LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE ADDITIONAL FACTORS NEEDED TO

TRANSITION A TROUBLED CHURCH TO HEALTH

A Thesis Project Submitted to
Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

By

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LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THESIS PROJECT APPROVAL SHEET

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ABSTRACT

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF THE ADDITIONAL FACTORS NEEDED TO

TRANSITION A TROUBLED CHURCH TO HEALTH

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Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2010

Mentor: Dr. Frank Schmitt

There is a level of frustration among pastors as they try to apply philosophical models of health to troubled churches. These churches have been labeled "troubled" because of the traumatic events they have experienced in the past. These experiences have resulted in barriers to any effort by pastor to transition the church to health. The purpose of this study is to identify the common factors/issues that a troubled church must address in order to progress in the revitalization process. This study seeks to provide a description of the factors/issues that ten troubled churches addressed as they moved toward health.

Abstract length: 99 words.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my wife, whose love and support have allowed me to complete

this project. I also dedicate this project to my four children, Madison, Foster, Sawyer and

Hudson. Finally, I dedicate this work to the members and adherents of the Curwensville

Christian Church. It has been our journey together over the last nine years that has served

as the basis for this project.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The evangelical church in North America is at a critical crossroads. Ed Stetzer

points out in his book, *Comeback Churches*, that 340,000 churches are in serious need of

church revitalization.[1] In the midst of this landscape of decline, there has emerged a much

needed emphasis on church health instead of numerical growth. At the forefront of the

church health focus is Rick Warren's critical work, *The Purpose Driven Church*.

Concerning the nature of Warren's book and its impact among North American churches,

Thom Rainer writes

> …the Purpose Driven concept is simplistic genius. It is not as much a
> methodology as it is a basic philosophy: The church must be driven by its
> purposes. Church cannot be program-driven, building-driven, or budget-driven.
> They must be driven by the five purposes of the church: worship, evangelism,
> discipleship, ministry and fellowship.[2]

Warren's Purpose Driven philosophy has provided the North American church

with a valuable guide for church revitalization. In sharing his story of the revitalization of

Flamingo Road Baptist Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, Dan Southerland stressed the

impact that the Purpose Driven model had on their efforts to transition FRBC from a

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[1] Ed Stetzer and Mike Dodson, *Comeback Churches: How 300 Churches Turned Around and Yours Can Too* (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishing Group, 2007), 23.

[2] Thom S. Rainer, *Breakout Churches: Discover How to Make the Leap* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2005), 158.

declining traditional church to a healthy church. He writes

> We went to school on many different churches that were reaching unchurched people. The church that influenced us most was Saddleback Church of Mission Viejo, California. We came to realize that a common sense approach to purpose, target and strategy was what was needed to apply in our own setting.[3]

Like FRBC, numerous churches have benefited from implementing the Purpose Driven model to their context as they journeyed once again to health.

Since Warren's book was released in 1995, several other philosophical models, such as *Simple Church* and *Natural Church Development*, have emerged to help guide North American churches to health. With such resources available to pastors today, there should be a noticeable difference in the revitalization of North American churches.

Yet in spite of these philosophical models and the success of their implementation in numerous churches, there is still a significant frustration on the part of many pastors and their churches. Owen Weston presents the typical scenario that ends in pastoral frustration. He writes

> In some cases, the pastor might happen on a strategy that works for a season. But because it has no support structure, it quickly loses its effectiveness and is abandoned along the highway of "hollowness." The pastor is then quick to claim "Church growth strategy just does not work for us," or "We've tried this stuff and it doesn't last."[4]

Documenting small church research that was released by LifeWay Research in November 2008, Ed Stetzer revealed the level of frustration among small church pastors in the Southern Baptist Convention. According to their research, small church pastors:

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[3] Dan Southerland, *Transitioning: Leading Your Church through Change* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999), 11.

[4] Owen Weston, "7 Laws of 7: Without Them the Church Dies," *IPHC Evangelism USA Church Growth* (August 14, 2007), http://evusa.iphc.org/growth.html (Accessed January 2, 2010).

- see their efforts to lead frustrated by "turf" battles and a failure to clarify and evaluate plans.
- see the effectiveness of local church ministry often jeopardized by poor organization.
- are frustrated with how slowly progress is made at their church.
- said lay leaders in the congregation often resist change to protect their area of responsibility.
- said their church had experienced disruptive conflict in the past year.[5]

The frustration among pastors is very real. Is it a problem with the philosophical models or is there something within each local church that is hindering the transition to health? It is the author's contention that philosophical models are not necessarily the problem. Rather the local church with its unique character and history has inherent barriers that must be overcome in order to transition a church to health. This is especially true for local churches that have experienced traumatic events in their congregational life.

Background

Curwensville Christian Church is a town and country church nestled in the Allegheny Mountains of western central Pennsylvania. CCC is an independent Baptist congregation with a varied history of growth and decline. This history points to the fact that CCC can be classified as a troubled church. In 1999, the church called a seminary graduate to be their pastor. At the time the church, which had been averaging 300 in attendance, had declined to an average of 70 in the morning worship service due to a series of traumatic events.

When this pastor assumed the church in May 1999, he set out to implement the Purpose Driven model. Changes were made in accordance with the philosophical model.

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[5] Ed Stetzer, "Small Church Research," *Ed Stetzer.com* (November 13, 2008), http://blogs. Lifeway.com/blog/edstetzer/2008/11/small-church-research-1.html (Accessed January 2, 2010).

Pushback from the congregation emerged. After four months, the pastor challenged the church to embrace the new direction or leave. With that sermon, the church dropped in attendance from 70 to 35. Four months later, this pastor would resign. His abrupt resignation would add to the trauma that CCC had already experienced.

The pastor had failed to grasp the nature of the church's disposition. In its recent history, the church had experienced a series of traumatic events that included the abrupt resignation of a popular pastor, the moral failure of a youth pastor, a major church split, and the very short tenures of two subsequent pastors. In April 2001, the church called the author to be their pastor. Recognizing the frustration that the last pastor had faced, the author decided to lay aside the same philosophical model for the time being. The church was not ready to make the transition to health. The congregation was in "survival mode." It was very evident to the author that there were inherent barriers to health that resulted from the traumatic events of the past.

These barriers created an atmosphere that had to be overcome before the philosophical model could be applied.[6] The next eight years of the author's tenure at CCC were characterized by addressing specific issues to break through the barrier that was hindering a philosophical model from being applied. It is the result of the author's current experience at CCC that this project has taken shape.

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[6] A description of the conditions of the church can be found in the author's article "Regaining Their Trust" *Rick Warren's Ministry Toolbox* 335 (October 31, 2007), http:// legacy.pastors.com/RWMT/article.asp?ID=335&ArtID=10948

Rationale

It is the author's contention that this project is needed to broaden the understanding concerning the implementation of philosophical models to transition declining churches to health. The author specifically wants to draw awareness to the issue of transitioning troubled churches to a place where philosophical models can be applied. An approach must be taken to deal with the barriers that result in pastoral frustration and the hindrance of transitioning churches, specifically troubled ones, to health.

Statement of the Problem

This project will present a descriptive study of the additional factors necessary for a troubled church to move to health. The mistaken assumption that pastors make in implementing a philosophical model to their churches is that the model will solve their congregation's problems (see Figure 1).
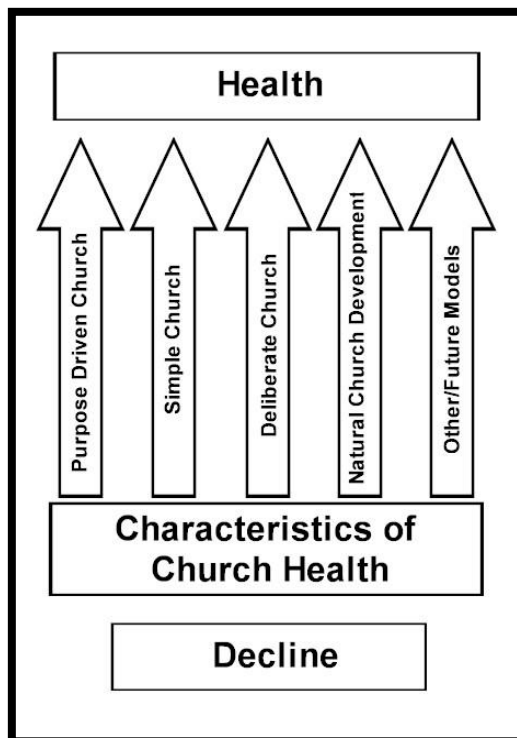
Figure 1. Assumed route to church health

Thom Rainer states that "Many church leaders attempt to introduce an innovative approach as an end instead of the means. They may see innovation as the 'the answer' to their churches woes."[7] This is the assumption that seemed to guide the author's predecessor at Curwensville Christian Church. He tried to implement the Purpose Driven model without addressing the traumatic events that had occurred just prior to his tenure. Those traumatic events were the basis for the barrier that frustrated his ministry. His frustration resulted in an abrupt resignation which only added to the church's trauma (see Figure 2).
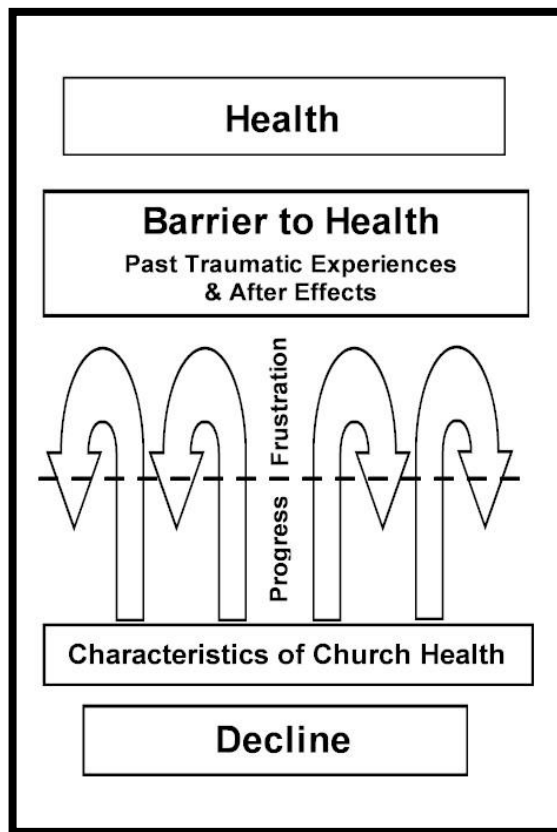
Figure 2. Troubled church dynamic

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[7] Rainer, 31.

While there are no guarantees for a pastor working with a troubled church[8], it is the author's contention that a turnaround can be possible for the church if certain factors/issues are addressed in order to break through the barrier to health (see Figure 3).
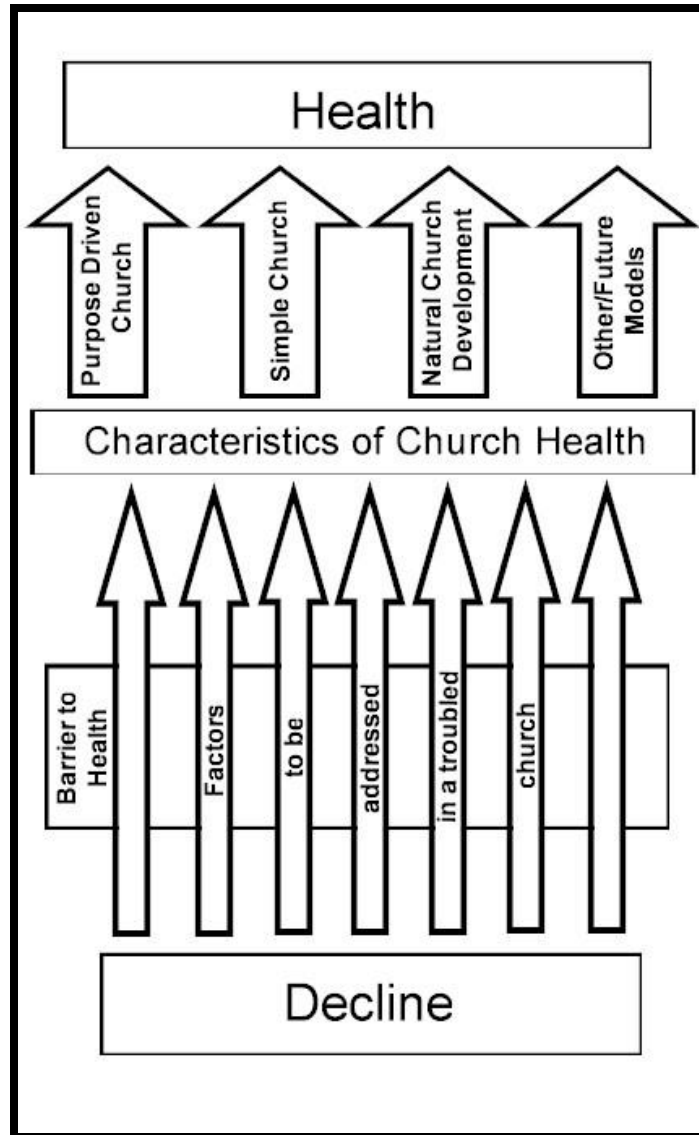
Figure 3. Possible route to health for a troubled church

In the author's experience with CCC, the church was not ready to have the philosophical model applied until key factors were addressed. These factors included the

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[8] Gene Wood, *Leading Turnaround Churches* (St. Charles, Illinois: Church Smart Resources, 2001), 12.

following issues:

- Corporate forgiveness
- Restoration of the pastoral office
- Spiritual renewal/revival
- Long pastoral tenure
- A shift in power structures
- Conflict resolution
- Settlement of fiscal issues within the church
- Breaking of dysfunctional behavior patterns

One by one, as these issues were addressed, the church has moved to a place where it can now begin to apply a philosophical model toward health. It is the author's belief that pastors can move troubled churches toward health when they discover and address key issues that are creating barriers to church health.

Definition of Terms

There are several terms in this project that will be used on a regular basis. These terms will require an initial explanation so that there will be common ground as the project expands.

Troubled Church

The term "troubled church" is a common phrase used for various reasons to describe churches. The use of the term is very broad in its general use. Its common use is with reference to the church's negative testimony to the community as a whole. For an example of its specific use, a publication located on the South Carolina Baptist Convention website describes a troubled church as a congregation where "a reoccurrence

of dismissal" has occurred.[9] It is also used in main-line churches to refer to churches that are causing friction within the denomination. For the purposes of this project, a "troubled church" will be defined as a church that is in a state of plateau or decline due to one or more traumatic events in the life of the congregation that has created a barrier to health.

<div style="text-align:center">Traumatic Event</div>

In this project, when the term "traumatic event" is used, it refers to a situation that has a negative impact on the church. This results in a barrier to health. A "traumatic event" includes, although is not limited to the following: moral failure by a key leader, church splits, forced terminations, abrupt leadership resignations, the abuse of pastors, pastoral abuse of the congregation and mass exits of congregants. These events create a barrier whereby the church remains plateaued or in a state of decline.

<div style="text-align:center">A Healthy Church</div>

The term "healthy church" is a common phrase used in most church growth/health publications. There are various concepts that reflect a healthy church in current literature. Two of these concepts reflect the purposes of this project. The first concept is reflected in Mark Dever's definition of a healthy church:

> it's a church that continually strives to take God's side in the battle against ungodly desires and deceits of the world, our flesh and the devil. It's a church that seeks to conform itself to God's Word . . . A healthy church is a congregation that increasingly reflects God's character as his character has been revealed in his Word.[10]

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[9] The South Carolina Baptist Convention, "Avoiding Forced Termination," *Church Administration*, October 15, 2008, http://www.scbaptist.org/churchadministration/article155629c2228248 .htm (Accessed June 10, 2009).

[10] Mark Dever, *What is a Healthy Church?* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2007), 40.

Thom Rainer speaks to the second concept of a healthy church. He writes "we believe

that any healthy church should be reaching at least one person with the gospel every two

weeks." [11] Based on these two concepts, a "healthy church" will be defined as a church

that is a body of believers that reflects the character of God and is effective in its gospel

outreach.

Turnaround Churches

The phrase "turnaround churches" is another common term within church

growth/health literature. The term was made popular with the release of George Barna's

book, *Turn-Around Churches.* Barna writes

> The good news is that some churches experience a rapid decline but are able to
> end that hemorrhaging and make a full comeback to healthy Christian ministry.
> These are referred to as turnaround churches, and they are exceptions to the rule.[12]

For the purposes of this project, a turnaround church is defined as an established

congregation that had been in a state of decline, but has made the transition to health once

again.

Breakout Churches

The next term that needs to be expanded is "Breakout Churches." Breakout

Churches is a specific term used by Thom Rainer in his book, *Breakout Churches*. He

defines breakout churches as a church that ". . . had been declining or had plateaued for

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[11] Rainer, 20.

[12] George Barna, *Turn-Around Churches: How to Overcome Barriers to Growth and Bring New Life to an Established Church* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1993), 23.

several years prior to its breakout year, or the church was experiencing some type of stagnation not readily apparent in the statistics."[13] From that point of decline, he writes that these churches had a "clearly indentified point at which they began to experience significant growth."[14] According to Rainer, the slump reversal and breakout all took place under the same pastor.[15] For the purposes of this project, similarities between Breakout Churches and the transitioning of troubled churches will be noted.

Change Agent

The final term that needs to be explained for this project is "change agent." Ramsey Coutta describes a change agent as a catalyst. He writes, "they are individuals (or groups) in the church who build up momentum for change even if they don't necessarily shoulder all the work."[16] Bill Easum makes a strong case that the change agent must be a pastor. He states, "It begins with a new pastor. Either the pastor experiences a personal resurrection or the church actually gets a new pastor."[17] For the purposes of this project, the change agent is the senior pastor who builds up the momentum for change as a troubled church is transitioned to health.

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[13] Rainer, 21.

[14] Ibid., 16.

[15] Ibid., 21.

[16] Ramsey Coutta, A *Practical Guide for Successful Church Change* (New York: iUniverse, Inc., 2008), 17.

[17] Bill Easum, *A Second Resurrection: Leading Your Congregation to New Life* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2007), 1.

Statement of Limitations

In approaching a project of this type, several limitations need to be expressed. First, this project is descriptive in its nature. It is not the aim of this project to be prescriptive. The author does not intent to provide a "step-by-step" guide to transitioning a troubled church to health. To do this would feed a disastrous tendency among some pastors today. Rainer reveals this tendency when he writes

> … church leaders would often attend conferences or read books and see the outside influence as the next great initiative for the church. They would do so without taking a realistic assessment of their current situation or the church members' ability to handle immediate and sometime radical change. These leaders would often fail to understand their own cultural context and how a new initiative might work in their area.[18]

It is because of this tendency that this project will simply describe the factors/issues that certain troubled churches addressed in order to transition to health.

Second, this project will be limited to troubled churches. While there are many factors that will result in the decline of a church, this project will focus on a specific category of declining churches. This project will be limited to churches who are in decline because of certain traumatic events that have occurred in their congregational life.

Next, this project is not about methodology. It is not the task of this project to explain how the issues with a troubled church are addressed. Any reference to a specific methodology will simply illustrate how certain factors/issues were addressed by a church. This project will not address how to implement philosophical models in a troubled church. It is the author's intention to present possible factors/issues that churches addressed in order to apply a philosophical model.

Finally, the very nature of transitioning declining churches is a limitation. Two

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[18] Ibid., 83.

dominate factors necessitate this limitation. First, the fact remains that transitioning

declining churches typically results in failure. Not every declining church can be turned

around. In his book, *Turn-Around Churches*, Barna shares the perspective of Richard

Germain concerning the issue of working with declining churches. Germain states "not

every church can be turned around. I've watched a lot of guys break their hearts trying.

