

ABSTRACT

CONTRASTING BELIEFS WITH REALITY: THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF BRANDING AND BRAND IMAGE IN THE SMALL CHURCH

by

James Pernell, Sr.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stated in his *Propagandizing Christianity* sermon at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church:

Don't be afraid to defend the Church where necessary. Certainly, the Church is not perfect. It has often stood in the way of social and scientific progress, and as I will show in a few minutes, I am often ashamed of the Church, but in spite of its errors, I would hate to see what the world would be like without

it. (*Propagandizing Christianity*)

It emerges that mainstream denominations are standing in the way of progress as it relates to branding and brand image in their small church contexts. When the small church brand and brand image is tarnished, the denomination as a whole is also tarnished and stained. How a denomination's branded image is viewed depends on how the small churches are considered in their respective communities. If the Church refuses to get out of its own way, it will result in catastrophic errors that it cannot afford after the COVID-19 pandemic.

This project studies the mission of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church and its practices by investigating its leadership and missional effectiveness. The research type for this study is mixed method using surveys, interviews, and interviewee

observations. Analysis of the data following the completion of the survey generated unprecedented results. Conceivable considerations for these discoveries are discussed.

CONTRASTING BELIEFS WITH REALITY:
THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF BRANDING AND BRAND IMAGE IN THE SMALL
CHURCH

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by

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CHAPTER 1

NATURE OF THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This project explores the mission of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in its organizational structure, processes, and outreach by investigating its leadership's effectiveness with small churches (membership fifty or fewer) and the image it exhibits through the concept of branding. Chapter 1 begins with a personal introduction and Biblical foundations which motivate the problem statement, purpose, and rationale. Themes for and significant contributors to the literature review are identified as well as contextual factors of the ministry setting. This chapter also includes the purpose statement, research questions for the project, the research, participant descriptions, and methods for data collection and analysis. The researcher concludes with a preview of the entire project by chapter.

Personal Introduction

The AME Church's mission is to minister to the spiritual, intellectual, physical, emotional, and environmental needs of all people by spreading Christ's liberating gospel through word and deed (Barbour 13). I found what ineffective leadership does to a church in my first ministerial charge. My first pastoral experience caused me to start thinking about how to eradicate the stain that ill-prepared leadership in small congregations cast on the AME Church brand image. My experience caused me to think about how I could put myself in the best position to learn all I can to serve the smaller local church and the communities they serve. At that point, I realized that I needed to know more, and even then, I could not grasp enough. I immediately enrolled in business school and shortly

after in seminary for a continuous learning experience. Business school helped me in the area of finance and budgeting. I have come to understand that most new and unschooled pastors are not astute in either. The church is part business and requires proper financial skills that are vital for existence. I wanted to sharpen those skills, and business school helped me to do just that. Small local churches do not have the additional resources to retain an accountant to handle their finances. Every bit of help the church receives is driven by volunteerism; therefore, the pastor must acquire essential skills to ensure the church is managed correctly in finance and budgeting. For me, business school was the first step on my newfound path of learning.

Dr. Gyertson proclaimed, "Great leaders think deeply about the theories and theologies (the what elements) that inform their leadership callings" (Gyertson 1). To my surprise, I was thinking about those processes even before I realized what I was doing. The lack of leadership at the local church level that I saw diminishing the AME Church's brand image that I fell in love with was causing my head to become more informed, which caused a significant shift in consciousness. If I could change one thing that happens within the AME Church framework, it would be the support and aid given to the small local churches to uplift the tarnished reputation of the AME brand image in their communities.

Bethel AME Church in Senatobia, Mississippi, was the first church where I was pastor in my journey to becoming a full-time pastor. Newly licensed to preach, I was assigned to Bethel as a pastor, and to my surprise, what I saw was devastating. I saw a little white church sitting on a hill lacking the essentials needed to become a beacon of light in the community. Most importantly, it was missing effective pastoral and

denominational leadership. On the outside, the roof was leaking and needed replacing. The paint was peeling on all four sides of the building. The concrete block steps were in unsafe shape, and the unmanicured trees on the property were making the church less visible from the county road. The tree roots coming out of the ground were cracking the church's foundation and causing the underground pipes to burst regularly.

