to take less money and hope someday there will be a raise than it is to open their discussion and say what they really need to live on. This type of honesty and openness will allow a pastor to pay his bills and give his family much-needed financial support.

The candidate must give accurate information about salary goals and honest views of church government when he fills out the questionnaire and during the time of the interview. The candidate should carefully read the church budget and bylaws to understand the established scope of the church. This is the place where most churches have conflict with a new pastor, and this is one of the reasons for short tenures at many local churches. In all fairness to the local church, many have never been anywhere but their church, so they believe what they do is what every church does. Again, this is where openness, honesty, and hard discussion pays great dividends in the churches future because both have on paper a description of their views which act as a marker in their discussions and future relationship. The workbook and video will provide instruction on how to use the material that comes from the written questionnaire to get to an open discussion.

3. In both the church and candidate packets, a link to videos clearly explaining the process steps should be included. This video should consist of the expectation of the church and

the candidate, emphasizing the ethics of this process and giving explicit encouragement on how to follow the plan precisely.

4. Once a review committee has been appointed by a national, state, or local leader, the committee should view the video that clearly explains the process, the limitations, and the expectations for the committee. This video must reveal the biblical role of the local church and make sure that those who are serving on the review committee understand that in building a Free Will Baptist Church there are no bishops. The committee needs to hear clearly and precisely what their function is in helping walk through the profiles of the candidates to best match the local church that they're serving as a review committee.

The committee must have clear instructions of the role they play and the limitations that are placed upon them. One of the clear issues that needs to be addressed in this video to the review committee is confidentiality. It will take a lot of trust for a local church to put this kind of information in the hands of someone who is not in their fellowship. It will be imperative that those who serve on the review committee never talk outside of the review committee except to the local church. If local churches begin to realize that other leaders are talking about them outside the review committee this process will be damaged, and the trust factor will be gone.

It is also suggested that a video be produced on how to have an interim pastor during the time of transition and sent to every church searching for a pastor. The goal of the interim pastor from the video's perspective is not just filling the pulpit but helping the church get to a place of better spiritual health and preparing for their permanent spiritual leader. The interim pastor must be given credibility and allowed to lead the church during this transition. Both the church and the interim pastor must understand that this short term six to eighteen months, gives the church the security of a pulpit being filled each week and someone doing the work of the ministry. The

interim pastor is not left out of the business of the church or the affairs of the church but is allowed to help lead in this time of insecurity. The church must understand that this individual has been given the unique ability to come into their lives at this unusual moment not as a stranger but as a friend who is there to bring advice in leadership as they prepare for the next person who will be their spiritual leader. Churches that are left without this type of setup have no one to do marriage counseling, no consistency in the pulpit, and has a spirit of disunity that can begin inside the local church. Therefore, giving instruction to the local church on how to have a good solid relationship with an interim pastor can bring a depth of strength in what could have been a very weak moment in the history of that church.

5. A video and workbook training interim pastors will be crucial for the Refresh ministry if churches are to walk across the bridge from one pastor to another. In the Free Will Baptist movement an interim pastor is normally seen as an individual who simply feels the pulpit and visits a few folks. One of the common things happening in some churches is that the interim stays for years and the church's health continues to decline because there is an uncertainty always looming about the future. This type of teaching instrument gives retired pastors new life, understanding the purpose behind an interim position. Giving guidelines on how to lead the church to spiritual health before the new pastor arrives and laying the foundation for the future of this new leader can be revolutionary in many dying, local churches who are without pastors.

6. As stated in this project, many FWB churches looking for a pastor struggle with spiritual health. This could be a crucial time once the new pastor is elected to introduce them to the other components of the Refresh initiative of the NAFWB. If the church can embark on a path of healthiness, then the potential for a successful pastorate is much stronger. If the church

returns to its old, spiritual unhealthiness, then conflict and fleshly actions have a breeding ground to grow and hurt this new relationship.