Sometimes it just doesn't happen, and I don't understand all the reasons why."[19]

Second, dealing with the issues that lead to a decline does not guarantee that a

troubled church can be moved to health. Consider the testimony of one church that

Edward Rowell writes about in *Leadership* journal.

> One church in the Midwest had a dramatic response to the solemn assembly. The
> people repented for the inappropriate firings of four previous pastors. They sent
> letters to each former pastor, asking forgiveness for the pain the church had
> caused them. But now, four years later, some old behavior patterns have returned.
> The new pastor sometimes wonders if his days are numbered.[20]

It is not the task of this project to convey that working with troubled churches will always

result in a turn-around toward health. The fact remains that a dying, troubled church may

be at "a point of no return."

The Theoretical Basis for the Project

The basis for this project is rooted in two specific theoretical areas. First, there is

a relationship between transitioning troubled churches to health and Biblical theology.

Second, the issue of working with troubled churches is rooted in pastoral theology as

well.

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[19] Barna, *Turn-Around Churches*, 108.

[20] Edward Rowell, "The Day Our Church Repented," *Leadership* 17, No 3 (Summer 1996): 94.

Biblical Theology

The relationship between this project and Biblical theology is demonstrated in the very nature of the New Testament epistles. Paul's epistles to the Galatians, Corinthians and Thessalonians are instructional letters that specifically deal with problem areas that are hindering these bodies of believers from being healthy churches. In his first epistle to the Corinthians, he writes, "And the rest I will set in order when I come." (1 Cor. 11:34 NKJV)

Dealing with the problem areas within a church is not just the concern of the apostle Paul. The letters to the seven churches in the book of the Revelation specifically detail instructions from Jesus Christ concerning issues that were affecting the churches negatively. Each of the letters includes the common statement "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). In the spirit of this New Testament precedent, this project seeks to present the issues that must be addressed in order for a troubled church to move toward health.

Pastoral Theology

This project also has a relationship to pastoral theology. While church planting is a growing and necessary movement today, not every seminary graduate is qualified or has the personality and skills necessary to be a church planter. With a large number of North American churches in decline, a majority of seminary graduates will pastor declining, established churches. Gene Wood states in his book, *Leading Turnaround Churches*, that "the skills necessary to direct a comeback are not synonymous with those

of a church planter or the pastor who leads a steadily growing congregation."[21] Wood makes the point that "God can and does choose to use average people to breathe fresh life into stagnant and dying churches."[22] This project seeks to show that working with troubled churches is a necessary work for pastors in the revitalization of North American churches.

Statement of Methodology

The project is designed to be a help for pastors of troubled churches. It is focused on recognizing and addressing the factors/issues that have resulted from a traumatic experience that is now hindering the church from transitioning to health. In order to help pastors of troubled churches address these issues, the author has chosen to use the descriptive study method. It is therefore necessary to form a research group of troubled churches which have been identified as having successfully addressed the issues that created a barrier to health.

The author will construct a survey that will be used to identify the issues or factors that were addressed by the research group as they broke through the barrier to health. The survey will include the following:

1.   Church Data

- Size of congregation

- Age of the congregation

- The nature of traumatic experience(s) at the church

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[21] Wood, 17.

[22] Ibid., 11.

- The state of plateau or decline prior to transition to health

2. Pastoral Data

- Age of pastor

- Ministry experience

- Education level

- Tenure at current church

3. Transitional Data

- Issues that were addressed

- Duration of transition

- Philosophical model that was applied

The size of the research group will be a minimum of ten churches that have transitioned from being a troubled church to a healthy congregation. The basis for the study group being limited to a small number of churches is due to two factors. First, there are very few troubled churches that have made the transition to health. In an initial interview that the author had with a denominational official from a group of 300 Baptist churches in Canada, only one church out of more than 30 churches that were labeled as troubled had successfully made the transition to health in the last ten years. Finding troubled churches is not difficult, finding churches that have made the transition is.

Second, it is the author's contention that a study group with a minimum of ten churches can be used. This is based on the precedent that Thom Rainer used in his book, *Breakout Churches*. In identifying the study group for his research, he writes

> If you are having trouble naming several such churches, you have a taste of the difficulties the research team encountered in this project. We believe, quite simply, that there are very few breakout churches in America. In fact, although we have data on thousands of churches, we found only thirteen churches that

survived the rigorous screening.[23]

Because the number of troubled churches that have successfully transitioned to health are few, the study group will have to be small. Yet the information gained from these churches can be valuable. Once again consider Thom Rainer's reasoning for his research group in *Breakout Churches*. He writes "the lessons we have learned from these churches is priceless."[24] It is the author's contention that the lessons learned from a small research group of troubled churches can be extremely valuable to pastors seeking to move their churches to health.

After the introduction, the author will seek to present the project in a systematic manner. In Chapter Two, the author will present the assumed route to church health (see Figure 1). The author will present the characteristics of the healthy church. As the characteristics are presented, the author will provide a comparative chart of these characteristics based on current literature. The author will also present a brief overview of the philosophical models that are currently accepted for transitioning a declining church to health.

In Chapter Three, the author will present the nature of a troubled church. A brief overview of the traumatic experiences that result in a troubled church will be presented. The author will show how these experiences create a barrier to the transition process to health (see Figure 2). The author will show that troubled churches require additional factors/issues to be addressed before the congregations can move toward health.

In Chapters Four and Five, the author will present the "proposed route to health

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[23] Rainer, 16.

[24] Ibid.

for a troubled church." A descriptive study of the research group will be presented in order to highlight the key factors/issues that must be addressed in order to break through the barrier to health. This chapter will include the author's observation of the research data as well as specific observations based on follow-up interviews with the research group. Chapter Six will summarize the material with a conclusion for the reader in general and the pastor of a troubled church in particular.

Review of Literature

The issue of troubled churches has not been absent from current literature. However, few volumes exist that address the issue of transitioning a troubled church to health. The earliest reference to working with troubled churches that the author found was Winston Sherwick's article, *Helping Troubled Churches*, in Fall 1983 *Leadership* journal. This article was written from the perspective of an interim pastor who has served in many troubled churches. He details his experience in working through personality conflicts, financial crises and congregational depression. The basis of the article looks at the efforts of an interim pastor in the short term.

One recent volume that addresses the issue of bringing healing to troubled churches is Kenneth Quick's book, *Healing the Heart of Your Church: How Church Leaders Can Break the Pattern of Historic Corporate Dysfunction*. In this volume, Dr. Quick addresses the issue of corporate dysfunction rooted in the corporate heart of a congregation. This dysfunction is a result of traumatic events in the church's past. He then presents guidelines for leading a church through the healing process. The second part of the book is devoted to these guidelines with chapters devoted to dealing with each

of the following traumatic events: splits, pastors who abuse, the abuse of pastors, sinful

reactivity and past shame. This book is focused primarily on the issue of corporate

healing.

Closely related to Quick's book is his article in Fall 2008 *Leadership* journal,

"Attachment Disorder Churches." In this article, he specifically looks at one area of

trauma that troubled churches have experienced. This area of trauma is the abandonment

of churches by their pastors during a period of crisis and the dysfunctional behavior that

comes as a result. He then provides some steps for leading such a congregation toward

healing.

Another recent publication is Dwight Tomlinson's book, *Healing the Wounded*

Church. In this volume, Tomlinson shares the process of healing that took place at

Liberty Baptist Church in Irvine, California. The book is a basic look at the issues he

faced as he tried to bring healing to a fundamental Independent Baptist Church.

In 1994, Neil Anderson and Charles Mylander released *Setting Your Church Free*.

This book was an extension of Anderson's popular books, *Victory Over the Darkness* and

Bondage Breaker. In this volume, the authors focus on the issue of releasing churches

from the bondage of past sin. This book emphasizes the spiritual warfare dimension of

working with declining churches.

Another volume that addresses the issue of transitioning a troubled church is

Randy Frazee's book, *The Comeback Congregation: New Life for a Troubled Ministry*. In

this book, Frazee with Lyle Schaller presents the story of his ministry at Pantego Bible

Church (PBC). In this book, Frazee presents the fact that a change agent is required for

the troubled church. This book provides a guide for how he led PBC to health. Frazee's

book is primarily a guide to the implementation of a philosophical model. It does not go into detail concerning how he addressed the past traumatic events at PBC.

Another volume that is similar to Frazee's book is Dan Southerland's *Transitioning: Leading Your Church Through Change*. While FRBC had gone through some traumatic experiences before he became senior pastor, he does not specifically address whether or not these experiences were addressed. His book simply provides a guide to the implementation of the Purpose Driven model to an established church.

Another article, "Piecing Together a Shattered Church," that appeared in the Spring 1988 edition of *Leadership* was written by an author using the pen name, Richard Porter. The article is written from the perspective of a seasoned pastor who assumed the pastorate at a troubled church. The author explains the difficulties that he faced in trying to bring this church back to health. In particular, he lists the actions that he took in order to restore trust in the pastoral office and once again bring unity. He also shares the steps that he undertook for his personal survival.

Dan Cooley's article, "Ghosts of Conflicts Past," in Fall 2004 *Leadership* journal presents the story of dealing with the pattern of dysfunction in his congregation. In particular, he was dealing with a generational pattern of forcing pastors to resign. He shares how he confronted the issue and the results of the healing process in the church.

Closely related to the issue of working with troubled churches is Thom Rainer's book, *Breakout Churches*. Although Rainer is not specifically addressing the issue of troubled churches in his book, several of the churches that he highlights from his research group had experienced traumatic events that resulted in decline. Some of the principles, that Rainer draws from his research group, have direct implications for this project.

While many of these volumes touch on some aspect of working with troubled churches, such as Quick's *Healing the Heart of Your Church*, it is the author's aim to supplement these works with a descriptive study of what factors/issues were addressed by pastors as they moved their troubled churches to health.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ASSUMED ROUTE TO CHURCH HEALTH

To comprehend the dilemma facing pastors of troubled churches, there needs to

be an understanding of the current thinking concerning the assumed route to church

health (see Figure 1). Consider again the point that Thom Rainer makes concerning the
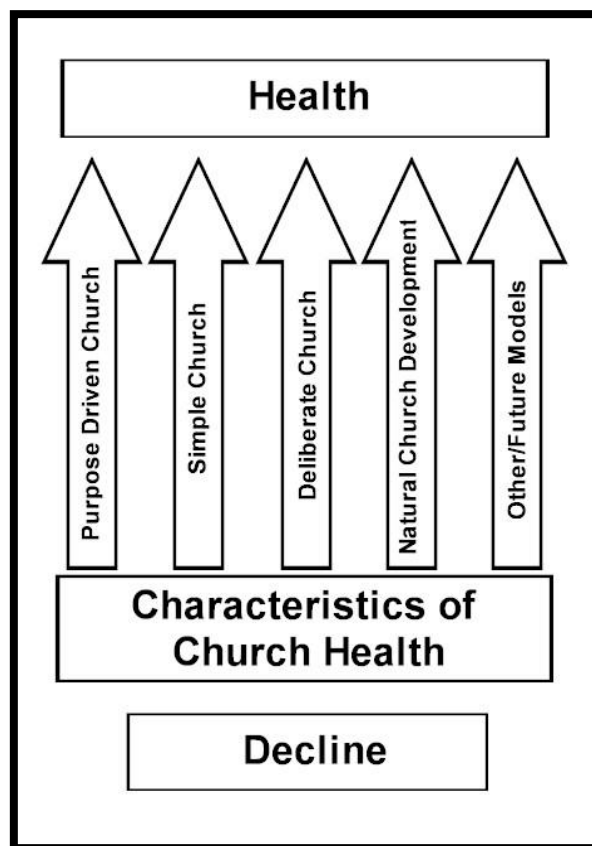

Figure 1. Assumed route to church health

mistaken assumption that pastors have about the process of revitalization. He stressed

that many pastors see "innovation as an end instead of the means. They may see

innovation as the 'the answer' to their church's woes."[1] Tragically, the route to church

health has become the simple application of a philosophical model.

    The development of church growth/health thought over the last forty years and the

recent development of philosophical models for health has made it easy for a pastor to

look at the revitalization of a church as simply the application of a model. This is in spite

of the fact that most church growth/health literature plainly sets forth the qualifier that

every church is different and the application of a philosophical model does not guarantee

results. Commenting on this tendency, Rick Warren states

> The problem with many churches is that they begin with the wrong question. They
> ask, "What will make our church grow?" This is a misunderstanding of the issue. It's
> like saying, "How can we build a wave?" The question we need to ask instead is,
> "What is keeping our church from growing?" What barriers are blocking the waves
> God wants to send our way? What obstacles and hindrances are preventing growth
> from happening?[2]

Moving a church toward health is extremely complex, requiring the change agent to give

concerted thought to the "questions" that need to be asked about the congregation.

    If a change agent is going to approach the revitalization of a troubled church,

there needs to be a proper understanding of the nature of church health. An improper

understanding will lead the change agent into frustration and further disaster for the

troubled church. Therefore, it is necessary to look at the development of church health

thought and the characteristics of a healthy church. With this understanding, the author

will present the current philosophical models for moving a church toward health.

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[1] Rainer, 31.

[2] Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message &
Mission* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 15-16.

The Development of Church Health Thought

There is no doubt that Rick Warren's *The Purpose-Driven Church* is a foundational book that has become a bench mark for the revitalization of churches. Warren's premise is simply that "the key issue for churches in the twenty-first century will be church health, not church growth."[3] Warren's book placed the concept of church health in the forefront of pastoral ministry. It has also influenced current literature, both positively and negatively, concerning 21st century church ministry.

While Warren's book moved the focus from church growth to church health, the issue of a church health was evident at least 20 years prior to its release. In fact, the concept of a healthy church was a part of church growth literature for many years. This can be seen through the writings of Donald McGavaran, C. Peter Wagner, Leith Anderson and Dann Spader. Church health was also a key component of the Body-Life movement of the 1970's.

Donald McGavran

In 1973, Donald McGavran and Win Arn's book, *How to Grow a Church: Conversations about Church Growth*, was released. In their book, the authors devoted a section to the issue of diagnosing church health. In looking at the discussion that McGavran and Arn have in this section, two observations concerning church health emerge. First, the authors do not view church growth and church health as separate concepts. Church health or the diagnosis of a church's health is a crucial aspect of

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[3] Ibid., 17.

bringing about growth in a church.[4] Next McGavran points out the importance asking

crucial questions about a church's health in order to bring about growth. He states

> Such questions as these need to be asked: In what areas is the church in poor
> health? What areas of the church are growing? What areas are not growing?
> Where is the church effective in the community? Where is it not effective? Is the
> church reproducing itself at various levels: the children, the youth, the young
> adults, the middle-aged, the business people, the single women? Information in all
> these areas is essential to a church. Board members and leaders in all age groups
> should be keenly aware of these facts.[5]

The very brief nature of this discussion with relationship to the whole book, suggests that

the authors view the issue of church health as one component of the overall church

growth equation.

The Body-Life Movement

Around the same time of McGavran and Arn's book, the North American church

saw the emergence of the Body-Life movement. Elmer Towns describes the Body-Life

movement as "The clustering of Christians together in a shared intimacy to achieve

growth by all members of the Body working together and building up one another."[6]

Towns identifies four key authors whose books best exemplify the essence of the Body

Life movement. These authors include Gene Getz, Lawrence Richards, Robert Girard and

Ray Stedman, whose book *Body-Life* exemplified the values and thinking of the Body-

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[4] Donald McGavran and Win Arn, *How to Grow a Church: Conversations about Church Growth* (Glendale, California: Regal Books, 1973), 60-61.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Elmer L. Towns, *A Practical Encyclopedia of Evangelism and Church Growth*, ElmerTowns.com 1995, http://elmertowns.com/book/online/PrcEncyclopChurchGrowth/Practical_ Encyclopedia_of_Growth_[ETowns].PDF (accessed April 7, 2010).

Life movement.[7] In reading the books of these four authors, the term "healthy church" is only used by Stedman. Yet each author very clearly presents what the signs of a "healthy church" are.

Gene Getz

In his book, *Sharpening the Focus of the Church*, Gene Getz alludes to the health of church as he describes body-life. He states

> A functioning body, or "body life," as some have designated it, is absolutely essential for growth and maturity to take place in the church. The very nature of the body of Christ makes it important for every member to function and contribute to the process of edification.[8]

To Getz, the sign of a "functioning body" is marked by the exercise of spiritual gifts among church members. He states that "every "joint" must function and every "individual part" is to make its contribution to the life of the church."[9]

Lawrence Richards

Lawrence Richards, in his book *A New Face for the Church*, goes further and envisions what a church will look like when they begin to focus on Body-Life, which he calls Group-Life. He writes

> It is important to remember that these chapters are planned to show what may happen in renewal. The features which I have incorporated are valid options, but not the only options. No congregation ought to take these patterns as a model to reproduce. For valid change comes only through consensual discovery of God's

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[7] Ibid.

[8] Gene A. Getz, *Sharpening the Focus of the Church: The Church Seen Through Three Lenses* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974), 116.

[9] Ibid., 112.

will - and the change format in each congregation. But perhaps we can take these chapters as outlining a church that contrasts with today's church, and in the contrast demonstrate why we so desperately need change. For the new life of the church envisioned here is, to me, a far better life than we know today.[10]

The change, that Richards is calling the church to, is reflected in three "valid options." He states that these options are Christian education, evangelism and social concern.

Robert Girard

Robert Girard tells the story of Our Heritage Wesleyan Church in Scottsdale, Arizona in his book, *Brethren, Hang Loose*. The book is basically the story of how he transitioned a traditional church to a Body-Life church. In his book, Girard shares the key traits of a church that reflects life and wholeness. These traits include: talking about Jesus, caring about each other, prayer, sharing their faith, seeing miracles, service, growth, life and trust in God.[11]

Ray Stedman

The book that best epitomizes the movement is Ray Stedman's *Body Life: The Church Comes Alive*. It is this book that draws a direct connection between Body-Life and the issue of church health. While the other writers allude to traits of church health, Stedman devotes a chapter to the discussion of health. He writes in "Keeping the Body Healthy" that "the work of the ministry will never be properly done by a weak and

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[10] Lawrence O. Richards, *A New Face for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), 236.

[11] Robert C. Girard, *Brethren Hang Loose: Or What's Happening to My Church?* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), 155-164.

unhealthy church, torn with internal pains, and wracked by spiritual diseases."[12] To

Stedman, health in a church was attainable and manifested in several keys areas. He

writes

> A healthy body is necessary to do effective work. To attempt evangelism while the body of Christ is sick and ailing is worse than useless. It is not difficult to keep a body of Christians healthy and vital if the individuals involved (especially leaders) are concerned to bear one another's burdens, confess their faults one to another, and to instruct and admonish one another in love, by means of the word of God. It is by these means that the church is becoming what its Lord desires: a church in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.[13]

The Overall Contribution of Body-Life

The current concept of church health owes much to the emphasis of the Body-Life

movement. In assessing the movement, Elmer Towns points out that "The basic

principles and organizational implications for Body Life churches are considerably

different from those taught by fundamentalists."[14] He states that the principles of the

movement are assorted. Stedman focused on four primary ones. Richards listed six

principles: unified life, servant leadership, ministering laity, love lifestyle, growth

emphasis and scripture response. Gene Getz provides forty-one principles for growth and

ministry.[15] Towns summarizes the various principles from the Body- Life movement into

twenty-four principles, which he divides into eight major categories. He lists the eight

categories as

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[12] Ray C. Stedman, *Body Life: The Church Comes Alive* (Glendale, California: Regal Books, 1972), 106.

[13] Ibid., 114.

[14] Elmer Towns, John N. Vaughan and David J. Seifert, *The Complete Book of Church Growth* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1983), 137.

[15] Ibid.