The inside of the church was just as bad. The hardwood planked ceiling had mildew and dry rot. The restroom was unusable, resulting in the members having to relieve themselves outside if they could not hold it until they returned home. There was no working heating in the middle of winter during a severe snowstorm. The members and I were bundled up in our coats and scarves, and the shapes of cold smoke coming out of my mouth due to preaching in a freezing church became a source of entertainment to take our focus off the cold. You might imagine the shock factor this had on a newly licensed preacher who thought at the time that preaching was all that a pastor had to do. The experience was devastating to me. However, I knew that God wanted better for us and that God would help me, as a leader of His people, turn situations like that around so that no other preacher would have such an experience. First, I needed to prepare for the necessary work.

Ten years later, after attending both business and seminary school, I was appointed as a new pastor in Florida. To my surprise, I encountered a similar devastating situation as before when I had pastored at the small local congregational church in Mississippi. The church in Florida had a leaking roof, restrooms unusable, a rodent infestation, an AC unit that was not working, and no visible monument sign. The church also had unmanicured landscaping, electrical problems, unlivable pastoral housing, and

no digital footprint in a technological age; on top of all that, the church membership was on a drastic decline. The former pastor of the church had served the church for twenty-two years. He was well beyond retirement age, and he had a lot of health challenges that made it increasingly hard for him to keep up with the changing demands of being a pastor. Nevertheless, the vast difference between the church in Florida and the church in Mississippi was that the church in Florida was built on prime real estate in the community. As I looked at the possibilities that lurked beyond the church's current reality, I began to understand how branding and effective leadership could make a significant difference in the church's life and ministry.

Statement of the Problem

The AME church needs to consider how the local churches are branded in the communities they are residing in. When the local church's brand image is tarnished, the AME church as a whole is tarnished and stained. How the AME brand image is viewed depends on how the local churches are considered in their respective communities. Therefore, aid and support are needed from the overarching AME denomination to assist local churches within its ranks to ensure they maintain their facilities. Nevertheless, to do so, the structures of the AME denominational support and aid to the local charge must be reevaluated and changed to ensure its survival, or the AME Church will continue to experience a decline in membership and the closing of its small church doors.

Moreover, the local church must bear its weight of the problem as well. Ineffective denominational and pastoral leadership is one thing; inadequate congregational support is another. If the local congregations cannot care for and maintain their facilities, any help coming down from the overarching AME Church is fruitless. The

local church and the denomination must determine if the church is doing more harm in the community than good.

Purpose of the Project

This project explores the mission of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in its organizational structure, processes, and outreach by investigating its leadership's effectiveness with small churches (membership fifty or fewer) and the image it exhibits through the concept of branding.

Research Questions

The following questions will guide the research and learning for the purpose of this project.

Research Question #1

How do small denominational churches employ branding and brand image in the twenty-first century?

Research Question #2

What is the extent that small churches receive support (defined as financial resources) for branding?

Research Question #3

What are the best practices for denominations to support small membership churches in branding for the smaller and larger contexts?

Rationale for the Project

Contrary to popular belief, the church inescapably has a brand image tailor-made to its context. No church or organization operates without its brand image. It is unique to how the community perceives them. The church's appearance is how others on the

outside perceive the church. It is how the outside world experiences the church within its community. Therefore, this project matters because people will associate the effectiveness of a church's mission with its brand image effectiveness in their relative context. Most people shun away from the concept of branding and church, associating it with schemes and tactics used in trying to sell something. The AME Church's mission is to minister to the social, spiritual, and physical development of all people. The effectiveness of this mission being carried out also depends on the brand image that is associated with it. The way outsiders see the church's brand image can determine if they are open to receiving what the church has to offer.

David sets the stage in 2 Samuel 7 for the course of this project. In 2 Samuel 7 David, in conversation with the prophet Nathan, assessed his living situation and where God's ark was housed. After careful assessment, David desired to build God a temple. David's review lays the groundwork for why brand image matters. David wanted to build God a temple based on how he lived and where God's ark was kept. Similarly to David, people view the church based on their current living situations as well.