7. This project also revealed the need to add a question on the questionnaire to the pastoral candidate about their intent to be vocational or bi-vocational. This allows review committees to place the candidates in separate categories before sending profiles to local churches. Matching the bi-vocational church with the bi-vocational pastor would be clearer for both the church and the candidates.

8. The NAFWB needs to design an installation service for the new pastor. This service needs to be developed for the state and local leaders to be in attendance and place their endorsement upon the leadership of the new pastor. The church leaders and the pulpit committee need to understand that in this service they are passing the baton to the new pastor in front of the congregation. If the former pastor has left the church on good terms and is willing to come and place an endorsement upon the new pastor this will allow those who supported him the strongest to see the new man as their leader. This is a great opportunity for the local church to introduce the new pastor and his family to the community and its leaders. This gives local pastors from other churches and opportunity to meet the new pastor.

9. The NAFWB needs to also design clear instructions to the pulpit committee as to what their duties are once the new pastor has been put in position. He will need them to help him understand the culture of the church and the culture of the community. It will be very important for the pulpit committee to introduce him to people who have influence within the congregation and community. Introducing the new pastor to shut-ins and the elderly of the church will be very beneficial in his future success. Being a wall for the new pastor when criticism comes and standing with him through those awkward moments of confrontation in the early days of his

ministry are extremely important to his success. The pulpit committee and the church leaders have the opportunity during the early days of the new minister's time at the church to build a loving and lasting relationship in front of the congregation. This provides the foundation for a lasting relationship for the new pastor.

Future Research

The research needed to move forward in the future is a method of keeping track of individuals who have felt God's call of ministry and have either pastored for a brief time or never pastored. This research can also help identify the cause of men leaving the ministry allowing the denomination to address these issues.

In the days ahead, the NAFWB research committee needs to analyze the spiritual health of the local church before the resignation or death of a pastor. It would be valuable data in the future if the research committee could do a health analysis of the church two years after the new pastor's arrival. This would be a daunting task, but it would allow for an evaluation of the spiritual well-being of churches. The new pastor is in a new church, hoping it will be a loving relationship.

Research needs to be conducted on the condition of each church that is without a pastor. An analysis of the present condition of the church and projected future viability is needed. Some churches who practice an annual election of a pastor places themselves in jeopardy of finding a pastor and should be evaluated differently than those who are looking for a permanent pastoral relationship. Those who continue to practice what is known as the annual call will experience a much smaller pool of available men to serve as their pastor because the candidates would have to come from a much smaller geographical location.

Churches who consider themselves part-time need to be in a different category than those who consider themselves full-time. The part-time church has a prominent place in the denominational movement; therefore, part-time churches must also acquire their pastor from a local geographical location or be in a place where the new pastor can find vocational work. Bi-vocational pastors transplanting to new areas of the country can be very difficult and stressful upon the pastoral family. There needs to be a way to evaluate the economic opportunities that are available to the bi-vocational pastor profile. When the profile is sent from the review committee there should be some suggestions or ideas for possible employment that matches the skill set of the bi-vocational- pastor who is applying.

Research on how to best describe a full-time church and its viability to remain full-time needs to be done. As noted earlier in this project, one of the concerns is that many churches who fill out the questionnaire struggle with being clear about the pay package or the compensation package. In future research giving a tool to the review committee or place it on the questionnaire allowing the local church to be a part of an investigation into the churches future health in financial strength can be very advantageous. Over many years the denomination has emphasized and persuaded pastors to go full-time as a sign of growth but oftentimes it becomes the downfall of the churches opportunity to grow. The current executive secretary of the NAFWB was bi-vocational before coming to his current position. This gives an example of what vocational and bi-vocational really looks like from two different perspectives.

This research can be aided by state and local leaders who will understand the dynamics of most of the local churches within their influence. Some have questioned the numbers they have been given as to how many churches are without pastors, the research just discussed will help clarify the concerns over these numbers and divides the churches into at least three categories

once the research is complete. The researchers can divide the church into annual election, bi-vocational, and full-time.