1. Corporate Life (5 principles)
2. Administration and Leadership (6 principles)
3. Physical Facilities (1 principle)
4. Finances (1 principle)
5. Ministries (3 principles)
6. Christian Education (4 principles)
7. Ecumenism (1 principle)
8. Evangelism (3 principles)[16]

Interestingly, most of the categories that Towns uses to categorize Body-Life principles foreshadow the characteristics of church health that is reflected in literature today.

C. Peter Wagner

C. Peter Wagner contributed to the discussion of the healthy church with several publications. In 1973, he wrote an article for *Christianity Today* entitled, "How to Diagnose the Health of Your Church." Towns reflects on this article by pointing to the fact that Wagner explains the need for diagnostic research methods. Towns writes, "Dr. Wagner indicates that while the measurements don't cure the sick patient, they are definitely an invaluable tool in diagnosing the seriousness of the illness."[17]

A few years later, Wagner released the book, *Your Church can Grow: Seven Vital Signs of a Healthy Church*. Reflecting on healthy churches, he writes

> Healthy churches, like healthy people, exhibit certain vital signs. If the church is the Body of Christ, then there is some biblical justification in taking a rather clinical approach to analyzing the health of a church.[18]

He then presents in his book the seven "vital signs" of a healthy church. To Wagner these

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[16] Ibid., 138.

[17] Ibid., 126.

[18] C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow: Seven Vital Signs of a Healthy Church* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1984), 34.

seven signs are indicators of ecclesiastical good health. He lists these signs/indicators as

being: (1) The pastor, (2) The people of the church, (3) Church size, (4) Structure and

functions, (5) Homogeneous unit, (6) Methods and (7) Priorities.[19]

Eight years later, Wagner reflected on the impact of *Your Church Can Grow*. He

writes

> The seven signs have since been scrutinized very carefully. They have been
> addressed in many books, articles, and papers, and at least four computer-based
> tests have been run on them. . . . By and large, the seven vital signs have held up
> and have been found helpful for many church leaders who are involved in
> planning for growth in their churches. None has actually been contradicted,
> although tests for one or two have come up inconclusive.[20]

Dann Spader

In 1991, Dann Spader and Gary Mayes took the discussion of church health to

another level when they released *Growing a Healthy Church*. In their book, they briefly

discuss two issues concerning health that would later be reflected in two philosophical

models. First Spader and Mayes discuss the importance of purpose. They write

> . . . clear purpose and risk are close companions. When your purpose is crystal
> clear, there are times you will discover the need to alter your course. A consuming
> purpose may call for new endeavors, experiments, and journeys into uncharted
> waters in order to be fully achieved. Risk accompanies new endeavors because
> any kind of change, no matter how slight, takes people into the unknown. Of
> course risk is not easy. Yet a firm grasp on purpose and the direct relationship of
> change to that purpose enables people to be more willing to take needed risks.
> On the positive side, clear purpose not only enables people to risk, but it fuels
> faith at the same time. When we move ahead with the absolute confidence that
> what we are pursuing is the expressed purpose God has for us, we can move
> ahead in faith. We can make decisions anticipating the powerful work of God to

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[19] Ibid., 35.

[20] C. Peter Wagner, *Leading Your Church to Growth: The Secret of Pastor/People Partnership in Dynamic Church Growth* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1976), 35.

accomplish His purpose because our agenda has aligned itself with His desire.[21]

Second, the authors make the point to stress the importance of simplicity. In a section

entitled "Principles to Guide Our Programming," their third principle is "Doing a few

things well is more effective than doing many things in mediocrity."[22]

The heart of their book is the presentation of six foundational aspects of ministry.

These six aspects are as follows: an atmosphere of love, relational ministry, clear

communication of Christ, healthy ministry image, a prayer base, and the communication

of the Word.[23] Spader and Mayes feel that these six aspects are crucial for creating an

environment for growth.

Leith Anderson

The discussion of church health progressed with the release of Leith Anderson's

book, *A Church for the 21st Century*. He points out that health differs from church to

church. He writes, "Healthy for a young church in a booming suburb of Orlando includes

a growth rate of 50% per year. Health for an old church in a declining inner city of the

Rust Belt may be staying the same size."[24]

Anderson also stresses that church health is the responsibility of each church. He

writes

> Each church needs to define health for itself. That comes through a process of
> comparison, consultation, and self-evaluation. Comparison is made with other

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[21] Dann Spader and Gary Mayes, *Growing a Healthy Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 20.

[22] Ibid., 30.

[23] Ibid., 48-50.

[24] Leith Anderson, *A Church for the 21st Century: Bringing Change to Your Church to Meet the Challenges of a Changing Society* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 1992), 128.

churches, especially healthy ones. Consultation with outsiders helps us see ourselves as others see us. Self-evaluation is applying insider's insights to the comparisons and consultations.[25]

While pointing out that it is not exhaustive, he lists seven characteristics of a healthy church. His list includes: glorify God, producing disciples, the exercise of spiritual gifts, relating positively to one's environment, reproduction, incorporation of new comers and an openness to change.[26] He also stresses that faith, prayer and the Word of God are essential to healthy churches.[27]

The Purpose Driven Church

The critical year for the development of church health thought was 1995 and the release of Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Church*. Warren took the discussion of church health to the next step with the introduction of a philosophical model. Thom Rainer points out the implications of *The Purpose Driven Church*. He writes "What many critics do not seem to grasp, however, is that the Purpose Driven model is not a new program or fad; it is rather a philosophy of ministry that begins with the question, "What is the church supposed to do?"[28]

At the heart of *The Purpose Driven Church* are the five purposes for the church that are derived from scriptural commands. According to Warren, a church needs to grow warmer through fellowship, deeper through discipleship, stronger through worship, broader through ministry, and larger through evangelism. When the church focuses on

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Ibid., 129-140.

[27] Ibid., 140-141.

[28] Rainer, 105.

balancing these purposes in the church, the result is growth.[29]

To illustrate the philosophical model for health, Warren uses his now well-known baseball diamond. The diamond represents the process of moving people from "unchurched and uncommitted to mature believers."[30] Make no mistake; the issue with Warren is church health. Reflecting on his book, he states that his prediction that health not growth would be the primary focus of the 21st century church has proven true.[31] To Warren, church health is the key to church growth.

<div align="center">Implications</div>

An understanding of the progression of the church health discussion prior to the release of *The Purpose Driven Church* has implications for a pastor seeking to bring health to his congregation. First, one cannot help but notice that church health has always been a component of the church growth movement. To McGavran and Arn, church health was part of the process. The focus on church health is not a new line of thinking.

This then results in the next implication. Church health is not the "silver bullet" to growth in declining churches. Each church is unique. Diagnosing the health of a congregation is simply a part of the revitalization process. Finally, church health must be recognized as a complex issue. There are many factors within the church that will affect the revitalization process. One important factor for a change agent is having an

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[29] Richard Abanes, *Rick Warren and the Purpose that Drives Him: An Insider Looks at the Phenomenal Bestseller* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2005), 60.

[30] Ibid., 58.

[31] Rick Warren, "Church Growth is the Result of Church Health," *Rick Warren's Ministry Toolbox*, April 17, 2002 No.48 http://legacy.pastors.com/RWMT/?ID=48&artid=1666&expand=1 (Accessed June 10, 2009).

understanding concerning what a healthy church looks like.

Characteristics of a Healthy Church

Since the release of *The Purpose Driven Church*, there have emerged a number of books of various types to describe what a healthy church is and what the characteristics of such a church are. While a number of books agree on some basic characteristics, one cannot help but notice that gaining an understanding of the characteristics is not a simple matter. For the purposes of this study, the author will seek to define the major categories of characteristics. With the identification of the categories, the author will present a comparison chart of the characteristics based on current literature.

The Major Categories of Characteristics

For the author, the issue of categorizing the characteristics of the healthy church emerges from the discussion of the Body-Life movement by Elmer Towns. In presenting the movement, Towns divided the twenty-four principles of the movement into eight categories. These categories include corporate life, administration and leadership, physical facilities, finances, ministries, Christian education, ecumenism and evangelism.[32] Based on this precedent, the author believes it is important to divide the characteristics that are listed in current literature into categories. This will help a change agent understand the complexity of church health.

In looking at the current literature, various authors have intentionally and not intentionally divided their characteristics in categories. In Warren's book, a healthy

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[32] Towns, Vaughan and Seifert, 137.

church is represented by balancing the five purposes. Mark Dever in his book, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, states that his marks (characteristics) are divided into two main "needs" or categories: the preaching of the message and the leading of disciples.[33] The characteristics presented in some literature are broad enough in nature that they can be seen as categories. An example of this can be seen with Christian Schwarz's eight quality characteristics of healthy churches.[34]

It is the author's intention to use Warren's five purposes as the structure for categorizing the characteristics of a healthy church. In addition to Warren's five purposes, the author will include a sixth category, Leadership. While Rick Warren does not specifically include leadership as a characteristic in his book due to his emphasis on the Biblical purposes of the church, there is an underlying assumption concerning the need for leadership in growing a healthy church. For example, he writes that "church leaders should stop praying 'Lord, bless what I'm doing' and start praying, 'Lord, help me to do what you are blessing.'"[35]

Schwarz's quality characteristics will also be adapted as some of the subcategories for the six main categories. With that in mind, the characteristics that are evident in current literature will be placed into the following main categories:

- Church-body/Fellowship
- Discipleship
- Worship
- Ministry
- Evangelism

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[33] Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2004), 28.

[34] Christian A. Schwarz, *Natural Church Development: A Guide to Eight Essential Qualities of Healthy Churches* (St. Charles, Illinois: Church Smart Resources, 1996), 47.

[35] Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 15.

- Leadership

Comparison of Current Literature

Comparing the characteristics of a healthy church from current literature can be insightful for a change agent. However, any comparison of current literature will be partial due to the number of publications that have been printed since *The Purpose Driven Church* was released. The author's comparison (see Figure 4), is reflective of well-known books and some lesser-known works on church health. The books used in the comparison are as follows:

- *The Purpose Driven Church* by Rick Warren[36]
- *Natural Church Development* by Christian Schwarz[37]
- *9 Marks of a Healthy Church* by Mark Dever[38]
- *Growing Healthy Churches* by Ebbie Smith[39]
- *Becoming a Healthy Church* by Stephen A Macchia[40]
- *Comeback Churches* by Ed Stetzer & Mike Dodson[41]
- *The Church in Transition* by Tim Condor[42]
- *12 Pillars of a Healthy Church* by Waldo Werning[43]
- *The Practices of a Healthy Church* by Donald J. MacNair[44]

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[36] Ibid., 103-107.

[37] Schwarz, 24-39.

[38] Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, 29-32.

[39] Ebbie C. Smith, *Growing Healthy Churches: New Directions for Church Growth in the 21st Century* (Fort Worth, Texas: Church Starting Network, 2003), 19-23.

[40] Stephen A. Macchia, *Becoming a Healthy Church: 10 Vital Traits of a Healthy Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 23.

[41] Stetzer and Dodson, 192-198.

[42] Tim Condor, The *Church in Transition: The Journey of Existing Churches into the Emerging Culture* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2006), 105-196.

[43] Waldo J. Werning, *12 Pillars of a Healthy Church: Be a Life-Giving Church and Center for Missionary Formation* (St. Charles, Illinois: Church Smart Resources, 2001), 25-70.

[44] Donald J. MacNair, *The Practices of a Healthy Church: Biblical Strategies for Vibrant Church Life and Ministry* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 1999), 9-11.

Characteristics of a Healthy Church	The Purpose Driven Church	Natural Church Development	9 Marks of a Healthy Church	Growing Healthy Churches	Becoming a Healthy Church	Comeback Churches	The Church in Transition	12 Pillars of a Healthy Church	The Practices of a Healthy Church
1. Church Body / Fellowship	■				■				
a. Self-sufficient/ Stewardship/ Generosity				■	■			■	
b. Relationship		■			■		■	■	
- Care				■					
- Assimilation						■			
- Fully Functioning Parts				■					■
- Absence of conflict									■
c. Structures		■				■		■	
- Administration & Accountability					■				
- Church Membership			■						
- Church Discipline			■	■					
- Immune System				■					
2. Discipleship	■		■						
a. The Gospel			■					■	
- The Bible			■						■
- Theology			■						
- Preaching			■						
b. Spirituality		■					■	■	■
- Spiritual Disciplines					■				
- Prayer						■			■
c. Small Groups/ Sunday School		■				■		■	
3. Worship	■	■			■	■	■	■	■
4. Ministry	■	■		■					
a. Mission							■	■	■
- Children's Ministry						■			
- Youth Ministry						■			
b. Networking					■				
c. Empowerment of Holy Spirit					■				
5. Evangelism	■	■	■						
- Understanding of conversion			■						
- Growth				■					
- Church planting				■				■	
- Outward Focus					■				
- Missions						■			
6. Leadership		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■

Figure 4. Comparison of current literature

When the characteristics are plotted in the comparison, several key observations emerge. First, *The Purpose Driven Church* remains foundational to the church health discussion. When the characteristics presented in other works are plotted, they fit with Warren's five purposes for a church. Next, there does not seem to be agreement among current literature as what are the basic characteristics of a healthy church. The only exceptions to this observation are worship and leadership. Next, the characteristics tend to reflect the philosophical/theological bent of the author. This can be seen in Dever's book, which reflects his bent toward church administration, and Condor's book, which is reflective of the Emerging Church movement.

Finally, the comparison of current literature helps the change agent grasp the complexity of church health. While Warren's five purposes provide a broad picture of health, the comparison shows that a specific picture of church health characteristics is complex and almost unattainable.

From the comparison, there emerges a crucial implication for a change agent. The change agent should take great care in allowing any one publication to define what church health is for his congregation. Aside from the broad picture that Warren's five purposes provide, defining health for a specific church is complex. A change agent needs to study more than one work to grasp what health will look like for his congregation. By allowing any one work to define health, the change agent may actually do harm to a congregation. This is especially true for troubled churches.

Current Philosophical Models for Church Health

Having looked at the development of church health thought and the complexity of

church health as seen in the various characteristics listed in current literature, it is

necessary for the change agent to have a general understanding of the philosophical

models for church health. What follows is a brief overview of the current philosophical

models, both well-known and lesser known. The models that will be presented are as

follows:

- The Purpose Driven Church
- Simple Church
- Natural Church Development
- The Seed-Planting Church
- The Deliberate Church

With the presentation of the current models, the issue of philosophical versus

methodological application of the models will be examined. This examination is

especially critical to the discussion of transitioning a troubled church to health.

The Purpose Driven Church

At the forefront of the philosophical models for church health is Rick Warren's

The Purpose Driven Church. Referring to the Purpose Driven model as an innovating

church approach, Ebbie Smith states that the primary purpose is to target the unchurched

as the church places reaching the unsaved in a primary place without overlooking the

developmental needs of believers.[45] The essence of the Purpose Driven model is the focus

on moving the unchurched and uncommitted to a place of spiritual maturity. Warren

illustrates this model for health with a baseball diamond around which church members

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[45] Smith, 134-135.

are to be ushered. The baseball diamond reflects the five purposes for the church as

Warren sees them delineated by the Bible. The diamond is nothing more than a "life

development process" based on the Great Commandment and the Great Commission.[46]

Simple Church

Another well-known philosophical model is Simple Church. The heart of this

model is the concept that "the healthiest churches in America tended to have a simple

process for making disciples."[47] Interestingly, Rainer and Geiger state that "this book is

not about another church model."[48] The point of their book is to stress that a "simple

church is a congregation designed around a straight-forward and strategic process that

moves people through stages of spiritual growth."[49] The process of simple ministry is

centered on four critical elements: clarity about the process, logical movement,

alignment, and focus.[50]

Natural Church Development

Natural Church Development (NCD) was first published in 1996. NCD is an

approach to church health that looks at the "underground realities" which influence life

within the congregation. NCD seeks to recognize the "underground realities in order to

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[46] Abanes, 58-60.

[47] Thom S. Rainer & Eric Geiger, *Simple Church: Returning to God's Process for Making Disciples* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), ix.

[48] Ibid., 3.

[49] Ibid., 60.

[50] Ibid., 68.

answer the question of why there is growth in church.[51] Schwarz states that he developed

NCD from three different sources: empirical research, observing nature and studying

scripture.[52] Schwarz stresses that NCD is different from other models in that it is

principle-oriented in its approach, sees the quality of church life as the key to

development and is attempting to release the growth forces within a church.[53]

<div align="center">The Seed-Planting Church</div>

A lesser known model for church health is Waldo Werning's *The Seed Planting

Church*. Werning's model sets itself in contrast to what he calls the "programmatic,

maintenance, harvesting church." He stresses that the church must be a "missional, seed-

planting, nurturing church." He states that the institutional church cannot be revitalized.[54]

Health and growth takes place due to the organic nature of the church. His model stresses

the nurturing, equipping aspects of a church.[55] His model primarily looks at the issues of

stewardship among God's people, the need to care for the entire church, the use of quality

control systems and faith empowered leadership.

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[51] Schwarz, 10.

[52] Ibid., 14.

[53] Ibid., 15-16

[54] Waldo J. Werning, *The Seed Planting Church: Nurturing Churches to Health* (St. Charles, Illinois: Church Smart Resources, 2003), 15-17.

[55] Ibid., 53.

The Deliberate Church

The final model that will be presented is *The Deliberate Church*. Mark Dever and

Paul Alexander wanted to add their voice to the discussion concerning the philosophical

models for church health. Commenting on their model, they state

> First, it's not new. It's old…really old. We're not claiming that any of this stuff is
> original with us; it's not a "fresh take" or a "unique approach" – it's not
> innovative. In fact, we don't even want to be innovative (there, we said it!).
> Second, it's not a program.[56]

In essence, this model is a restatement of the traditional model of a church. They state

that it is called "Deliberate" because it is a well-thought and careful approach. This

approach is seeking to build the church according to the scriptures. The issue with this

model is not innovation but faithfulness to the scriptures.[57] The authors make the

centrality of the Gospel as the key to the model. This results in a desire to keep methods

"plain and basic."[58]

One key component to the Deliberate Church model is what the authors called the

"regulative principle." This principle states that "everything we do in a corporate worship

gathering must be clearly warranted in Scripture." "Clearly-warranted" means having an

explicit command or an implication from the Biblical text.[59]

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[56] Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2005), 20.

[57] Ibid., 21.

[58] Ibid., 22.

[59] Ibid., 77.

Philosophy versus Methodology

With the presence of philosophical models for church health, the issue for the

change agent is the application of those models. The change agent must consider whether

the models will be used philosophically or methodologically. It is important to note that

the authors of the various models present them as philosophical. An example would be

Warren's warning to his readers. He writes

> To understand many of the methods in this book, you need to understand the
> context in which they were developed. Otherwise you might be tempted to copy
> things we did without considering the context. Please do not do this! Instead, look
> beneath the methods to see the transferable principles on which they are based.[60]

 He also warns that "to artificially plant a Saddleback clone in a different environment is

a formula for failure."[61] According to Warren, the issue is the application of principles

(philosophy) as it is filtered through the change agent's personality and church context.[62]

Overall Implications

In looking at the issue of church health, several implications stand out for the

change agent. First, church health is part of the overall process for growth in a church.

Simply stated, church health is a process. This can be seen in the fact that the church

health discussion has always been a part of the church growth movement. Church health

is not to be contrasted with church growth, but rather it should be seen as an important

component.

Next, the change agent must recognize the complexity of church health. While

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[60] Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 27.

[61] Ibid., 67.

[62] Ibid., 68.

Warren's five purposes present a general overview of health, the change agent must guard against allowing any one book to guide what health should look like in his church. This is due to fact that while most books agree that a healthy church is characterized by worship and servant-leadership, they tend to emphasize the particular bent of the author. This fact alone should cause a change agent to study more than one model concerning health.