Regarding the church based on current living situations can be good and bad. For example, most people have a sense of pride in where they live. How they live and where they live is a testament to who they are and the brand image they project so others perceive them in a certain way. David was vastly concerned about how others would view God's dwelling place, because as a person, it was a concern of his owing to where and how he was living. On the other hand, if people do not care or have a sense of pride in the way they live, they will care less about how God's dwelling place is perceived or

branded. Hence, in all denominations, the smaller congregational church is declining due to the leadership's carelessness and the people therein.

Definition of Key Terms Associated with this Study

The following key terms for this project will be defined as follows.

Brand Image

Stephan McDonald defines brand identity as “the unity of style elements that identify the belonging of everything on which these elements are placed (goods, means of communication, communication messages) to a particular company/organization and distinguish it from competitors” (McDonald 7).

African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church

African: The word “African” as used in the name of the church denotes that the church was organized by people of African descent and heritage. Not that the church was founded in Africa or that it is solely for people of African descent.

Methodist: “Methodist” is used in the historic sense. It relates to all subsequent denominations that find their roots in the Wesleyan tradition. This church is a member of the family of Methodist churches.

Episcopal: This term refers to the form of government under which the church operates. This means that the chief executive and administrative officers are bishops. These bishops receive their authority from the General Conference.

Church: This term is used interchangeably between the “local church” and the “universal church.” The church is the assembly of the “ekklesia” as expressed in the New Testament (Acts 7:38) (Gill ix).

Bishops/Active & Retired (B1A) or (B1R)

The AME Church operates under a centralized form of Government, largely clerical. The central legislative authority resides in the General Conference, with the Bishops' Council, General Board and General Board of Education serving as its interpretative agents with authority to act. The Episcopal Bishops are its chief administrative and executive heads. These bishops receive their authority from the General Conference. Bishops are responsible for overseeing the spiritual and temporal affairs of the church, to include presiding over annual conferences, making pastoral appointments, ordaining deacons and elders, and organizing mission (Gill ix-x).

Candidate for Bishop (B-Candidate)

A person seeking to be elected and consecrated as the chief administrative and executive head of the church.

Presiding Elders/Active & Retired (PE1A) or PE1R)

The Presiding Elder is the official of the AME Connection charged with the responsibility for ensuring that each local church under their supervision understands and complies with the policies and programs of the connection. This person is appointed by the bishop and supervises the churches in their subdivided petition of the Annual Conference area known as District. The Presiding Elder presides over the Quarterly Conference of each local church under their supervision (Gill x).

Pastors/Active & Retired

Pastors for local churches are appointed by the Episcopal Bishop at the seat of the Annual Conference. These appointments are for one year, at which time the person could be reappointed to the same local church or to another. There is no limit to the number of times a pastor could be appointed to a particular local church (Gill xii).

Doctrine

A body of ideas, taught to people as truth. It is theology regarding the nature of truth, God, Jesus, salvation, damnation, the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, the Gospel, resurrection, etc. The two historic documents that form the basis of church's beliefs are contained in the Apostle's Creed and the Twenty-Five Articles of Religion. These Articles of Religion "were developed by John Wesley and were formally adopted in 1784 when Methodist was organized in America" (A. White 59).

Delimitations

To establish a brand image for the local church context, it is critical to work within the AME Church denomination of the Christian faith. There are some unique aspects to the AME Church that make brand image attractive to the Black community that are less attractive outside of the Black context. Thus, to take denominational authority, eldership, and the itinerant system into account, this project focused specifically on AME Church's clergy leadership ranks to show the importance of or lack of branding or brand image that function in the smaller congregational settings. Other relevant kinds of literature look at brand image outside of the AME Church framework, and these were taken into account; however, the research was focused specifically on the AME Church clergy leadership ranks.

The participants used were either active or retired within their respective ranking. Each participant has served as a servant leader in the 11th District of the AME Church, which includes the state of Florida and the Bahamas. The participants were both male and female. Each participant was eighteen years or older. Each participant was or was not college or seminary-trained; due to that, some participants may have been grandfathered

into their respective ranked position. Each participant must have or currently serve a church with a membership size of fifty members or less.