A spiritual health test for the local church analyzed by the review committee or someone else the local church involves in the discussion can allow churches to see their viability for the future. Those that are viable need to be the ones that review committees do their best to aid in their pastor search. Churches with less viability needs to be recommended to Refresh ministry to aid them in revitalization. The ones who are less viable still need ministered to but in a totally different way. Finding a pastor may not be their priority but finding a way to be healthy as a church could set them on the track or path to true viability.

A note of caution to future researchers. Understanding that this approach in being the clearing house for pastors and churches from Refresh ministry is only to empower and aid the church, it must always be at the forefront of all research and reactions to the research. The autonomy of the local church must always be understood as a centerpiece in FWB government. Local churches will continue to operate, and do as they see fit, therefore future researchers need to be strengthened with ideas for the state and local associations to educate local church leaders in the biblical model of what a church really should look like.

The national, state, and local leaders must stay alert and continue to monitor the condition of churches and the possibility of candidates for local churches for the denomination to sustain its church population and existence.

The relationship between the pastor and the church must originate from a loving relationship, as Paul describes in I Thessalonians. The project's goal was to aid this relationship before it started by providing a tool to assist in the discussion between the church and the

candidate to make a clear decision. With those issues addressed, this project can offer an opportunity for that relationship to prosper.

CHURCH QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PASTORAL SEARCH

Church Name _____

Church Street Address _____

Church Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Contact Person _____

Contact Phone _____ Contact Email _____

---

1. On a separate sheet of paper, give a brief history of the church.

2. Please include a copy of church by-laws, budget, annual financial reports, and other legal documents.

3. Average attendance:
   Sunday morning _____
   Sunday evening _____
   Wednesday evening _____

4. Church membership total: _____
   Number of church members who have died in the last five years: _____

5. Number of baptisms in the last year: _____
   Number of baptisms in the last five years: _____

6. What is the pastor's salary including benefits? (Is a housing allowance or parsonage included?) _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

   Please detail each of the following parts of a pastoral pay package:
   a. Salary amount _____
   b. Parsonage or housing allowance _____
   c. Utility payments _____
   d. Auto expenses _____
   e. Expense of moving _____

7. What other paid staff does the church have? (List positions, description of duties, and names of the staff.) _____

8. List the last five pastors of the church and the years they served:

1) _____
2) _____
3) _____
4) _____
5) _____

9. List any non-negotiables of your church (other than doctrinal issues) and why they are non-negotiable. _____

10. What person (or persons) has the most influence in the church? (Use names, not their position.) _____

11. How would you describe the daily role of a pastor? What would his average week look like? _____

12. How would a new class or ministry begin in the church? Please give the steps of the total process._____

13. What preferences would the church not want to change? (e.g. music, Scripture version)_____

14. What type of music is included in the church service? (Please check one.)
- ☐ Traditional (hymns)
- ☐ Contemporary (praise and worship)
- ☐ Blended (mixing traditional and contemporary)

15. What office of the church is in control of the music? _____
Name of individual _____

16. List all boards and committees, their functions, when they meet, the names of members serving, and their terms of office. (Use the back of the page to list other boards and committees, if needed.) _____

17. Describe the process the church uses to welcome visitors. _____

18. Attempt to honestly describe the fellowship and unity of the church. _____

19. When is communion practiced? _____
Who is responsible for preparing and conducting the service? _____

20. When is feet washing practiced? _____
Who is responsible for preparing and conducting the service? _____

21. When are business meetings held? _____
Who is the moderator of the meeting? _____

22. Preferred preaching style: ☐ Expository ☐ Topical ☐ Mixture
Please explain the answer. _____

23. Describe the church's outreach ministries. (Please add more ministries on the back page, if needed.) _____

24. Describe the church's expectation of the involvement of the pastor's family in the ministry of the church. _____

25. What in-church ministries does the church have? (Check the ones that are active.)

☐ Sunday School	Attendance _____	Curriculum: _____
☐ Children's Church	Attendance _____	
☐ Vertical 3	Attendance _____	
☐ WNAC	Attendance _____	
☐ Master's Men	Membership _____	
☐ Small groups	Attendance _____	
☐ Teen ministry	Attendance _____	