Next, the change agent should focus on the philosophical nature of church health models. In doing this the change agent looks for universal principles rather than specific methods. In fact Rick Warren writes

> Anytime I see a program working in another church, I try to extract the principle behind it and apply it in our church. Because of this, our church has benefited from many other models that we've studied, both contemporary and historical.[63]

Next, the change agent needs to view the path to church health from a long-term perspective as he implements principle-based strategies. Mark Dever stresses that "healthy growth takes time, prayer, hard work, patience and perseverance."[64] In fact Warren points out that it took fifteen years to fully develop the Purpose Driven model at Saddleback.[65]

Finally, the change agent needs to consider his context as he applies a philosophical model. Every church is unique and a product of its past experiences. This is what Warren stressed when he stated that principles need to be filtered through the personality and context of a church. He writes

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[63] Ibid., 66.

[64] Dever and Alexander, 20.

[65] Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 18.

I've visited some large churches in metropolitan areas that have chosen a highly specialized strategy that may only reach ½ percent of the population. But because 200,000 people live in the area, the church has 1,000 in attendance. You'd be mistaken and disappointed if you thought that by imitating their same strategy your small-town church would grow to the same size. To be realistic, you need to focus on the percentage of population being reached, not actual numbers. A strategy that reaches 1,000 in a city of 200,000 is likely to reach 50 in a town of 1,000.[66]

Revitalization is not just the simple application of a philosophical model to a church. The change agent needs to study the context in which he is ministering. He needs to apply Warren's advice and find out what is hindering his church from growth. He must look for the barriers that are preventing the church from being effective.[67] The process of revitalization for a declining church requires the concerted effort of the change agent to answer those questions. This is especially true if the change agent is trying to revitalize a troubled church, which contains barriers that have resulted from their past traumatic experiences.

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[66] Ibid., 162-163.

[67] Ibid., 25.

CHAPTER THREE

THE TROUBLED CHURCH DYNAMIC

The road to health in a declining church is far from simplistic. It requires more than just the simple application of a philosophical model to bring a church to health. The path to health is complex requiring an understanding of the church and the perseverance of the change agent to see through the process of revitalization. Ramsey Coutta describes the perseverance needed by the change agent to affect change. He writes

> Nearly every effort at change is going to have obstacles and setbacks. Long-term efforts at change are going to lead to weariness. It is important to remember that the tree of success does not yield its fruit until the fruit has been plucked from the tree. Too often church leaders are headed in the right direction and are on the cusp of successful change give up due to one further setback, obstacle, or simply weariness. Right when their hand is closing about the fruit of success do they pull back and give up. A church leader must enter the change effort with a determination to see change through.[1]

When dealing with the complexity of working with declining churches, it must be recognized that there is a type of declining church that requires additional effort and perseverance on the part of the change agent. These churches are in decline because of a past traumatic experience. These traumatic experiences then hinder the church in its health and growth. Because of the effects of their traumatic experiences, these churches have been referred to as troubled churches.

Adding to the difficulty of working with troubled churches is the fact that many

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[1] Coutta, 30.

change agents operate under a mistaken assumption that the path to church health is the

simple application of a philosophical model. When this assumption is applied to a

troubled church, the result can be disastrous. It is the author's contention that there is a

dynamic adherent to troubled churches (see Figure 2) that must be addressed in order to

move the congregation to health.
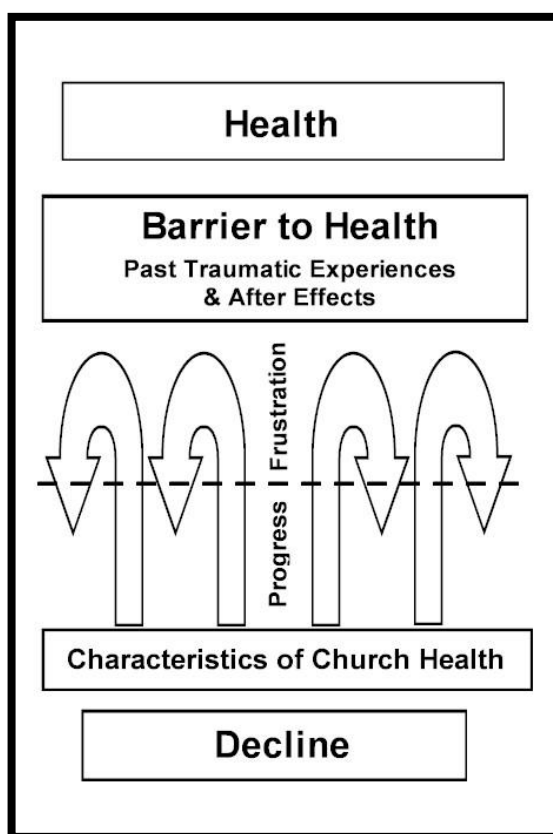
Figure 2. Troubled church dynamic

  To understand the impact of this dynamic on the process of revitalization, there

needs to be an examination of several areas concerning troubled churches. These areas of

examination include the nature of troubled churches, the frustration that results from

dealing with them and the common attitudes that exist concerning troubled churches.

With an understanding of the troubled church dynamic, a possible route to health for the

troubled church will be presented.

The Nature of Troubled Churches

When it comes to the reality of troubled churches, there are two facts. First they

are everywhere. Kenneth Quick points out that

> There are so many churches in North America over ten years old that have
> experienced splits or group exoduses. Their causes may differ – philosophical,
> doctrinal, personality, or power-driven – but these traumas to Christ's body leave
> scars with varying degrees of seriousness. All of them affect the present ministry
> of the church if no one ever addressed them.[2]

Troubled churches have always existed. As it has already been mentioned, several letters

in the New Testament were written to troubled churches.

The fact that troubled churches are everywhere stands in contrast to the second

fact about troubled churches. There is an ignorance concerning the existence of troubled

churches on the part of many pastors, especially new seminary graduates and the

churches themselves. Concerning this ignorance on the part of churches, Quick points out

that many churches operate by the principle "out of sight, out of mind," which results in a

false assumption that "It's not our problem anymore."[3] From the stand point of pastors

and new seminary graduates, Quick stresses a similar ignorance. He writes

> Because pastors, especially those fresh out of seminary or with little church
> experience, are naïve about how to assess a church before they accept a call, they
> walk innocently into these destructive situations. They don't talk to former pastors
> to find out what happened. If they do talk to them, they don't ask the right
> questions. They accept the word of the search committee that the problem lay
> with the former pastor(s).[4]

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[2] Kenneth Quick, *Healing the Heart of Your Church: How Church Leaders can Break the Pattern of Historic Corporate Dysfunction* (St. Charles, Illinois: Church Smart Resources, 2003), 72.

[3] Ibid., 23.

[4] Ibid., 107.

An ignorance concerning the issues related to troubled churches and what is needed to

deal with them will ultimately result in frustration on the part of the change agent.

Troubled Churches Defined

To understand what is needed to work with troubled churches, one has to have a

comprehension of what is a troubled church. In his book *Turnaround Churches*, George

Barna describes the phases of decline that take place in churches. The final phase occurs

when fewer and fewer visitors come and stay. This results in a slow reduction in

attendance.[5] This slow reduction is accelerated with certain types of churches. Barna

writes "Sometimes this final phase approaches like a tornado. In some cases, it is caused

by scandal within the church: the moral failure of the pastor, the misappropriation of

church funds, a personality conflict between key leaders that leads to a split and so on."[6]

For the purposes of this project, a "troubled church" is defined as a church that is

in a state of plateau or decline due to one or more traumatic events in the life of a

congregation that has created a barrier to health.

Traumatic Experiences

When a church experiences traumatic events in its life, the health and growth of

the congregation is greatly hindered. Before a change agent can apply a philosophical

model to a troubled church, he needs to understand the nature of the trauma that churches

face. Kenneth Quick stresses that "Many churches today have in their history one of two

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[5] Barna, *Turnaround Churches*, 22.

[6] Ibid.

traumatic experiences. They have either had a pastor who has subjected them to spiritual abuse or they have abused their pastor."[7] From Quick's assessment of troubled churches, the traumatic experiences can be placed into three categories: abuse by pastors, the abuse of pastors and general trauma. Abuse by pastors includes the moral failure of a pastor, abandonment by a pastor and spiritual abuse. The abuse of a pastor is reflected in forced terminations as well as other abuses. General trauma includes church splits, a mass exodus from the church, pastoral turnover and severe church conflict. A typical troubled church has experienced at least one of these traumatic experiences.

Abuse by a Spiritual Leader

The first category is traumatic experiences that occur based on the actions of a pastor. Leadership always impacts the church positively or negatively. Sadly in a troubled church, the actions and missteps of leadership have had a disastrous impact.

Moral failure of a pastor

Moral failure among pastors can have a devastating effect on congregations. Moral failure includes sexual immorality, addictions and misappropriation of church finances. In the December '97/January '98 edition of *Pastor's Family*, Simon Dahlman points out a 1991 survey by the Fuller Institute of Church Growth that reported that 37% of ministers surveyed stated that they "had inappropriate sexual behavior with a church member other than their spouse."[8]

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[7] Quick, *Healing the Heart of Your Church*, 95

[8] Simon J. Dahlman, "Ministers at Risk," Pastor's Family (December 1997/January 1998): 23.

The experience of moral failure by a pastor can lead to further trauma. Commenting on the effects of moral failure, John Simpson, General Superintendent of Baptist Church of Australia – Victoria Union, states

> It will take years for a church to recover from such dislocation with many members quitting out of disappointment, disgust or anger. Tampering with the trust of members and friends is a devastating blow to the Body of Christ and brings the church into disrepute in the community. The damage is long term and near to irreparable.[9]

The church can experience further trauma when a split occurs as the congregation divides itself between those who are willing to forgive the pastor and those who wish to punish him. It can also result in a mass exodus from the church.

Abandonment by a pastor

Abandonment by a pastor refers to the sudden departure of a pastor with no explanation. Abandonment is actually quite common. Gene Wood points out that "each month more than 1,200 pastors leave the ministry due to stress, church related issues, family issues or burnout."[10] It is also quite common for a pastor to abandon his church during a building project or soon after its completion.

Referring to churches who have experienced abandonment, Kenneth Quick calls them Attachment Disorder (AD) churches. He points out that AD churches have "been abandoned somehow, either physically, emotionally, or both."[11] Describing the effects on a church that has experienced abandonment, Kenneth Quick writes, "The church body

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[9] John Simpson, "Hormones and Ministry: A Good Mix?," *Ministry Health* 162, http://www. ministryhealth.net/mh_articles/162_js_hormones_ministry_mix.html (Accessed July 14, 2010).

[10] Wood, 35-36.

[11] Kenneth Quick, "Attachment Disorder Churches," *Leadership* 29, No 4 (Fall 2008): 89.

has deeply vested in this couple. Then, in the moment of crisis, and despite their attempts to reach out to him, this shepherd abandoned his flock, just at the time they needed each other the most. And the church bore the scars for years."[12]

Spiritual abuse

Spiritual abuse by a pastor can also traumatize a church. The New Testament example of spiritual abuse is found in 3 John. There the apostle John addresses the autocratic abuses by an individual named Diotrephes. Thom Rainer comments on the devastating effects of autocratic leadership in a church. He writes

> We noticed that these autocratic pastors tend to have a pattern of conflict in the churches they serve. They may see short-term or even mid-term numerical gains in their churches, but any positive result of their ministry is seldom long-lasting. Some have been fired from their churches, others have left under pressure. And they have left a trail of hurting and angry members in many of the churches they served.[13]

The Abuse of a Spiritual Leader

The actions of pastors are not the only source of trauma that a church can experience. Churches can hurt themselves by their own actions. Specifically churches can experience trauma due to abusing their pastors with forced terminations. There are also other abuses that churches can heap on their pastors that ultimately hinder the church in the end.

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[12] Ibid., 90.

[13] Rainer, 46.

Forced terminations

A forced termination refers to the action of the church in which a pastor is fired or forced to resign. Concerning the frequency of forced terminations, Gene Wood writes

- More than 1,300 pastors each month are forcefully terminated without just cause.
- A church that fired a pastor has a 70 percent chance of doing the same to the following pastor.
- Thirty percent of pastors have been fired at least once.[14]

Nick Kimpinski reflects on the situation in Canada when he writes, "All across Canada, forced exits by pastors is an unspoken yet all too common ministry hazard."[15]

Forced Terminations are a reality. Sadly, pastors have a one in three chance of being forcibly terminated. In *Your Church,* John LaRue writes "In fact, one-third of all pastors (34%) serve congregations who either fired the previous minister or actively forced his or her resignation. Perhaps more telling, nearly one-fourth (23%) of all current pastors have been forced out at some point in their ministry."[16] Kenneth Quick points out that "that sixty-two percent of pastors who have been forced to leave their churches were ousted by churches that had previously ousted one or more pastors."[17]

When a forced termination occurs because of a select group of individuals and the reasons are kept from the church as a whole, the impact of the congregation is even more devastating. In fact, even though it was the church which forced the termination of the pastor, the impact on the church is similar to abandonment by the pastor since most of the

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[14] Wood, 35-36.

[15] Nick Kimpinski, "Working through Church Issues," *LeaderLink*, April 2007, http:// www.efcc.ca /pdfs /April%202007%20Kimpinski.pdf (accessed August 22, 2009).

[16] John C. LaRue, Jr, "Forced Exits: A Too-Common Ministry Hazard," *Your Church*, April 14, 2009. http://www. christianitytoday.com/yc/more/specialreport/6y2072.html (Accessed August 22, 2009).

[17] Quick, *Healing the Heart of Your Church*, 106.

congregation does not know why the pastor left abruptly.

Other abuses

While forced termination is the main abuse that a pastor can face by a church,

there are other abuses. These abuses can include but are not limited to the following:

- Underpaying the pastor
- Withholding the pastor's pay
- Reducing the pastor's pay
- Emotional trauma caused by slander and gossip
- Threats of physical violence
- Mental and emotion trauma toward the pastor's family

General Trauma

The third category of traumatic experiences refers to general trauma. This refers

to traumatic actions or events that may or may not be attributed to the specific actions of

the pastor or the church. However, they can be a result of the other traumatic events.

Church splits

There is probably nothing more devastating for a congregation than a church split.

Splits can be the direct result of other traumatic experiences. Splits can occur apart from

other traumatic events. Splits can be described as a cancer that is empowered by "anger,

pride and ambition instead of the meekness and patience of Christ."[18]

The nature of church splits is complex. Concerning the complexity of splits, Nick

Kimpinski writes, "I am convinced that no church in history has ever split over doctrine.

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[18] Francis Frangipane, *A House United: How Christ-Centered Unity Can End Church Division* (Grand Rapids: Chosen Books, 2005), 16.

No church has split over the style of music or the color of the sanctuary carpet, or the

way the pastor dresses. These surface issues just mask the real issue."[19]

Francis Frangipane lists various reasons for church splits in his book, *A House*

United. He writes

> The reasons for church spits are many. Divisions may originate from confusion
> concerning church governments. To whom has God given final authority in any
> given congregation? Sometimes the root of conflict is simply misguided ambition
> in one or more associate leaders. And of course, there is always the issue of
> spiritual warfare. Often, just as a church begins an upward swing in attendance or
> spiritual growth, demonically manipulated strife emerges.[20]

Whatever the source of the split, the outcome is generally the same. Church splits impact

the community as a whole.

A mass exodus from the church

A mass exodus refers to an event that is separate from a church split. This refers

to a significant portion of the church leaving for various reasons. These reasons may

include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Lack of programming
- Spiritual stagnation within the church
- Declining population in the community
- Disagreement with the direction of pastoral leadership
- Being drawn to other healthy congregations in the area
- Frequent pastoral turnover

A mass exodus can occur rapidly. However, in most cases the exodus occurs gradually

over a period of time. Describing a mass exodus that occurred at his church, Richard

Porter states "These conflicts scattered the leadership at Suburban Baptist. A new Baptist

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[19] Kimpinski.

[20] Frangipane, 16-17.

congregation was started in town, and a number of members saw this as an opportunity to

respond to a new challenge as well as a way out of a difficult situation."[21]

Pastoral turnover

Pastoral turnover refers to the inability of a church to keep a pastor long term.

George Barna describes this event in his book, *Turnaround Churches*. He states,

"Consequently, many of the declining churches experienced a revolving-door pastorate:

pastors working at the church for three months to two years before fleeing to a more

attractive position at a more stable church."[22] The inability to keep a pastor long term can

result in additional barriers being created at the church. Pastoral turnover can lead to

other traumas such as a mass exodus from the church. Rick Warren states that "changing

pastors every few years guarantees a church won't grow."[23]

Severe church conflict

Conflict is a part of the human experience. It is also a part of the church life. Yet

there is a point where church conflict can become severe and have a detrimental effect on

a church. Commenting on church conflict, Jim Van Yperen writes

> Conflict comes more from the pews than the pulpit. However, the way leadership
> responds to the conflict will always determine if, how and when the conflict is
> reconciled. The problem is that most church leaders have little or no practical

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[21] Richard Porter, "Piecing Together a Shattered Church," *Leadership* (Spring 1988), April 1, 1988, http://www.christianitytoday.com/le/1988/spring/8812082.html (accessed July 17, 2010).

[22] Barna, *Turnaround Churches*, 43.

[23] Rick Warren, "Pastoral 'free agency' hurts churches," *Rick Warren's Ministry Toolbox*, July 8, 2010 No. 434, http://www.pastors.com/blogs/ministrytoolbox/archive/2010/07/08/pastoral-free-agency-hurts-churches.aspx (Accessed July 9, 2010).

training in biblical conflict resolution.[24]

Severe church conflict can cripple churches. It produces an outcome that leaves scars that run deep in the fiber of the church. Norma Cook Everist describes the characteristics of destructive conflict. She writes

- Voices are silenced and people avoid one another regularly.
- The atmosphere is one of sadness, apathy, or merely strained civility.
- People gather in clusters to discuss issues outside regularly scheduled meetings.
- People harbor resentments, remembering when they were slighted.
- Creative energy has been replaced by acrimonious rancor.
- Rumors lead to suspicion and shunning.
- Members are dissatisfied with outcomes, feeling only that they have lost.
- Faith is quashed and people leave not only the congregation, but never return to any church.[25]

Barriers to Health & Growth

Traumatic experiences leave scars. It is a reality that is true for churches as well. Reflecting on the decline of churches, George Barna states that "the problems can intertwine in a variety of ways and generally begin to feed on each other once the downward spiral gains momentum."[26] For a church, the scars of traumatic experiences become barriers for health and growth. He states that "barriers to renewal fall within three basic types: barriers related to attitudes, barriers related to resources and barriers

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[24] Jim Van Yperen, "Ten Axioms for Church Conflict," *Change Your Mind*, November 2001 No. 10. http://www.restoringthechurch.org/resources/newsletter/archive/documents/CYM-10_Ten-Axioms.pdf (Accessed June 12, 2009).

[25] Norma Cook Everist, *Church Conflict: From Contention to Collaboration* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 2004), 27-28.

[26] Barna, *Turnaround Churches*, 39.

related to relationship."[27] From his research, he lists several unique barriers to church

health that can develop within declining churches:

- Divisive internal politics;
- Inadequate Christian education and training;
- Dilapidated facilities;
- Frequent changes in leadership positions;
- Pastor-centered ministry;
- Emotional discouragement among the congregation;
- Unreconciled theological disagreement;
- Absence of ministry opportunities for people;
- Financial decline;
- Loss of key laypeople;
- Loss of critical laypeople;
- Lowering of ministry standards;
- Denominational meddling;
- A shift from Bible-centered teaching;
- Absence of assimilation program.[28]

For troubled churches, traumatic experiences produce several unique barriers that are

common among this type of declining congregation. They include the formation of power

structures, the formation of dysfunctional behavior patterns, the emergence of financial

difficulties, a loss of respect for pastoral leadership and a spirit of confusion, helplessness

and negativity.