Review of Relevant Literature

This project consulted biblical, theological, leadership, and marketing literature to glean insights into the importance of branding or brand image to discover the best practices of Organizational Leadership to address current AME Church structures and processes regarding the support of small membership churches within its denominational context. In addition, this project also consulted *The Doctrine and Discipline of The American Methodist Episcopal Church* to explore the structures set in place within the organizational framework.

King David in 2 Samuel 7 gives the base for this project. The tone is set out of the concern David has for how and where he lived in relation to how and where the Ark of the Covenant resided. The theological tenet is birthed out of how humanity responds to God's unmerited favor in their lives. At the point of his concern, David realized that all that he had accomplished came by God's hand. David's theological assertion birthed out of his own lived experience gives him the desire to create a paradigm shift in how the Ark of the Covenant was housed. Leaders must embody the ability to manage conflict. David wrestles with an internal conflict that was created from an external observation. How leaders handle conflict and conflict resolution plays an important part in leadership. This project explored the contention that the AME Church had to sore about, which created the brand that many have come to revere. Finally, this project explores marketing and how important branding is to the business and corporate sectors. Brand image shifts

the perspective of who and what others perceive businesses or organizations are concerning their products.

Research Methodology

This project relied on both quantitative and qualitative research methods to find the importance of brand image of smaller congregational churches within the African Methodist Episcopal Church's clergy ranks. This project relied on a mixed-approach method of questionnaires followed by semi-structured interviews with bishops, presiding elders, and itinerant ministers, both active and retired. These participants served in their respective positions for several years. A questionnaire was sent to each participant. Then interviews were conducted with each participant.

The responses and interviews were then carefully analyzed to see if there were principles of change applicable and consistent throughout the ranks. Each participant was unique in their respective ranks with overlapping experiences throughout each rank; nevertheless, there were unifying principles that arose out of this research that can be applied to the importance of branding or brand image for smaller congregational contexts within the framework of the AME Church.

Type of Research

This study was pre-intervention and mixed methods because it created the framework to gather the data needed to discover best practices of organizational leadership to address current African Methodist Episcopal Church structures and processes regarding the support of small membership churches within its denominational context.

Participants

The research focused on the bishop, presiding elders, and the itinerant pastors of the AME Church, either active or retired. One bishop, two presiding elders and two itinerant pastors of small congregations of 50 or fewer members were chosen to represent the ranks in the AME Church structure to discover best practices of organizational leadership to address current African Methodist Episcopal Church structures and processes regarding the support of small membership churches within its denominational context.

Instrumentation

Data was collected through interviews and questionnaires to exploring knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding the importance of brand image issues related to small congregational churches.

Data Collection

The primary means of data collection involved a questionnaire followed by a semi-structured interview via Zoom with the bishop, presiding elders, and itinerant pastors in the AME Church. As a qualitative project, the collection of data was from the participants in the data gathering process. All data gathered was collected in a natural setting with both the researcher and participants interacting via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The researcher was recognized as the primary data gathering “instrument” and was responsible for developing a clear picture of the issues.

Data Analysis

The research data, specifically the questionnaire and interview manuscripts, were reviewed multiple times to identify trends, defects, and similarities across the structure and rankings of the AME Church.

Generalizability

This project focused primarily on discovering the best organizational leadership practices to address current African Methodist Episcopal Church structures and processes regarding small membership churches' support within its denominational context. The AME Church is comprised of twenty districts over five continents. While this research was done in the context of the 11th District, the research relevance is applicable across the five continents in all twenty districts.