26. Describe the support the church gives to outside causes, both Free Will Baptist and non-Free Will Baptist. (Include local, state, national, and international ministries.) _____

27. Does the church have a method of aiding members in finding their spiritual gifts? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If yes, please describe the process. _____

If no, would the church be willing to establish a process for finding spiritual gifts? (Give reasons to support your answer.)

NAFWB

Find additional resources for church and pastor:
www.nafwb.org

Appendix B

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PASTORAL CANDIDATE

Name _____

Street Address _____

Mailing Address _____

State _____ Zip _____ Email _____

---

1. On a separate sheet of paper, give a brief personal testimony of your conversion and call to ministry.

2. Average attendance of your current ministry:
   Sunday morning _____ Sunday evening _____ Wednesday evening _____

3. Current church membership total: _____
   Number of church members who have died in the last 5 years: _____

4. Number of baptisms in the last year: _____
   Number of baptisms in the last 5 years: _____

5. What association are you in? _____

6. What salary (including benefits) will you need? _____
   Please detail each of the following parts of a pastoral pay package.
   a. Salary amount _____
   b. Parsonage or housing allowance _____
   c. Utility payments _____
   d. Auto expenses _____
   e. Expense of moving _____

7. What is your experience in overseeing other paid staff? _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

8. List your last five ministerial positions and the years you served.
   1) _____
   2) _____
   3) _____
   4) _____
   5) _____

9. List any non-negotiables (other than doctrinal issues) and why they are non-negotiable. _____

10. How would you describe the daily role of a pastor? What would your average week look like? _____

11. How would you go about starting a new class or ministry in the church? Please give the steps of the total process.

12. What preferences would you be unwilling to change? (e.g. music, Scripture version) _____

13. Check the type of music which most closely reflects your view of church music. (Please check one.)

❏ Traditional (hymns)

❏ Contemporary (praise and worship)

❏ Blended (mixing traditional and contemporary)

14. What office of the church should be in control of the music? _____

15. List all boards and committees (and their functions) you feel are important to the effectiveness of a church.

16. When do you practice communion? _____

17. When do you practice feet washing? _____

18. When are business meetings held? _____

19. Describe your preaching style: ❑ Expository ❑ Topical ❑ Mixture
Please explain the answer.

_____
_____
_____
_____

20. Describe the outreach ministries you want to lead your next church in. _____

_____
_____
_____
_____

21. Describe your family's involvement in the ministry of the church. _____

_____
_____
_____
_____

22. What active ministries do you have in your current church? Check all that apply.

❑ Sunday School Attendance _____ Curriculum: _____
❑ Children's Church Attendance _____
❑ Vertical 3 Attendance _____
❑ WNAC Attendance _____
❑ Master's Men Membership _____
❑ Small groups Attendance _____
❑ Teen ministry Attendance _____

23. What in-church ministries do you think are important? Check all that apply.

❑ Sunday School
❑ Children's Church
❑ Vertical 3
❑ WNAC
❑ Master's Men
❑ Small groups
❑ Teen ministry

24. Describe the outside causes you would like the church to support, both Free Will Baptist and non-Free Will Baptist. (Include local, state, national, and international ministries.)

25. What is your approach to aiding members in finding their spiritual gifts? Describe the process.

26. Go to DISC website and complete a personality test. Attach results to this form.
https://discpersonalitytesting.com/discassess/work-free/free-start.php

27. Take the Myers-Briggs personality test. Attach results to this form.
https://www.truity.com/test/type-finder-personality-test-new

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