<center>Power Structures</center>

One of the major barriers that can develop in a troubled church is the formation of

power structures. This is especially true in cases that involve the departure of the pastor

for whatever reason. For example in the case of a moral failure or a church split, a group

within the lay-leadership or the church itself can assume ownership based on a "survivor

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[27] Ibid., 87.

[28] Ibid., 39.

mentality." This survivor mentality produces a barrier to future growth as the survivors assume a "self-appointed" responsibility to guard the church from future pain.

Rather than protecting the church from pain, their misguided actions can produce more. Gene Wood states that "95 percent of all serious problems in the church stem from a power struggle."[29] George Barna points out that power structures usually "developed to allow ministry, but simultaneously serve to limit, if not prevent innovation and rapid response to opportunities."[30]

<div align="center">Dysfunctional Patterns of Behavior</div>

Another barrier that develops within a troubled church is dysfunctional patterns of behavior. A troubled church will form behavior patterns that are a direct result of a traumatic experience. Kenneth Quick comments on the impact of these behaviors on any revitalization process. He writes

> In many small, medium and large churches, there were problems rooted in the church's history and pattern of behaving before we got there. This history and these behaviors derail any leadership attempt to lead the church to significant church growth. The frustrated pastor usually has no clue where the brick wall came from or how it got there, and certainly no idea how to remove it.[31]

These patterns can include the following: pattern of pastoral turnover, actions and attitudes toward outsiders, treatment of pastoral leadership and decisions made by small group within the church. Behavior patterns can be deeply entrenched in a church. Even if they are dealt with, there is always the possibility that they can reemerge.[32]

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[29] Wood, 47.

[30] Barna, *Turnaround Churches*, 21.

[31] Quick, *Healing the Heart of Your Church*, 12.

[32] Rowell, 94.

Financial Difficulties

Another barrier that is a direct result of traumatic experiences is financial

difficulties. Churches face a lack of revenue due to the fact that trauma disheartens

members and adherents. They in turn either leave the church or withhold their offerings.

The result is a shortfall in income. This lack of income then leads to several other

negative outcomes: reduction of staff, facilities falling into disrepair, the budget being

encumbered by indebtedness and the underpayment of the pastor.

The Loss of Respect for Pastoral Leadership

A major barrier that is created by traumatic experiences within the church is a loss

of respect for pastoral leadership. This is especially true in the instance of a moral failure

on the part of a pastor. The concept of pastor held by a troubled church has been

diminished. This results in two hindrances to the change agent's leadership in the church.

First, the church will become resistant to the change agent's message. Quick

states that this resistance can be both active and passive.[33] Actively, people will become

very critical of the pastor's preaching. This is based on seeing the pastor as a hireling

which they have the right to instruct concerning preaching. Passively, the church member

will simply become a spectator. They cannot and will not be motivated by the change

agent's message.[34]

Second, the church will not follow pastoral leadership. Because there is no trust in

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[33] Quick, "Attachment Disorder Churches":90.

[34] Ibid.

pastors, the members of a troubled church tend not to follow pastoral leadership. Quick

points out that an awareness of this problem may not materialize until a change agent

introduces a new initiative which results in unexpected resistance.[35] The resistance is a

direct result of no longer trusting pastoral leadership. It also results in the change agent's

motives, actions and word being misunderstood or questioned.

<div align="center">A Spirit of Confusion, Helplessness and Negativity</div>

An additional barrier that needs to be considered is the fact that troubled churches

develop a spirit of confusion, helplessness and negativity. Richard Porter describes the

atmosphere in the troubled church that he assumed. He writes "Every member's attitude

toward me and the church was in some way colored by these past events, yet each person

viewed those events in different ways. It was difficult to get a clear picture of what

happened."[36]

Quick stresses that AD churches cannot fully embrace the pastor. Their fear of

abandonment does not allow them to "feel like they have a shepherd at all." The result is

a congregation that becomes distressed, confused and downcast.[37] Randy Frazee points

out another component of the spirit of negativity in the community as well as the church.

He writes

> Two significant emerging realities were hard to overcome. First, PBC had a great
> deal of negative advertising spreading by "word of mouth" throughout the
> community. This image would take significant time to undo. Second, the
> remaining congregation was suffering from a low corporate self-esteem. It was

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Porter.

[37] Quick, "Attachment Disorder Churches": 91

questionable whether the members believed that revitalization was possible.[38]

Frustration of the Pastor

These barriers coupled with ignorance on the part of the change agent create the

conditions for a perfect storm of frustration experienced by the pastor of a troubled

church. Elmer Towns states

> Failure to admit the existence of barriers, and overcome them, is devastating to
> the cause of evangelism. If barriers are not removed, money and time is wasted in
> getting out the gospel, and those involved in the task become frustrated and
> discouraged by their failure to get results.[39]

The path to frustration is easy to identify. First, the change agent seeks to move the

troubled church to revitalization quickly and painlessly. Thom Rainer states "Our

research demonstrates repeatedly that one of the key reasons the leaders of the

comparison churches failed to move their churches to greatness was their unwillingness

or inability to pay the costs necessary to do so."[40]

Next, pastors, who assume troubled churches, have a tendency to take the

assumed route toward health. Rainer describes this common approach to church

revitalization. He writes

> The comparison church leaders would often attend conferences or read books and
> see the outside influence as the next great initiative for the church. They would do
> so without taking a realistic assessment of their current situation or the church
> members' ability to handle immediate and sometimes radical change. These
> leaders would often fail to understand their own cultural context and how a new
> initiative might work in their area.[41]

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[38] Randy Frazee, *The Come Back Congregation: New Life for a Troubled Ministry* (Nashville, Tennessee: Abingdon Press, 1995), 38.

[39] Towns, *A Practical Encyclopedia of Evangelism and Church Growth*

[40] Rainer, 192.

[41] Ibid., 83

Rainer goes on to express the disastrous outcome for this approach. He writes

> Therefore the consequences were often disastrous. Major church conflicts and not a few church splits were the painful results of these changes. The leaders became excited about the latest and newest ideas and introduced them to their churches with little forethought to the congregation's response or the culture of the community.[42]

The result is further trauma to an already troubled church. Adding to the trauma of the church is the negative impact on the change agent as he faces discouragement and frustration. Frustration can result from not being adequately equipped to face the challenges of a troubled church. Frank Page writes that "one of the most challenging and frustrating aspects of a shrinking church is that the more serious the situation is, the more scarce the tools for fixing it seem to be."[43]

Frustration is not the only result from working with a troubled church. There is also a spiritual and emotional toll on the change agent. Expressing the impact on the change agent, Kenneth Quick writes

> …there are times when I found their messages discouraging in the extreme. They certainly don't intend to discourage me, but the struggle to get my church untracked and moving in the direction these visionaries tell me I should has created times of deep frustration.[44]

Stetzer and Dodson point out that the change agent becomes "gun-shy" about the revitalization process. They write that the "leader has made valiant efforts to lead the church to positive change, but the resulting resistance and criticism have caused significant pain."[45] Demoralized and hurt, the leader is no longer willing to try "great

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[42] Ibid.

[43] Frank Page, *The Incredible Shrinking Church* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Books, 2008), 9.

[44] Quick, *Healing the Heart of Your Church*, 11.

[45] Stetzer and Dodson, 179.

things for God" because of fear.[46]

Common Attitudes

The lack of understanding and resulting frustration has resulted in two common

attitudes toward working with troubled churches. The first attitude is expressed in the

well-known proverb, "It is easier to give birth, than to raise the dead." Randy Frazee

sums up this current attitude as he writes, "Though many have tried to revitalize some of

these churches, they have found starting from scratch to be far more effective and less

frustrating."[47] George Barna is more direct in comments about this attitude. He writes

> One turnaround pastor summarized his forty years of ministry experience and
> observations by saying, "No, every church cannot be turned around. Some are full
> of emotionally crippled people. We spend far too much time trying to renew
> churches that can't be renewed. We should just leave them alone and start another
> church full of people who want to grow. Don't kill the old church. It'll run down
> and kill itself over time. It's much easier to start a live church than to renew a
> dead one, and much more productive in the end."[48]

If church planting is not an option for a seminary graduate or pastor, then a

second attitude emerges. It is one of avoidance. Glen Daman comments on this attitude in

his book, *Shepherding the Small Church*. He writes

> Bringing healing to an unhealthy church requires time, gentle and loving
> confrontation, and an unwavering commitment to see the church through the
> process. Too often pastors who desire to lead healthy churches are not willing to
> go to the troubled church and bring health to it.[49]

This attitude conveys the thought that if one does not have the skill-set to be a church

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[46] Ibid.

[47] Frazee, 31.

[48] Barna, *Turn-Around Churches*, 108.

[49] Glenn Daman, *Shepherding the Small Church* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Books, 2002), 54.

planter, he needs to make sure that he does his homework and not assume the pastorate at a troubled church.

A Possible Route to Health

The prognosis for pastors of troubled churches is not necessarily good. Yet the reality is not every pastor or seminary graduate can become a church planter or avoid troubled churches. Does this mean that those who end up pastoring troubled churches are doomed to failure? The answer is no. George Barna comments "The death of a church is usually avoidable, but it may take a different type of ministry mind-set than many of today's church leaders possess."[50]

Troubled churches require a different approach to ministry. Marlin Thomas makes an excellent point concerning what is required of a change agent in moving a troubled church to health. He writes

> For pastors of troubled churches, ministry cannot be viewed as "business as usual." One cannot relate to troubled people as fully rational beings, capable of making and keeping bona fide agreements. And troubled church systems cannot be led as if they were healthy systems. If they are so treated, they will only become less healthy, and the pastoral leader will ultimately be caught by painful surprise and sadly fail in his heavenly calling.[51]

Understanding that there needs to be a different approach, requires that a change agent address the barriers that are hindering the health and growth of a congregation. Quick states that "there are some God-designed preconditions that must be met before

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[50] Barna, *Turnaround Churches*, 15.

[51] Marlin E. Thomas, "The Pastor's Role in Managing Church Conflict," *Direction*, Fall 1990 Vol. 19 No. 2, http://www.directionjournal.org/article/?1167 (Accessed December 3, 2009).

vision casting and church growth principles can become effective."[52] Dealing with the

issues at a troubled church takes time and effort. Peter Steinke writes that "no anxious

congregation can handle more than three to five issues at a time."[53]

It is the author's contention that a turnaround can be possible for a troubled

church if certain factors/issues are addressed in order to break through the barrier to

health (see Figure 3). When a change agent discovers and addresses the issue/factors
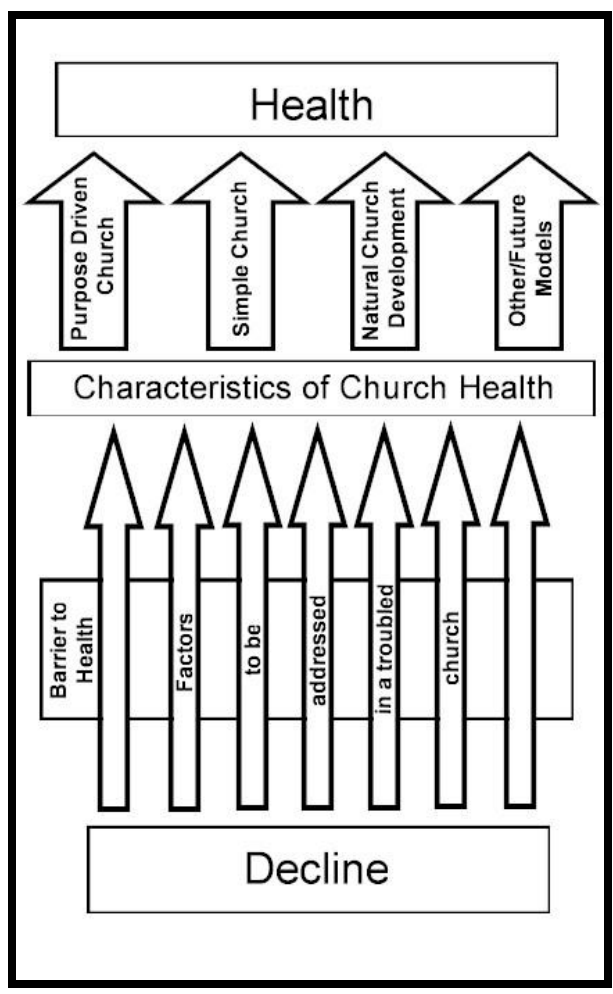

Figure 3. Possible route to health for a troubled church

[52] Quick, *Healing the Heart of Your Church*, 14.

[53] Peter L. Steinke, "Twenty Observations about Troubled Congregations," *Alban Weekly*, December 4, 2006. http://www.leadershipinministry.com/Steinke20observations .pdf (Accessed May 30, 2009).

at his troubled church, a philosophical model for health can possibly be applied. Based on

his experience at Curwensville Christian Church, eight factors/issues have been identified

by the author as needing to be addressed in a troubled church. These factors included the

following issues:

- Corporate forgiveness
- Restoration of the pastoral office
- Spiritual renewal/revival
- Long pastoral tenure
- A shift in power structures
- Conflict resolution
- Settlement of fiscal issues within the church
- Breaking of dysfunctional behavior patterns

Corporate Forgiveness

Corporate forgiveness refers to an action on the part of the congregation to

forgive the sins that had been committed in the past by a pastor or others against the

church as a whole. This action may take place in a special service or a small group

setting.

Restoration of the Pastoral Office

The restoration of the pastoral office refers to actions on the part of the pastor to

regain the integrity and authority of pastoral leadership within the church.

Spiritual Renewal/Revival

Spiritual renewal/revival refers to a renewal within the church as it regains its

focus on the worship of the Lord, service and a passion for the lost.

Long Pastoral Tenure

A long pastoral tenure refers to the fact that a long pastorate was needed in order to guide the church through its pain and into health. It is also needed to break any patterns of the church with regards to forced terminations and pastoral turnover.

A Shift in Power Structures

This refers to the fact that a shift has occurred within the power structures of the church (boards, committees, etc.) to allow for growth and health.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution refers to the concerted action on the part of the church and/or leadership to resolve past unresolved conflicts.

Settlement of Fiscal Issues within the Church

This refers to a concerted effort to deal with fiscal issues that emerged from past traumatic experiences and that have hindered growth.

Breaking of Dysfunctional Behavior Patterns

This refers to the changing of dysfunctional behavior patterns that were a direct result of past traumatic experiences within the church.

The Pathway to Understanding

In order to support the author's contention that these additional factors must be addressed in order to move a troubled church to health, the author had to form a research group. This research group consisted of troubled churches that have made the transition to health. These churches were surveyed to identify the factors/issues that were addressed in order to make the transition. The results of this survey will provide the basis for Chapters Five and Six as the author seeks to support his contention.

CHAPTER 4

BARRIER BUSTERS

It is possible for a troubled church to progress in the revitalization process. Rather than adopting attitudes of avoidance or ignorance with these churches, a change agent needs to take a cautious approach of understanding as he seeks to bring healing to a traumatized congregation. He must become a student as he immerses himself in the church's history. With this information, he needs to then assess the barriers that are a direct result of these tragic events.

When the author assumed the pastorate at Curwensville Christian Church, he was very aware that the church had endured severe trauma in its recent past. Yet he did not fully know what factors/issues needed to be addressed in order to move the congregation to health. Because of this lack of understanding, the healing process at CCC was a long process taking several years. Rather than knowing what to look for, the author stumbled from one factor/issue that needed to be addressed to another. In God's grace, the author slowly plodded a course from one issue to another until the church made a breakthrough to health. It was out of the lessons he learned at CCC that the concept for this project was born.

With the recognition of the barrier to health that is adherent in a troubled church, the change agent will need to have an understanding of what factors/issues may need to be addressed in order to bring healing to the congregation. This project seeks to identify

the factors/issues that might need to be addressed in a troubled church. The information gained from this project may help a change agent approach a troubled congregation with insight rather than ignorance. So with that goal in mind, it is the author's intention to provide a descriptive study of those factors/issues, so that a change agent is equipped to work with a troubled church.

The Research Group

In order to provide a descriptive study of the factors/issues that require attention in a troubled church, a research group was formed for this project. The research group consisted of churches that fulfilled the following three requirements.

1. The church has experienced one or more past traumatic events that have resulted in a barrier to church health.

2. The church identified and addressed the factors/issues in order to break through the barrier to health.

3. The current pastor was the change agent who guided the congregation to identify and address the factors/issues that were hindering health.

From this research group, the nature of their traumatic experiences was explored. The common factors/issues that were identified by the author and those addressed by the research group were compared. The philosophical models, that have influenced the change agents in their churches' transition to health, were noted and explored to some degree. The data collected from the research group will provide the basis for this chapter and Chapter Five.

The Difficulty

The identification of a group of churches that meet the aforementioned

requirements is extremely challenging. It is not difficult to identify troubled churches.

They are present in every community. The challenge exists in locating troubled churches

that have made the transition to health. In seeking to find these churches for the research

group, the author consulted a denominational official who oversees a group of 300

Baptist churches in Canada. The official pointed out that only one church out of more

than 30 troubled churches had successfully made the transition to health in the last ten

years.

Because these churches are difficult to locate, the size of the research group was

limited to ten.[1] The author's church, Curwensville Christian Church, was included as one

of the ten churches within the research group. The complete list of churches that formed

the research group is located in Appendix A of this project. Due to the nature of the

traumatic events experienced by these churches and the actions taken to address the

barrier to health, the churches will not be referred to by name in this project. Each church

has been assigned a number, which does not correspond to the alphabetical order of the

churches listed in Appendix A

The Makeup of the Research Group

The nature of the churches within the research group reflected various

denominational traditions. The group consisted of three Baptist churches, two churches

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[1] The author would like to thank Rev. Mark Barnard and Dr. Kenneth Quick, Blessing Point Ministries, Peachtree City, Georgia for their assistance in locating seven of the ten churches that made up the research group for this project.

belonging to the Reformed Church in America, three churches belonging to the Christian

& Missionary Alliance, one church belonging to the Presbyterian Church in America, and

one Bible church.

All churches within the research group were well-established churches. The

youngest church in the research group was founded in 1975. The oldest church was

established in 1737.

The Limitations of the Research Group

The size, make-up and nature of the research group churches and pastors

necessitate several limitations for this project. First, the size of the group requires that the

project be descriptive rather than prescriptive. While the information gained from the ten

churches can be helpful to a change agent, the project can only describe the factors/issues

that were addressed within these ten churches. The project cannot prescribe which issues

must be addressed in order to transition to health.

Next, the denominational make-up of the group places a limitation upon the

information gained from this study. Issues of church polity and denominational control

can have an effect on how the change agent can approach the factors/issues that are

hindering church health.

Next, the very nature of the church and its members place a limitation upon the

results gained from this study. Each church is a unique entity. While the nature of the

traumatic experiences is similar between the churches, the resulting effect on the

congregation is unique to each church. The specific circumstances of the factors/issues

confronted in each church are also unique to each congregation

Finally, the role of the change agent places a limitation upon the results gained from this study. The role of a change agent can be filled by a senior pastor or an interim pastor. Three of the pastors with the research group were interim pastors who led their churches through the barrier to health. Interim pastors are short-term pastorates by nature. They are able, with denominational backing, to address factors/issues within a congregation in a forthright manner. This is not necessarily true for a senior pastor who must approach the factors/issues within a troubled church with care.

The Research Tools

The author utilized a survey as the primary research tool for this project. After contacting the pastors within the research group, the survey was sent via email. The survey questioned the pastor concerning his education and ministry background, the church's age, the nature of churches' traumatic experiences, the factors/issues that were addressed, and the philosophical models that have influenced the pastor's ministry at the church. The complete survey is located in Appendix B.

When the surveys were returned by the pastors, a follow-up phone call was made to each pastor to discuss their answers in detail. During this phone conversation, the pastor was allowed to add any additional thoughts concerning the transition that took place at their church. They were also asked to comment on the use of philosophical models within the church.