Project Overview

What follows this introduction is an in-depth literature review in Chapter 2 that gives definition and parameters to the importance of brand identity as well as looking at relevant change leadership literature. Chapter 3 presents how this project's research was structured to reveal the best practices for branding image in a local church context. Chapter 4 analyzes the findings of the study through interviews and questionnaires. Finally, Chapter 5 discusses the research as a whole and as a model for branding small congregational churches in the AME Church.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

As there is nothing new under the sun (Harrelson 931), King David, admired biblically as a person after God's own heart (Harrelson 412), took action that seemingly branded the value, word, and impartation of God. One interpretation in essence is that he believed that how God looked outwardly was as crucial as the work of the hands of God upon his people as He ushered them into new beginnings. David's considerations of his perception of God resulted in wanting to construct a temple worthy for only God to dwell (Harrelson 450), which was immaculate and holy as his palace was. His notion was frowned upon, as noted in several renderings of the Bible and by biblical scholars. Theologically, David's aim was simple yet complex. He wanted to show the relevance and superiority of God above all other gods (Harrelson 450). Together, these converge to form the spiritual framework for this research project when contrasted to modern-day churches, including the AME Church, with attention to smaller churches related to the image portrayed in their respective communities.

Several motifs were discovered during the research process and investigated in light of the biblical and theological foundation and the mission of the AME church. Within the biblical foundation, the following concepts formed: leadership, servant leadership, spiritual leadership, leaders' characteristics, leadership attributes, branding, brand image, church missions, and organizational structure. The servant leadership model uses aspects of listening, foresight, discernment, and stewardship. The literature also revealed the theological foundation, which analyzed building design concepts when the

house of God was compared to one's own home, the nature of God or God's heart, and the exploration of David's heart.

Examining the research literature revealed significant reasons posited by scholars regarding why the brand image is essential to carrying out a church's mission regardless of the denominational divide. Notably, the heart's disposition intangibly produced tangible importance towards building a temple of God in correspondence with the degree of love, admiration, esteem, and reverence in line with glory given to God that epitomizes God's glory and David's "dynasty" forever. The heart of leadership, according to David, resulted in his direct action for God. The research literature based on biblical and theological foundations conveyed a collection of concepts that may be helpful to church leaders and yield benefits to churches and their respective communities

David's desire to establish a brand image for God based on God's unmerited favor in his lived reality suggests that such a desire is relevant today. God is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Harrelson 2169). The research indicates that the heart, servant leadership, and other perspectives should likewise be mirrored when considering biblical and theological foundations.

Historical Foundations

The formation of the AME Church can be misunderstood without knowing the Methodist freed person's opportunities through Wesleyanism. The Methodist movement originally started on Christ Church College's campus in Oxford University in the mid-1720s with the name "Holy Club." The club was led by Charles Wesley and his brother John who later came on board. With their unique style of "methods" related to organization and spiritual disciplines, Methodists instituted an evangelical form of

worship and practice that focused on ministering to the social needs of the oppressed classes of London. The new movement was so well received that Wesley had no choice but to expand its leadership platform by organizing new converts into the "class leader system" under an itinerant minister's direction. Coupled with rejection from the Anglican Church, the movement's uniqueness resulted in forming a unique Protestant movement.

Once the Wesleyan movement crossed the Atlantic Ocean in the mid-1730s, Thomas Coke, Francis Asbury, and George Whitefield led the movement and its distinctive preaching and teaching methods to the lower classes in the colonies, who received them very well. Lincoln and Mamiya proclaim, "Large numbers of slaves were among those who responded to the Methodist preachers, exhorting the revivals and camp meetings of the First Great Awakening in the 1740s" (Lincoln and Mamiya 50). Methodists had a difference of opinion when it came down to slavery. They put out a statement officially in 1743 in opposition to the brutal act. However, after 1785 the Methodists turned from their opposition and antislavery sentiments. Nevertheless, this did not stop the alarming attraction for African Americans to the evangelical fervor associated with the Second Great Awakening during the turn of the century.

Born into slavery on February 14, 1760, and enslaved to the slave owner Benjamin Chew, a Philadelphia lawyer, Richard Allen was one of the many who held on to the "methods" even after the retreating of their opposition of slavery. Allen and his family were sold to a slaver named Stokely Sturgis because of Chew's law practice's drastic decline. The unique thing about Stokely was that he was encouraging his slaves to learn to read and write as well as have frequent church attendance in a time where slaves could be killed for learning how to read and write. Allen's exposure to church came by

the Methodist circuit riders' voices that proclaimed the gospel to Blacks on the plantations they were held. The Methodist circuit riders not only preached to the slaves but preached to the slave owners as well. The preaching of a Methodist circuit rider proclaimed slavery as a sin and denounced it to the point that Stokely experienced a change in consciousness and allowed Allen to purchase his freedom for \$2,000.