Summary of Research Data

The data collected from the churches of the research group through the surveys

and subsequent phone calls was organized into four main categories of research. First, the

nature of the trauma experienced by the churches will be examined. Next, the

characteristics of the change agents will be presented. Third, the factors/issues that the

author set forth will be compared with the factors/issues that the churches had to deal

with in order to break the barrier to health. Finally, the philosophical models that

influenced the change agents will be explored.

The Nature of the Trauma

To understand the barriers that hinder a troubled church from moving toward

health, there has to be a comprehension of the traumatic events that a congregation has

experienced. In every church within the research group, the change agent took the time to

become a student of their church's history. Wisely, they approached their church from the

standpoint that the church was a product of its past, rather than from the standpoint that

the church was a clean slate to which they can simply apply a philosophical model.

In comparing the traumatic experiences that the churches within the research

group endured (see figure 5), three observations stand out concerning the impact on a

congregation and its transition to health. First, while the type of traumatic experiences

among the churches is similar, they are not necessarily universal for each troubled

church. Each church is unique in the combination of traumatic experiences and the

resulting barrier to health. With some of the churches, traumatic events were the direct

result of other trauma. Yet in some churches the same traumatic events were not tied to

	Church #1	Church #2	Church #3	Church #4	Church #5	Church #6	Church #7	Church #8	Church #9	Church #10
Moral Failure of a pastor	▓		▓	▓		▓	▓		▓	▓
Church Split	▓	▓	▓	▓		▓	▓	▓		
Forced Termination of a pastor	▓		▓	▓	▓	▓		▓	▓	▓
Abandonment by a pastor	▓		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	
Severe Church Conflict	▓	▓		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	
Mass exodus from the church	▓	▓		▓		▓		▓	▓	▓
Abuse by a spiritual leader	▓		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	
Abuse of a spiritual leader	▓		▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	▓	
Other									▓	

Figure 5. Traumatic experiences comparison

another traumatic experience.

Next, the severity and frequency of the traumas also had a bearing on the nature of the barrier to health in each church. For example, churches #4 and #9 had multiple traumatic events that ultimately required time and patience on the part of the change agent to work through the barrier to health. This was not true for church #10 where the number of traumatic events were not as many.

Finally, due to the nature of the traumatic events experienced by the churches, it is apparent that dealing with the barrier to health is not a matter of applying a simple formula to bring health. While there are basic tools of which a change agent must be aware, addressing the traumatic experiences of the past is complex. In many ways the approach that a change agent takes is similar to peeling an onion, one layer of trauma after another. To help the reader understand the complexity of the barrier, it is necessary to illustrate from the research group the nature of the trauma that was faced by these troubled churches.

Moral Failure of a Pastor

The moral failure of a spiritual leader is the most devastating of all traumatic experiences that a church can endure. The ramifications go far beyond the leader and his failure. It reverberates throughout the congregation, as it directly leads to other traumatic experiences. It also breeds dysfunctional behaviors that cripple the health of the church and the ministries of future pastors.

Of the churches within the research group, six had experienced the moral failure of a pastor. Significantly, this failure was not on the part of the senior pastor alone. Church #3 endured the divorce of two senior pastors. One was the direct result of the pastor's wife having an affair.

Three of the churches experienced the moral failure of an associate/youth pastor. The youth pastor at Church #4 resigned over the issue of pornography. The youth pastor at Church #9 was fired when it was discovered that he was having an affair with a volunteer youth worker. Further damage resulted when some in the congregation perceived that there was unequal treatment of the youth pastor and volunteer worker. In every case the moral failure of a pastor resulted in a lack of respect for the pastoral office as a whole.

Church Split

While the moral failure of a pastor is traumatic, the reality of a church split is equally devastating. Seven of the churches experienced church splits. Church #4 experienced three major splits in its history. Three of the churches experienced splits due to a shift in the direction of church's ministry (i.e. traditional versus contemporary

worship service, music, doctrinal differences).

Church #2 experienced a major split over a lawsuit. The church had a trust fund that was the major source of the church's operational budget. When there was a major downturn in the stock market, the fund was not able to finance the church's budget. The pastor and a segment of the congregation sued the trustees of the church's trust fund on the basis of negligence. The result was a major split that devastated the church for the next twenty years.

Church #3 experienced a split when the congregation moved to facilities eight miles away. Church #9 also experienced a split due to hard feelings over a church plant. In each church, the split left the congregation devastated and weak. It also resulted in a series of dysfunctional behaviors that would later hinder any attempt at growth and health.

Forced Termination of a Pastor

One of the key characteristics of a troubled church is the fact that they may force the termination of their pastors. It is also true that forced termination is often a repeated event in a troubled church. Eight of the churches had experienced the forced termination of a pastor.

Church #5 experienced the forced termination of three different pastors. Church #4 provides an example of the forced termination of a pastor. The church had a history of repeatedly forcing its pastors to resign after the governing board would force a vote of confidence concerning the pastor's ministry. The church kept detailed minutes concerning the proceedings against its pastors. The following notations from the church

minutes present a typical pattern of events that resulted in the forced termination of a

pastor

- August 3rd – A board member speaks for the board and addresses perceived

   problems in the church. "The church was going downhill. The majority of people

   were upset and unhappy. It was felt that the church needed to look for a new

   pastor." The minutes state that the pastor would pray about this.

- August 31st – The issue of the pastor was discussed again at a board meeting.

   Pastor refuses to tell the board his decision. He will tell the congregation on

   Sunday morning.

- September 4th – The board reads a letter at a monthly business meeting requesting

   a special meeting be held to vote on retaining the pastor. The majority present

   voted to hold the meeting in two weeks.

- September 18th – A special meeting was held to vote on retaining the pastor. The

   vote was cancelled when the pastor immediately tendered his resignation.

This sequence of events was often followed by the governing board as it forced the

resignation of its pastors. The pastor who assumed the church after the aforementioned

pastor experienced that same treatment. The church records included a brief statement

concerning this pastor that expresses the horror of this traumatic event on the pastor and

the church. The board minutes stated

> After the meeting on Wed. night, Pastor _____ resigned and it was
> accepted by the board. We will begin to pray and help the pastor all we can. To
> sum up his ministry here, he was not a leader, he was not a shepherd, he was not a
> soul-winner, he did not have a pastor's heart, he could not organize, and he was
> lazy, and it hurt the church the whole way around.

Some of the churches were not as open about terminating its pastors. Church #6

has three subsequent pastors resign after being pressured by the church board. One of those pastors resigned under "unpleasant circumstances." In church #8, a forced termination was about to occur, but the pastor resigned before it took place. Church #9 could technically state that it did not force out its pastors, but the board did strongly encourage its pastors to find other churches. Typically in these churches, the congregation was not aware of what was happening. In one church, when this issue was confronted, the congregation was shocked to learn that its pastors had been treated this way in the past.

Abandonment by a Pastor

While the forced termination of a pastor is devastating to the health of a congregation, it is true that the pastor can also inflect pain on a congregation when he abruptly leaves without explanation. Five of the churches within the research group experienced abandonment by a pastor.

Church #9 felt abandoned by its pastor, when he made a commitment to stay at the church for ten years. After three years, the pastor abruptly left in the midst of turmoil that he had largely created. Church #4 had experienced the abandonment of three different pastors. Two pastors had abruptly resigned when the church was experiencing growth and success. Church #8 was abandoned by a pastor who made a five year commitment, but left in the midst of a large building program. The result of abandonment was manifested in a feeling of distrust toward the pastoral office and the formation of dysfunctional behavioral patterns.

Severe Church Conflict

Severe church conflict was experienced by eight of the churches within the research group. Church #4 experienced one conflict after another. When the change agent assumed the pastorate, he found that the people remaining in the church did not like one another. Church #6 experienced severe conflict in its business meetings. Conflict arose over issues concerning the addition of a second contemporary service and the use of contemporary music. Church #8 identified eleven full pages of newsprint with challenges and conflicts from 1983 to 2010. Church#9 experienced conflict arising out of building issues and musical styles. Unresolved conflict in each church provided a serious barrier to any effort to revitalize the church.

A Mass Exodus from the Church

A mass exodus of people is a separate event from a church split. Seven of the churches within the research group had experienced a mass exodus of people. Church #4 experienced a mass exodus of people on two different occasions. In one instance the exodus took place when a popular pastor left. In the second instance, the exodus was gradual as the church's health had been devastated by a church conflict and split. In all of the churches, the mass exodus took place as a direct result of another traumatic event.

Abuse by a Spiritual Leader

Sadly, trauma can be inflicted on the congregation as the direct result of a pastor's ministry. Six of the churches within the research group stated that they had been abused by a spiritual leader. Church #1 experienced the abuse through the financial

mismanagement of two pastors. One pastor had the church pay $20,000 to have the phone company run a wire to the church offices so that the pastor could have high speed internet. Another pastor sold the churches facilities in order to purchase facilities that had a modern look. When that property was purchased and the financing was in place, the church was informed by the municipality that it could not meet there because of zoning. Churches #4 & #9 had pastors who were marked by outbursts of rage that hurt many people within the congregation.

The Abuse of a Spiritual Leader

Sadly, troubled churches tend to be "clergy-killers." Eight of the churches within the research group have abused their pastors. Aside from the actions that took place with the forced termination of a pastor, clergy-abuse took many forms. Church #4 had a pastor who endured threats, cursing and being spat upon by congregants and board members. The pastor of Church #6 endured being called a liar at a business meeting. Churches #8 and #9 abused its pastors through gossip and the undermining of their pastoral leadership.

Other Trauma

Aside from the traumatic events that the author identified in the survey, Church #9 identified another event that would affect the church and hinder its health in the future. The church had a pastor who assumed the pastorate as a single man. He then married into one of the church families who were power brokers in the church. This marriage resulted in a feeling of distrust toward the pastoral office by the other congregants. This distrust lasted into the ministries of subsequent pastors.

Church #1 and #4 identified another traumatic event has hindered their congregations. Both churches had experienced multiple name changes in their histories. When change agent of Church #4 assumed his pastorate, he found a church which hated its current name. The name of the church was changed by his predecessor and imposed on the congregation without their input. Now that he was gone, a group of the remaining members wanted to change the name back. The problem facing the pastor was the fact that this was the fourth name change in the history of the church. Multiple name changes results in an identification crisis for the congregation and a poor testimony to the community as a whole.

The Characteristics of the Change Agent

A key ingredient to the process of transitioning a troubled church to health is the change agent himself. This raises the question concerning what does the profile of a change agent for a troubled church look like? The small size of the research group limits what key characteristics can be determined. Yet there are three observations from the research group that help provide a picture of the man who can help a troubled church find healing.

First, the pastors of the research group tended to be older. The median age of pastor assuming a troubled church was forty-seven. The minimum age of a pastor when he assumed a troubled church was thirty-five. The oldest pastor in the research group was sixty-two when he assumed the pastorate of the church.

Next, all of the pastors had the minimum of an undergraduate degree. Seven of the pastors had a seminary degree of which six had a Master of Divinity and one had a

Master of Theology. Two pastors were currently seeking a Doctor of Ministry degree.

Finally, almost all of the pastors within the research group had served other churches in a pastoral role. Of those who did not have prior pastoral experience, one pastor was serving in his first pastoral ministry with no prior pastoral ministry experience. One pastor had served as missionary before assuming the pastorate at his church. One pastor served as the youth pastor for seven years before assuming the senior pastor position at the same church.

Based on these three observations, three limited conclusions can be made about the characteristic of a change agent for a troubled church. These conclusions are not true for every church within the research group, but they are reflected of the group as a whole. First, the pastor transitioning a troubled church needs to be older. Next, the pastor needs to have some post-graduate seminary training. Finally, the pastor needs to have some experience in pastoral ministry.

These three conclusions help the pastor with his greatest asset in dealing with a troubled church. That asset is credibility. The typical pastor of a troubled church that has found healing has the age, the education and the pastoral experience to approach the task.

Dealing with the Barrier

The heart of the data collected from the research group provided a comparison of the factors/issues that the author set forth in Chapter Three and actual factors/issues that each church and change agent dealt with as they made the transition to health. The opportunity was given in the survey to allow each change agent to list any factors/issues that were not included in the author's initial list. Only one church listed a factor that was

not included in the initial list. Church #2 also listed consistent Biblical teaching as an important factor that needed to be addressed in the church.

In comparing the factors/issues that each church dealt with (see Figure 6), three observations can be made. First, there appears to be several key factors/issues that needed to be addressed in most of the churches within the research group. These factors/issues include the following:

- Corporate forgiveness
- Restoration of the pastoral office
- Spiritual revival/renewal
- Shift in power structures
- Conflict resolution
- Dysfunctional behavioral patterns with the church addressed

The foremost factor/issue that was dealt with by all of the churches was corporate forgiveness.

	Church #1	Church #2	Church #3	Church #4	Church #5	Church #6	Church #7	Church #8	Church #9	Church #10
Corporate forgiveness	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Restoration of pastoral office		■		■			■	■	■	■
Spiritual renewal/revival	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	
Fiscal problems/problems dealt with	■			■			■	■	■	■
Long pastoral tenure		■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■
Shift in power structures	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Conflict resolution	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Dysfunctional behavioral patterns within church are addressed	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■
Other		■								

Figure 6. Comparison of factors that were addressed

Next, most of the churches dealt with a majority of the factors/issues listed within the author's initial list. Only two churches dealt with a minimum number of factors/issues. When this data is compared with the data in Figure 5, a final observation

emerges. The nature of the trauma faced by a church necessitates how many factors/issues must be dealt with by the church and the change agent.

To understand what is required of a church and change agent to address the barrier to health, a detailed look at efforts of the churches to deal with the factors/issues must be presented. This detailed look will serve as the basis for Chapter Five.

The Philosophical Models

The final area of study with these churches revealed the philosophical models that influenced the change agent as he transitioned the church to health. A comparison of the philosophical models is found in Figure 7. From the data, the philosophical models that

	Church #1	Church #2	Church #3	Church #4	Church #5	Church #6	Church #7	Church #8	Church #9	Church #10
The Purpose Driven Church			▦	▦			▦	▦	▦	
Simple Church				▦	▦	▦	▦	▦	▦	
Natural Church Development	▦		▦					▦	▦	▦
The Deliberate Church							▦			
The Seed Planting Church					▦					
Other Models	▦	▦	▦			▦		▦	▦	▦

Figure 7. Comparison of philosophical models that influenced pastors

have influenced the change agents can be divided into three groups of models: primary models, secondary models and other models. After the three groups have been detailed, an overall assessment of the philosophical models by the change agents will be presented. Additional resources that were recommended by the change agents will also be mentioned.

Primary Models

Of the philosophical models presented in the survey, three models emerge as the main philosophical models that have influenced change agents. It is not surprising that *The Purpose Driven Church* was selected by six pastors. The author believes that this is a testimony of the overall impact of Rick Warren's book. The second philosophical model that was selected by six pastors was Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger's *Simple Church*. The change agent from Church #6 indicated that the Simple Church model is attractive in his metropolitan area. This is due to the simplicity model striking a cord in an area where things are so fast-paced and complicated. Another main model, which was selected by five pastors, was Christian Schwarz's *Natural Church Development*. It is also significant to the author that almost all of the change agents were influenced by two or more philosophical models.

Secondary Models

Two philosophical models emerge from the survey as secondary models. The author must note that these models are referred to as secondary due to the fact that only a few change agents acknowledge any influence from these models. The first philosophical model in this group is Waldo Werning's *The Seed Planting Church*. The pastor from Church #5 stated he had read the book, but did not indicate whether or not it was a major influence. The second philosophical model is Mark Dever and Paul Alexander's *The Deliberate Church*. The pastor from Church #7 stated that his church was leaning toward Dever's model lately.

Other Models

Almost all of the change agents indicated that they were influenced by models not listed in the author's list. The change agent from Church #1 indicate that he was relying more and more on material developed for the denominational district to which he belongs. Church #2's change agent indicated that he had not read any of the models listed on the author's list. He did indicate two other works that have influenced his pastoral ministry. These two works are Jack Hiles' *The Hiles Church Manual* and John McArthur's *Rediscovering Pastoral Ministry*.

The pastor from Church #3 mentioned three churches whose ministries have influenced his ministry. These three churches include Brooklyn Tabernacle, Willow Creek Community Church and Yoido Full Gospel Church of Seoul, South Korea. Church #6's pastor indicated that he is more and more being influenced by the model expressed in Acts 2:42-47 as well as Acts 6.

The Assessment of the Models

The survey and subsequent phone calls to the change agents revealed their assessment of the philosophical models as they move their churches to revitalization. The change agent from Church #5 expressed that the only shortcoming of the philosophical models is the fact that they do not deal with the historical sins that created the barrier to health. Church #6's change agent recognized the need for strategies and programs, but stated that he is becoming increasingly aware that we have made the process of revitalization much too complicated. The change agent from Church #9 summed up the general feeling among the changed agents as a whole. He pointed out that these

philosophical models will only have limited and temporary success if the root causes of the problems have not been identified and addressed.

Additional Resources

Since the current philosophical models do not specifically address how to revitalize a troubled church, two additional resources for the change agent emerged from the research. First, several pastors highly recommended that Kenneth Quick's *Healing the Heart of Your Church* (2003, Church Smart Resources) be used. This book was the text of choice for the three interims pastors within the research group. Quick's book guides the pastor through the process of identifying the root issues and attaining healing. Another resource that was mentioned by the Pastor of Church #3 was Neil T. Anderson and Charles Mylander's *Setting Your Church Free* (1994, Regal Books). This book also addresses the identification of the root problems and suggests a healing process.

<div align="center">

Overall Summary

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As it was mentioned before, it is possible for a troubled church to break through the barrier and become healthy once again. In looking at the churches of the research group, it is obvious that there are some patterns in their journey to health that can assist other change agents break through the barrier. The research revealed that the nature of the trauma experienced by these churches is similar to the trials of other churches. The pastors who have transitioned these churches approached the task with age, experience and education. Finally, these churches addressed specific factors/issues before being able to apply philosophical models. These specific factors/issues that were addressed will

serve as the basis for Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 5

BREAKING THROUGH THE BARRIER

While it is devastating for a church to endure a traumatic experience, living with

the after-effects of the trauma is just as crippling. This is especially true for a pastor who

finds himself ministering in a troubled church. One of the most frustrating moments that

a pastor will face in his ministry is coming to realization that there is a very real barrier to

any effort to move the church forward in gospel effectiveness. Even more frustrating is

recognizing that as a leader you do not know what to do. This dual frustration is a

common experience for those who have been called to shepherd troubled churches.

Referring to Kenneth Quick's *Healing the Heart of Your Church*, one interim

pastor stated that before he became aware of this resource, he was totally at a loss

concerning how to approach troubled churches. Now that he has a foundation of

knowledge about troubled churches, he is able to approach each congregation with

intelligence rather than ignorance.

Based on the experience at his church, the author suggested that there are possibly

eight factors/issues that must be addressed in order to move a troubled church to health.

Those eight factors/issues were then presented to the change agents of the churches

within the research group. From the data collected via a survey and a subsequent phone

call, a comparison of the factors/issues that the author presented and the actual

factors/issues that were confronted by the change agents was formed. This comparison

can be seen in Figure 6.

	Church #1	Church #2	Church #3	Church #4	Church #5	Church #6	Church #7	Church #8	Church #9	Church #10
Corporate forgiveness	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Restoration of pastoral office		■		■		■	■	■	■	■
Spiritual renewal/revival	■	■	■	■		■	■	■	■	
Fiscal problems/problems dealt with	■			■		■	■	■	■	■
Long pastoral tenure		■		■		■	■	■	■	■
Shift in power structures	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Conflict resolution	■	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Dysfunctional behavioral patterns within church are addressed	■		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Other		■								

Figure 6. Comparison of factors that were addressed

Gaining insight from the change agents who have transitioned their churches to health is crucial to helping other pastors as they find themselves frustrated by the barriers of their troubled congregation. From the data collected, it can be seen that there are common factors/issues that must be addressed to revitalize traumatized congregations. The examination of these factors/issues will serve as the basis for this chapter. Once all of the factors/issues have been examined, the current mindset of the change agents will be presented as they have moved beyond the barrier.

Confronting the Barrier

The barrier that exists in troubled churches is not impenetrable. A wise change agent can carefully address the barrier by dealing with several factors/issues that are unique to his congregation. The key is having an understanding of what those factors/issues are and how they have been confronted by others. As the data from the

research group is presented, there are three major thoughts that must be understood as

each factor/issue is examined. First, the general nature of the factors/issues is universal

for each church. For example, four of the churches confronted all eight factors/issues.

One church confronted seven factors/issues. And two of the churches confronted six

factors/ issues. That is seven churches who have addressed six or more of the

factors/issues.

Next, the specific nature of a factor/issue within a troubled church is unique to

that congregation. While it is true that most of the churches confronted the factors/issues

that the author presented, the actual nature of the factor/issue and how it was manifested

in the church was different. Due to this reality, one final major thought emerges. The

change agent needs to seek wisdom rather than a procedure from the example of the

research churches. While the approach to a factor/issue may be similar, each change

agent responded to the factor/issue based upon the unique character of his church.

With these three major thoughts in mind, an examination of the factors/issues will

be presented. As the factors/issues are presented, the actions taken by the churches of the

research group will be included. It is hoped that wisdom can be gained from the

experiences of other change agents who have successfully broken through the barrier to

health.

Corporate Forgiveness

In looking at the comparison chart in Figure 6, one cannot help but notice that all

ten churches had to deal with the issue of corporate forgiveness. From this fact alone, one

can deduce that corporate forgiveness is an important issue that the change agent needs to

consider. When one considers the nature of the trauma experienced in a troubled church, it must be noted that sin was perpetuated by the pastor, the governing board or the congregation in almost all of the incidents of trauma.

With that realization that sin is at the heart of the trauma, it must be approached in a Biblical manner, namely with forgiveness. If the sin is not dealt with in a Biblical manner, it continues to manifest itself within the church. This is why corporate forgiveness is so important. Concerning the importance of corporate forgiveness, Edward Rowell writes in *Leadership*, "Corporate repentance helps churches deal with past issues that affect present health and future direction."[1]

An example of the importance of corporate forgiveness can be seen in Church #4. When the change agent assumed the pastorate of this troubled church, his first year was spent listening to the continual complaints of the people concerning the actions of his predecessor. It became very evident to the change agent, that the church had not forgiven the last pastor for his actions. Sensing that this fixation on the last pastor was hindering the church, the pastor patiently pursued the issue of forgiveness through the two boards of the church. When the boards recognized the need to forgive the last pastor, the issue was brought before the congregation. The congregation agreed that they should forgive the last pastor. Almost immediately the complaining ceased and that pastor and his actions were not mentioned again.

The issue of corporate forgiveness was approached by the research group in one of two ways. The change agents chose to either deal with the forgiveness issue in a small group made of the principle parties or a large gathering of the congregation as a whole.

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[1] Rowell, 95.

Either approach had a major impact on the churches with the research group.

Small Group

When a change agent chose to use the small group approach concerning the issue of forgiveness, he dealt directly with the principle parties involved with the trauma that the church has experienced. For example, when the change agent in Church #2 assumed the pastorate at his troubled church, he became aware of the trauma the church had experienced twenty years before as a result of the lawsuit over the handling of a trust fund.

Upon examining the history of the problem, he discovered two letters in the church files that helped explain the lawsuit. One letter was from an outside auditing firm that stated that the trustees of the fund were not responsible for the decline of the trust fund during an economic downturn. The second letter was from a member of the congregation to the pastor who pursued the lawsuit. This member urged the pastor to pursue a lawsuit against the trustees no matter what the forthcoming auditor's report stated.

With the two letters in his possession, the pastor called a meeting of the members remaining in the church who were a part of the lawsuit. He also invited the former trustees of the trust fund, who had long since departed the church because of the lawsuit. Many of the former trustees were now in their seventies. At the meeting he presented the facts of the lawsuit as he produced the two letters. He then presented himself as the current pastor representing all past pastors of the congregation. In that role he asked for forgiveness from those who were present, especially the former trustees of the trust fund.

The change agent reported that his action produced tears and repentance from those who were present. The impact of the meeting was seen when two of the trustee families returned to the church after twenty years.

Large Group

A large group approach to corporate forgiveness requires the meeting of the entire congregation to deal with the issues of past trauma. These meetings have been referred to as "Solemn Assemblies," "Reconciliation Meetings" or "Restoration Meetings." Commenting on these meetings, Rowell states "The solemn assembly has become a tool to heal and restore some troubled churches, as they come to terms with their destructive behavior, toleration of sin, and spiritual indifference."[2] The point of this meeting is to bring the congregation to a point where it recognizes its sin, confesses it and finds freedom through the process of forgiveness.

The change agent of Church #5 provided an example of a "solemn assembly" used in his troubled church. The church brought back four former pastors to reconcile with them. Past sins perpetuated by the congregation were confessed. There was an opportunity for the pastors to confess the sins of leadership. This service brought to light many things that the congregation did not know as a whole. The result was liberating for the congregation.

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[2] Ibid., 91-92.

The Effects of Corporate Forgiveness

Corporate forgiveness can have a major impact on a troubled congregation as they

deal with the barrier to health. Whether a small group or large group meeting is required

in order to deal with the past wrongs and hurts, a troubled congregation can finally come

to terms with the destructive behavior and spiritual indifference that has crippled the

congregation. Corporate forgiveness can also result in major freedom for individual

members. Marshall Shelly refers to impact of corporate forgiveness on an individual

member in the author's church. He writes

> One member of Curwensville (Pa.) Christian Church recalled a special service.
> "George (Cannon, the pastor) emphasized the need for internal healing by
> forgiving past hurts and praying for each other. One Sunday he had a small
> wooden cross at the front of the church. We wrote what was hurting us on small
> pieces of paper and tacked them to the cross. It was a very liberating service."[3]

While the impact on a congregation can be tremendous, the change agent needs to

be cautious in his view of the results. Commenting on this reality, Rowell states "In cases

where the solemn assembly was seen as an event, effects were short-lived."[4] This was

reflected in the interaction with the change agent from Church # 6. He stated that he

believed that the Solemn Assembly needed to take place every two years. Church #3

conducted a "Solemn Assembly," yet the change agent felt that something was still

holding the church back.

Rowell points out a proper perspective concerning the impact of corporate

forgiveness on a congregation. He states "In congregations that used the service as the

beginning of a new pattern of relating to God and one another, the transformation has

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[3] Marshall Shelly, "Back from the Brink: 'Survey Results: Five Factors in Successful Turnarounds'," *Leadership* 26, No 4 (Fall 2005): 27.

[4] Rowell, 95.

sometimes been dramatic."[5] Corporate forgiveness is critical to breaking through the

barrier, but it should be seen as part of a long range process.

Restoration of the Pastoral Office

Consider the trauma of a troubled church, as well as the principle parties that

perpetuate it. A natural byproduct of this experience within the church is a diminished

view of the pastoral office. This is definitely seen in a congregation where a pastor has

experienced moral failure or abandonment by a pastor. When the change agent in Church

#4 began his ministry, he immediately noticed the "wait and see" attitude that many in

the congregation had towards him.

A major mistake that a change agent can make is having a mindset that assumes

that he is not tainted by any of the actions of former pastors. Reality is different from

assumption. If a congregation has experienced trauma as a result of a pastor's actions, the

congregation will be affected in how it views its next pastor. Trust towards a pastor has

been destroyed. This reality needs to govern the approach the change agent takes with a

troubled church. Respect for the pastoral office cannot be demanded, it needs to be

earned. In fact, demanding respect from a troubled congregation will only result in

further trauma. Dwight Tomlinson comments on his approach with his church in *Healing*

the Wounded Church. He writes

> One of the primary things in the healing of this church was to reestablish
> credibility in the position of senior pastor. I knew people would be watching
> every move I made and that there would be a group trying to find an area which
> they could use to criticize me. At that point I did not know how vehement they

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[5] Ibid.

would be, but I knew they were there.[6]

Seven churches within the research group had to experience a restoration of the pastoral office. The change agents had to make a concerted effort to regain credibility with their churches. From their responses to the survey and subsequent phone calls, three aspects emerge that reflect the approach that a change agent should take with a troubled congregation. First, a change agent needs to have patience as he works with the church. Tomlinson states that "If you take a church that is hurting, expect that it will take between five and seven years before you will be accepted as the leader of that church, as the undershepherd, before people will believe you, trust you and have confidence in your leadership."[7] The change agent from Church #2 stated that regaining credibility with his church took a long time. In fact, most of the change agents agree that traumatic experiences require time and patience to work through the issues.

Next, the change agent needs to focus on building relationships. Church #5's pastor stated that it took six months to build relationships with the people in the church. The change agent from Church #4 found that simply being available to the people when there was an emergency made a big difference in building relationships. He found that those who were left in the church were afraid to call the pastor when an emergency occurred. This was due to having two subsequent pastors who stated that they were only available during office hours. The change agent from Church #5 stated that the commitment to loving relationships must start at the elder and pastoral level.

Finally, the change agent needs to establish his credibility with the congregation.

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[6] Dwight Tomlinson, *Healing the Wounded Church* (Murfreesboro, Tennessee: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 2003), 3 .

[7] Ibid., 7.

Tomlinson points out that credibility requires a concerted effort on the part of the change

agent. He states

> If a man assumes the pastorate of a church that has been wounded, that man must understand that he will have to pay a price to reestablish credibility. He must be willing to work gently and slowly at rebuilding the trust and confidence of his position.[8]

The change agent from Church #2 stated that he had to spend time devoting himself to

the preaching of God's word and showing sacrificial love. Tomlinson echoes this point

when he writes "I began to establish credibility again by preaching and attempting, by the

grace of God, to set an example by my life and testimony."[9] The pulpit and the change

agent's life and character are crucial to establishing credibility with a troubled church.

In fact, the research shows that these three aspects, patience, relationships and

credibility are not options for restoring the pastoral office. All three are needed to help

the change agent as he guides his people to regain their trust in the office of pastor.

Spiritual Renewal/Revival

Another important factor/issue that must be addressed by the change agent is

spiritual renewal/revival. George Barna writes that "any leader who strives to regenerate

a church without placing a primary emphasis upon the spiritual renewal of the body is

destined to fail."[10] Spiritual renewal/revival occurs within the church as it regains its

focus on the worship of the Lord, service and a passion for the lost. Bill Easum states that

"the resurrection of a church is made up of the sum of many, many individual

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[8] Ibid., 5.

[9] Ibid., 3.

[10] Barna, *Turnaround Churches*, 95.

resurrections."[11]

From the comparison chart in Figure 6, eight of the churches stated that they experienced a point where spiritual renewal/revival took place within their congregation. One church stated that they are moving to this point. From the research group's responses, two observations emerge. First, helping a troubled congregation come to a point of spiritual renewal/revival is not easy. Easum states that

> Getting people to buy into the fact that they are spiritually dead isn't going to be easy. Many will simply deny it and turn a deaf ear and start plotting your departure. But those with "ears to hear" will see the wisdom in what you are saying. They have felt it in their gut for some time. They just needed someone to bring it to the forefront.[12]

It requires that effort of the change agent and the grace of God being poured out on the congregation. Second, spiritual renewal/revival does not mean that everyone will respond to the movement of God within a congregation. As Easum pointed out, some will turn a deaf ear to what you are saying.

These two observations can be seen in the example of Church #4. While most of the churches in the research group stated that spiritual renewal/revival took place as a part of a Solemn Assembly, Church #4 saw the renewal emerge in the church because of a three week sermon series. The change agent had spent two months praying about doing a series that would challenge the church concerning its existence.

Knowing that he would basically be drawing a line in the sand, he launched a three week sermon series entitled "Be the Church! When Doing Church is not Enough." He supplemented the series with a three week devotional and Sunday evening prayer

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[11] Easum, 18.

[12] Ibid., 19.

meetings. Unsure of what the response would be, the change agent was shocked by the response of the people. The Sunday evening prayer meetings were well attended. People began to give testimony to how God was waking them to reality of their true condition. A renewed desire for reaching the lost in the community emerged. That event took place two years ago. Yet the renewed focus on worship, service and evangelism has not diminished.

The change agent sadly pointed out that not everyone responded to the challenge. Some members simply did not see what others were seeing. Some members became angry and left. This resulted in an initial downturn in attendance. Yet the finances of the church increased. This was then followed by a long term attendance increase as congregants began to invite others to the church. The change agent states that he now reminds the church of that turning point each year with "Be the Church!" Sunday.

To understand the impact of a spiritual renewal/revival in a troubled church, consider the testimony from Church #7's change agent as he expresses the reality of the breakthrough in his church. He writes in his survey,

> We broke through in the spring of 2008. Many joined the church as they watched how we handled the situation. Since the process had been endured for so long, and many good friends left, it has taken a while to truly heal emotionally. The church is unified now as never before. The deacons and pastoral staff are a team as never before. The church is growing again, slowly but surely as we are truly a different church. We have become a body of believers instead of a corporate institution. To God be the glory!!!!!

<div align="center">Long Pastoral Tenure</div>

Another crucial factor/issue that can be seen in the research group is a long pastoral tenure of the change agent. George Barna points out the importance of this factor/issue in his book, *Today's Pastors*. He states that "the practice of changing

churches frequently is not a characteristic of a leading or effective pastor."[13] Most of the troubled churches within the research struggled through a series of short pastorates.

Commenting further on the importance of long pastorates, Barna states that "Many pastors experience their most productive years in ministry between their third and fifteenth year of service. Leaving after four years or so removes the prospect of exploiting the prime years of influence."[14] Concerning this factor/issue, seven churches identified a long pastoral tenure as important for breaking through the barrier.

In Church #4, where the congregation saw a pattern of many short pastorates and a few long pastorates that usually resulted in abrupt abandonment, the change agent's tenure of nine years has been significant. Before his tenure, the longest serving pastor had served the church for seven years before leaving abruptly. The change agent states that the long pastoral tenure communicates a message that the church matters.

Church #6's change agent stated that his long tenure of twenty-two years has allowed him to deal with "you don't know our church." Dwight Tomlinson states that a long pastoral tenure makes a statement to the congregation concerning his commitment to the work that God had called him to. He writes

> As time went by, some began to realize that I wasn't going to leave. Until then, the average stay of a pastor in the church had been about two years. As a result, many of the people who did not like the direction in which I was attempting to lead the church thought that if they waited a couple of years, I would leave.[15]

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[13] George Barna, *Today's Pastors: A Revealing Look at What Pastors are Saying About Themselves, Their Peers and the Pressures They Face* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1993), 36.

[14] Ibid., 37.

[15] Tomlinson, 4.

A Shift in Power Structures

When a church faces a traumatic experience, power structures form within the congregation that hinders its health. This is especially true for churches that have experienced the moral failure of a pastor or pastoral abandonment. Typically in the aftermath of the trauma, a group of members concerned for the church fills the leadership vacuum in order to "save their church."

The result is typically the opposite of their intentions as a power structure is formed. George Barna comments on impact of these power structures on the health of a church. He describes these power structures as "people who reign as the 'pillars' and systems that were developed to allow ministry, but simultaneously serve to limit, if not to prevent, innovation and rapid response to opportunities."[16]

In order for a troubled church to break through the barrier to health, there has to be a shift in the power structures of the church. Nine of the churches indicated that there was a shift in the power structures of their church. Interestingly, the shift in power structures was unique to each church within the research group.

Some of the churches approach the shift in power structures through denominationally empowered methods. For example, Church #1 stopped all ministries and services for several months as the church prayed for direction about the future. When it was determined that they were to continue as a church, a new board was formed. Church # 5 did away with the church leadership structure and the bylaws. The governing structure and by-laws reflected a time when the church was much larger, but now it was encumbering the health of the church. After a time of teaching, new boards were formed

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[16] Barna, *Turnaround Churches*, 21.

as a new set of by-laws were adopted.

The change agent from Church#2 used the by-laws to bring about a shift in power structures. When he assumed the pastorate of the church, the board contained members who were not qualified. This was a result of the turmoil that resulted from past trauma. The change agent wisely chose to educate the congregation concerning the nature of church leadership and the requirements of the constitution. He allowed the board members to fulfill their current terms. Once those terms ended, they were replaced with qualified candidates. In doing this, the change agent spared the congregation any further trauma.

Church #4 saw the shift in power structures slowly occur over an eight year period. The first part of the shift took place when the antiquated constitution was replaced. This resulted in the formation of new boards. The formation of new boards forced the decision making authority from a select group of congregants to the boards. The final aspect of the shift in power structures took place when two key families left. These two families had basically wielded much influence and power in the church. When these families left, the church experienced a renewal of growth.

Church #6 saw a shift in power structures when it moved from a "papal model of Senior Pastor at the top of a pyramid." The church moved to the senior pastor being one of two pastors, serving on an Elder team. The change agent believes that much of the pain and conflict was fostered by "systemic evil" associated with the papal model. Church #9 saw a shift in power structures when most of the power brokers in the church left. This enabled the church to move in a new direction.

As it was mentioned before the factor/issue was similar for each church, yet the

approach by the change agents were different. From their examples, it can be seen that power shifts can occur with the restructuring of boards, the revision of constitutions/by-laws, and the removal of members who are power brokers.

<div align="center">Conflict Resolution</div>

Troubled churches are known for conflict. Sadly, the reputation is often known to the community as a whole. As with the forgiveness issue, conflict resolution becomes very important for a congregation to break through the barrier to health. Christine Sheller writes in *Christianity Today* about the importance of conflict resolution for a troubled congregation. She writes that "churches can overcome material issues if key people can reconcile personally. That softens dialogue about the issues, setting an example for the flock."[17] Nine of the churches within the research group indicated that they had to deal with conflict resolution in order to break through the barrier.

Some of the churches resolved the issue of conflict as a part of corporate forgiveness. They chose to use a small or large group setting to resolve the conflict. Those who used a Solemn Assembly incorporated conflict resolution as a part of the process. Church #10 was able to resolve conflict as the change agent helped the parties involved with their communication skills. Once they learned how to understand what the other party was saying, the conflict disappeared.

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[17] Christine Scheller, "Missing the Rupture," *Christianity Today*, May 2003. http://www. christianitytoday.com /ct/2003/may/4.42.html (Accessed May 30, 2009).

Settlement of Fiscal Issues within the Church

A serious by-product of trauma in a church is financial issues. This is especially true if finances were involved in the trauma. Money is not the only fiscal issue that a troubled church can face. George Barna expresses another component of the fiscal issues that declining churches face. He writes that "some of the turnaround churches also faced problems related to their facilities: their existing facilities were too small, too dilapidated or too expensive."[18] Fiscal issues can cripple any effort by a change agent to transition a troubled church to health. Surprisingly only six churches from the research group saw this as a factor/issue that needed to be addressed. Barna refers to this in his book, *Turnaround Churches*. He writes concerning issues not mentioned by pastors that are very important to turn a church around. He states "Notice, too, that one of the resources not mentioned as being critical in the turnaround process was a treasure chest full of money."[19]Yet fiscal issues are important for the revitalization of a troubled church.

Because the issue of finances was a part of the trauma that impacted his church, Church #1's change agent stated that they needed to set in motion policies for the handling of money and the financial decision making process. He also had to deal with a structure that allowed for the waste of funds. All of his actions were supported by a level of teaching that reinforced the stewardship of God's resources.

The change agent of Church #4 was confronted with fiscal issues on several fronts. First he inherited a structure where the monthly financial statement only stated how much money was in the bank and what bills were due at that time. It had been the

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[18] Barna, *Turnaround Churches*, 93.

[19] Ibid., 57.

church's practice to pick and choose which bills to pay that month. He immediately

required detailed monthly financial statements for the board. He also required that

detailed quarterly statements be made available to the congregation.

Next, he moved the church to make an effort to retire a debt from a renovation

project that took place six years before. Next, he undertook a renovation project with the

Sunday school wing. Finally, he moved the church to demolish a building that had been

allowed to fall into disrepair. The removal of this building allowed the church to expand

its parking.

Church #8 & #9 saw the issue of finances dealt with when the change agent spent

some time teaching Biblical finances and stewardship. From these churches, three aspects

for dealing with fiscal issues emerge. First, the change agent must implement policies

concerning the handling and reporting of finances in a church. Next, the church must

make a concerted effort to retire debt loads that are strangling the church. Finally, the

change agent must undertake projects to improve the church facilities.

<div align="center">Breaking of Dysfunctional Behavior Patterns</div>

The final factor/issue that was addressed by churches within the research group

was the breaking of dysfunctional behavioral patterns within a troubled church. These

behaviors almost always come as a result of the trauma experienced by a church. George

Barna presents an example of the development of these behaviors. He writes "Another

limitation is the adoption of a small-church mentality by members of the

congregation. . . . The research we have conducted indicates that this is often a defense

mechanism adopted by people who are afraid of failing in their comeback bid."[20] The research gathered from the survey found that eight of the ten churches had to address dysfunctional behavioral patterns.

Church #1 had to deal with dysfunctional behavior from leadership. This behavior was expressed in prejudices and sexual discriminations. They also were very bold in their position that they had the last word. The change agent reported that when these leaders left the church, the behavior was corrected. Church # 2 reported that the dysfunction occurred when the board moved from an advisory role to a governing role. When the change agent addressed the issues concerning the power structures of the church, the behavior was dealt with as the board returned to an advisory role.

Church #4 saw dysfunctional behavior manifested in many ways. The change agent noticed from the history that there was a tendency to force a vote of confidence concerning a pastor at a Wednesday evening business meeting. Wednesday evening services tend to be the least attended services in most churches. Recognizing this trend, he guided the church to move business meetings to Sunday after the morning worship service when most of the members would be in attendance. In all, he reported that six different dysfunctional behaviors were addressed in his church.

In almost all cases where dysfunction was addressed within the churches, it was a direct result of the trauma that had been experienced. The behaviors were often formed by well-meaning people seeking to protect the church. However, it only resulted in a barrier to growth and health. Once structural changes were made, dysfunctional behavior was often corrected.

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[20] Barna, *Turnaround Churches*, 89.

Beyond the Barrier

As the author discussed the factors/issues that the change agents addressed within

their troubled congregations, he wanted to gain their perspective concerning moving

beyond the barrier to health. So he posed a question to each of the pastors that he spoke

to in a subsequent phone call. He asked, "Now that you have dealt with the issues of the

past and moved forward toward health, what is your perspective concerning the past

trauma that the church faced?" The responses from the change agents were very

enlightening and can be broken down into three categories: "Don't Look Back," "Wiser

than Serpents" and "A Cautious Eye."

Don't Look Back

This mindset was reflected in the attitude that the change agent from Church #3

expressed. When faced with a situation where more problems from the past were

emerging, he prayed for wisdom as to whether the church needed to address them. He

stated that he felt that God was telling him, "You have dealt with the past, let it be. Move

On!" So he has adopted that mindset. It must also be noted that during the interview, he

stated that there was still something holding the church back.

Wiser Than Serpents

One prevalent mindset held by half of the change agents within the research group

is expressed in the words of Jesus, "Therefore be wise as serpents. . ." (Matthew 10:16

NKJV). This mindset is expressed in the thought "we are not crippled by the past, but we

are aware of it." These change agents are moving on, but they recognize what has happened before. The change agent from Church #6 was very direct concerning this mindset. He stated "We have gained wisdom from the past. We have learned from it. We don't want to go back. We will do everything we can to make sure that it never happens again."

A Cautious Eye

The final mindset, held by some of the change agents, goes one step further than the "Wiser Than Serpents" group. This group is moving on, but they are very cautious about the past. The change agent from Church #9 concurred with this mindset. "We have gone through the process, but we are going to be aware of the past as we move forward. It is critical that we develop new behavioral patterns or we will revert back to the dysfunction of the past. It is a constant thing." Church #5's change agent summed it up with the statement, "You can never forget the past!"

The change agent from Church #1 drew an analogy from scripture to express this mindset. He stated that the church was like the children of Israel crossing over the Red Sea to salvation. They had experienced salvation, yet there was a generation who kept remembering Egypt. He stated that it was not until that generation had died in the desert that the next generation could claim the promise land.

Like the children of Israel, the troubled church has crossed over the barrier. Yet there are still those who remember the "fleshpots of Egypt." They keep remembering the past pain and trauma. He stated that a troubled church must always be cautious as it moves beyond the barrier until those who remember Egypt "have died off" and are

replaced by a new generation who did not experience the pain of Egypt.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

There remains a tendency today to view working with troubled churches as a work in futility. Hence, the well-known proverb espoused by many in pastoral circles, "It is easier to give birth than to raise the dead." This thinking has manifested itself in the thought that it is easier to plant churches, than to spend time working with dead churches who may never come back to life again. Yet it must be recognized that a majority of those who are attending our seminaries do not have the skill-sets or temperaments to become church planters. Of those who remain, only a few will be selected to serve on the staffs of larger churches. Are these remaining men doomed to a cruel fate of being thrown into the "meat grinder" of a troubled church? Must they enter into this type of ministry without any preparation for working with a traumatized congregation?

Add to this prevalent attitude a perception that there is no understanding of what is needed to work with these churches. Concerning this perception about working with declining churches, let alone troubled churches, Gene Wood shares a quote from Lyle Schaller and Ralph Neighbor Jr. They are quoted as saying "turnaround churches cannot be done and/or little is known that will work."[1] It is against the backdrop of this current thinking that the author has sought through this project to increase what little is known about successfully working with troubled churches.

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[1] Wood, 22.

Summary of the Project

This project attempted to examine the current mindset that is prevalent among many pastors who are laboring to guide their churches to health. Many view the process of transitioning to health as a simple application of a philosophical model. By tracing the development of church health thinking, the author has tried to show that church health is one component of church growth in general and is complex in its nature. The simple application of a model without considering the history of an established church will result in frustration for a change agent. This is especially true for a troubled church.

The author then examined the dynamics of a troubled church. He presented the mindsets of ignorance or avoidance that dominate the current thinking concerning working with these churches. He explored the nature of the trauma that these churches have experienced. He also presented how these traumatic experiences have resulted in a very real barrier to any effort to revitalize these churches.

Based on his experience at Curwensville Christian Church, the author sought to show that it is possible for a change agent to break through the barrier to health if certain factors/issues were addressed. He conducted research among ten churches that have moved beyond the barrier to health. Through the use of a survey and a follow-up phone call to the change agents, the author was able to present what factors/issues were common among the churches of the research group.

Based on the information gained in each component of this project and the personal interviews with the change agents of the research group, the author will summarize the overall observations of the project. This summary will be presented in the

form of general observations concerning church health, general observations concerning

troubled churches, general observations from the research group, and specific

observations from the change agents. The author will follow-up with some

recommendations for further study and a conclusion to the overall project.

General Observations Concerning Church Health

When the issue of working with troubled churches is considered, several general

observations concerning church health emerge. First, the change agent needs to guard

against viewing the path to health as the simple application of a philosophical model.

Approaching a troubled church from this perspective ultimately ends in frustration or

worse for the change agent. More often than not, it will result in further trauma to an

already troubled congregation.

Next, the change agent needs to view church health as part of the overall process

of church growth. By tracing the formation of church health thought, the author has

shown that the concept of a healthy church did not originate with Rick Warren's *The*

Purpose Driven Church. The discussion concerning the health of a church can be seen in

the conversation between Donald McGavran and Win Arn, *How to Grow a Church:*

Conversations about Church Growth. In fact, it is from their discussion that we see that

church health is one of several crucial questions that must be asked about a church in

order to bring about growth.[2]

Next, the change agent needs to recognize that church health is a complex issue.

The author has shown that while a book such a Warren's *The Purpose Driven Church*

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[2] McGavran and Arn, 60-61.

provides a general overview of health with the five purposes, the change agent must not allow any one book to solely guide what health should be for his congregation. Books tend to reflect the author's bent toward the issue of health. This is seen in Mark Dever's *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, which reflects his bent toward church polity and administration.

Finally, the change agent must consider his approach to philosophical models. He needs to guard himself from looking to them for a prescription to health. Philosophical models are not a "silver bullet" to turning a church around. Rather, the change agent needs to look for principles that he can apply to the context of his troubled church. He must also consider the words of the change agent from Church #5. He expressed that the only shortcoming of the philosophical models is the fact that they do not deal with the historical sins that created the barrier to health.

General Observations Concerning Troubled Churches

Working with troubled churches requires that the change agent have an understanding concerning the scope of the trauma that they have experienced. With that in mind, the author has three observations concerning the nature of troubled churches in general.

First, the change agent needs to do his homework before he assumes the pastorate of a troubled church. It would seem that this observation runs counter to the author's premise that troubled churches should not be approached from the standpoint of avoidance. But reality dictates that not every seminary graduate or pastor has the skill-set or temperament to pastor a troubled congregation. Such upfront effort on the part of a

pastoral candidate could spare the pastor and congregation needless trauma. Therefore a pastoral candidate should look into the history of the church, communicate with all former pastors (especially those who have been terminated), communicate with other pastors (from the community or denominational fellowships and associations) and communicate with former members. This homework on the part of a pastoral candidate will help him have a realistic view of the church to which God may be calling him to.

Second, the change agent needs to become a student of the church's history. He must take time to understand what trauma the church has experienced. He can then understand the barrier that resulted from the traumatic experiences. A study of the history of the church will guard the change agent from assuming that he is starting with a clean slate. He will grasp that the church is a product of its past experiences. Therefore, the dysfunctional behavior that he is seeing has its roots in some past experience. Only when he grasps what those experiences are can he help his church move past the barrier.

Thirdly, the effort put forth in a troubled church does not guarantee success. The fact remains that some troubled churches are beyond help. It is difficult to know which churches are beyond help. For example, Church #4 was so marked by a history of trauma. Yet the change agent stayed and worked through the issues. However, it is possible that in some situations a rebirth may be necessary for a troubled church.

General Observations from the Research Group

The data gained from the research also provides the author with some general observations for the change agent. First, troubled churches are a product of a series of traumatic events, not an isolated incident. In fact, many churches within the group were

repeat offenders. An example would be multiple forced terminations, moral failures and pastoral abandonments. This fact alone points the change agent to the reality that there are some factors/issues lying beneath the surface that must be addressed.

Next, the nature and frequency of the trauma will determine the time and effort that is needed to work with troubled churches. The change agent needs to recognize that addressing the issues of a troubled church is like peeling an onion, one layer at a time. The change agent from Church #4 discovered that when one issue was resolved, another unforeseen issue would surface. He has since recognized the need to deal with past issues as they arise. Dwight Tomlinson states that a pastor needs to recognize that it will take at least five to seven years for a pastor to make headway with the congregation.[3]

Third, there are some factors/issues that must be addressed in a troubled church. The foremost issue that must receive attention from the change agent is corporate forgiveness. Whether in a small group setting with the principle parties or a large congregational gathering in a special service, the sins of the past must be dealt with in a Biblical manner. The issue of conflict resolution is closely tied to corporate forgiveness. The research shows that the change agent may have to address the issue of power structures within the church. Overall, the data collected from the churches within the research group showed that the eight factors/issues presented by the author were addressed by the churches in the study. Once again, these factors include

- Corporate forgiveness
- Restoration of the pastoral office
- Spiritual renewal/revival
- Long pastoral tenure
- A shift in power structures

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[3] Tomlinson, 7.

- Conflict resolution
- Settlement of fiscal issues within the church
- Breaking of dysfunctional behavior patterns

Finally, the research shows that philosophical models influenced the change agents, but did not serve as the basis for dealing with the barrier to health. Most change agents used other resources such as Kenneth Quick's *Healing the Heart of Your Church* to help them with some particular issues. Yet, even these other resources did not fully address all of the specific issues that the church was dealing with.

Specific Observations from the Change Agents

From the change agents of the research group, three specific observations materialize. First, all of the change agents were older when they assumed the pastorates of their churches. This is significant point that must be noted. Troubled churches respond to older pastors. Combine this with the fact that the change agents tended to have some post-graduate education and have had prior pastoral experience. These characteristics of the change agent point to the most crucial component in dealing with a troubled church, credibility. The change agent needs to have credibility in order to work with a traumatized congregation.

Second, change agents who fulfill the role of interim pastor can affect change in a troubled congregation. Because of the short-term nature of their pastorates, they are able to address issues quicker than a senior pastor. Yet there appears to be a limit to what extent the interim pastor can move the congregation beyond the barrier.

Third, the longer the pastor serves in a troubled congregation, the success level for moving the church beyond the barrier rises. In most of the cases where a church

moved beyond the barrier to health caused by severe trauma, the change agents were well

tenured in their churches. The longest pastorate was twenty-two years. A long-term

pastorate communicated a commitment to the church in spite of its past.

Recommendations for Further Study

Because the scope of this project was limited to the factors/issues that must be

addressed in a troubled church, there is a need for the author to make some

recommendations for further study into the issue of troubled churches.

1. A larger study group needs to be formed to further validate the data from this

   study. While the information gather from the ten churches is important for the

   issue of dealing with troubled churches, a larger research group should be formed

   to test the validity of the results from the ten. A larger research group will give a

   broader view of the characteristics of a change agent who moved a troubled

   church to health and the factors/issues that were addressed to move beyond the

   barrier to health.

2. Research should be conducted on the role of interim pastors in moving troubled

   churches to health. While the research group did contain some interim pastors, it

   was evident to the author that their ministry has some distinct advantages and

   disadvantages that are not characteristic of a senior pastor.

3. The issue of corporate forgiveness needs to be studied further. As Edward Rowell

   points out in his *Leadership* article, how a "solemn assembly" is used and viewed

   by a change agent will determine the impact of the service on a church.[4] This fact

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[4] Rowell, 95.

necessitates that the dynamics of corporate forgiveness should be explored in a more detailed manner.

4.   A study of the temperament, spiritual giftedness and leadership styles of the change agents should be explored. It is possible that these factors could help a seminary student understand to what types of churches he could minister in. It may help some seminarians and pastors avoid the disaster of being wrongly fitted into a troubled church.

5.   A study should be conducted concerning the view of philosophical models by seminary students and pastors. This would be helpful in understanding whether students and pastors have a realistic view of philosophical models or an unrealistic view.

6.   A study should be conducted on the impact of resources such as Kenneth Quick's *Healing the Heart of Your Church* (2003, Church Smart Resources) and Neil T. Anderson and Charles Mylander's *Setting Your Church Free* (1994, Regal Books) on a troubled church. This will help in identifying resources for a change agent of a troubled church.

7.   Further study should be conducted with churches that have moved beyond the barrier. This study should look at whether or not the past traumatic events still have some impact on a church. This study should examine at what point the past trauma no longer mattered to the forward motion of the church.

Conclusion

The author's intention for this thesis project was to provide a descriptive study of the additional factors needed to transition a troubled church to health. A research group was formed for an in depth study of the factors/issues that were addressed in their churches. The author has presented the findings of this research with reference to the eight factors/issues that he set forth as possible issues that needed to be addressed in a troubled church. This chapter has summarized the author's observations from the thesis project.

It has been the author's goal to provide pastors and seminary students with helpful information concerning the issue of the moving troubled churches to health. It is hoped that this information will supplement pastoral theology in equipping students for the realities of ministry in North America. As students are exposed to the nature of troubled churches and the factors/ issues that may need to be addressed in them, they will be better prepared to deal with a troubled church.

It must be recognized that there is an element of truth in the well-known proverb, "It is easier to give birth, than to raise the dead." Working with troubled churches is difficult and time consuming. However, the change agent needs to be comforted with the fact that "God still raises the dead."

APPENDIX A

RESEARCH GROUP

Barcroft Bible Church, Fairfaix, Virginia

Curwensville Christian Church, Curwensville, Pennsylvania

East Boulder Baptist Church, Boulder, Colorado

First Alliance Church of Charlotte, Charlotte, North Carolina

First Baptist Church of Bellingham, Bellingham, Massachusetts

First Reformed Church, Fremont, Michigan

New Era Reformed Church, New Era, Michigan

Reedsville Alliance Church, Reedsville, North Carolina

West End Alliance, Richmond, Virginia

Westminster Presbyterian Church, Butler, Pennsylvania

APPENDIX B

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Church's Name: _____

Address: _____

        _____

        _____

Senior Pastor's Name:_____

A.   Information about the Senior Pastor

   1. Age: _____

   2. Level of education: Undergraduate degree_____

                          Seminary degree _____

                          Other (please specify) _____

                          _____

   3. How long have you served in pastoral ministry? _____

   4. How many churches have you served in pastoral ministry? _____

   5. How long have you served at your current church? _____

   6. How old were you when you assumed the pastorate at your current church?

   _____

B.   Information about the Church

   1. When was the church established? _____

   2. Past Traumatic Experiences

   Please mark which traumatic experiences your church has experienced in the past.

     a.   Moral failure of a pastor   _____

     b.   Church split   _____

     c.   Forced termination of a pastor   _____

     d.   Abandonment by a pastor   _____

     e.   Severe church conflict   _____

     f.   Mass exodus from the church   _____

     g.   Abuse by a spiritual leader   _____

     h.   Abuse of a spiritual leader   _____

     i.   Other (please specify) _____

                   _____

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_____

3. <u>Transition to health information</u>
    Please mark which factors/issues needed to be addressed in order for the church to
    move toward health.
    a.   Corporate forgiveness   _____
         This refers to an action on the part of the church to forgive the sins that
         had been committed by a pastor or others against the church. This action
         may take place in a special service.

    b.   Restoration of pastoral office   _____
         This refers to actions on the part of the pastor to regain the integrity of the
         pastoral office within the church.

    c.   Spiritual renewal/revival   _____
         This refers to a renewal within the church as it regains its focus on
         worship of the Lord, service and a passion for the lost.

    d.   Fiscal issues/problems dealt with _____
         This refers to a concerted effort to deal with fiscal issues that emerged
         from the traumatic experience and that have hindered growth.

    e.   Long pastoral tenure   _____
         This refers to the fact that a long pastorate was needed in order to guide
         the church through its pain and unto health.

    f.   Shift in church power structures   _____
         This refers to the fact that a shift has occurred with the power structures of
         the church (boards, committees, etc.) to allow for growth and health.

    g.   Conflict resolution   _____
         This refers to the action on the part of the church or leadership to resolve
         past unresolved conflicts.

    h.   Dysfunctional Behavior Patterns   _____
         within church are addressed
         This refers to the changing of dysfunctional behavior patterns that were a
         direct result of past traumatic experiences within the church.

    i.   Other (Please specify)_____

         _____
         _____
         _____
         _____

4. <u>Additional comments concerning transition to health.</u>
    Please list any additional thoughts or comments concerning the process of

transitioning a troubled church to health.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

C.   Philosophical Models information
Please mark which philosophical models for church health have influenced your ministry at the church.

a.   The Purpose Driven Church   _____
        By Rick Warren

b.   Simple Church   _____
        By Thom S. Rainer & Eric Geiger

c.   Natural Church Development   _____
        by Christian Schwarz

d.   The Deliberate Church   _____
        by Mark Dever & Paul Alexander

e.   The Seed Planting Church   _____
        by Waldo Werning

f.   Other models (please specify)_____

      _____

      _____

      _____

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