Once Allen purchased his freedom, he became more involved with the Methodist church. He later answered his called to preach and became licensed to preach in the circuit. As a member of St. Georges Church, Allen was sent to preach and hold class meetings for the forty-two Black members who belonged to St. Georges Church. However, Wheelchel, Jr. denotes, "It is ironic, in light of later history, to note that many early institutions to practice segregation were the churches of the North" (Wheelchel 85). St. Georges Church was not exempted from that daunting reality. Wheelchel, Jr., in another one of his books on the Black Church, talks about how on a Sunday morning in 1787:

Allen, Absalom Jones, and several other Black members of St. Georges Church were "determined" to engage in prayer at the altar of the church. It was at the altar of the church where these African Americans were pulled off their knees being denied the right to pray at the altar rail like everybody else who was not the same color as them. (Wheelchel 108)

As a result of this violation of their spiritual rights and dignity, Richard Allen and Absalom Jones led the removal of the Black members from St. George Church and later formed what was known as the Free African Society, which is now known as the AME Church.

After establishing in Philadelphia what is known as the “first independent Black denomination,” W. E. B. DuBois would proclaim that the AME Church was “the greatest Negro institution in the world” (Whelchel 107). This assertion of W.E.B. DuBois is a direct reflection of the brand identity the AME Church projected through the practice of fulfilling its ongoing mission. This mission was laced with liberation and social equality for both the spiritual and physical needs of those on the margin lines of despair. The AME Church's brand image and what it represented gave hope to the hopeless, an alternate free reality to the enslaved, and faith in the fact that a change would come. The history and formation of the AME Church are essential to this project because it shows how the AME Church's brand image was created and the driving force of its inception.

Biblical Foundations

2 Samuel 7 is the pericope that sets the biblical framework for this project. In 2 Samuel 7, David is in a period of rest from all his enemies. While in a period of rest, David reflects on the events that have taken place and have brought him to the position of being King of Israel. David's reflection birthed the desire to build God a temple. David looked closely at his living conditions. He also looked closely at the housing conditions of God's Ark that dwelled in a tent. David wanted to do something about the projected image due to God's Ark lacking a fixed permanent dwelling place. So, the birth of desire to build God a temple was born (Harrelson 450–51).

In an in-depth look at John Calvin's sermons on 2 Samuel 7, Maarten Kuivenhoven explores how Calvin asserted a dark cloud over David's desire to build a fixed permanent place for Yahweh. Calvin wrote, "We have here an act of David, which was highly praiseworthy, and yet it was utterly condemned by God" (Calvin, 1992).

Calvin continued his reflection that David was too hasty in not waiting upon the Lord for further commands to build a house for the Lord (Calvin 296). However, Robert P. Gordon, in his literary work *I and II Samuel: A Commentary*, raises another view on David's desire to build a temple as a fixed permanent dwelling place for God. The view can be clearly understood in retrospect of the practices of the Ancient Near East. Gordon contends, "David, who is a fairly typical near eastern king in this regard, wants to crown his external achievements with the erection of a temple to Yahweh who has granted him his victories." Gordon added his understanding and noted that, "In the ancient world, moreover, a god who lacked a proper temple was in danger of being regarded as critically inferior. In other countries, it had long been considered the responsibility of kings both to build and to maintain the dwellings of the gods" (Gordon 236-37). Gordon has a scholarly collaborator in Arvid Kapelrud. Kapelrud the author of *Temple Building, A Task For Gods and Kings*, gives further insight on the matter, "In the ancient Middle Eastern world, temple building was the task and the privilege of victorious gods and kings" (Kapelrud, 56).

Kapelrud's observation yielded ten standard features that showed correlations between the historical accounts of the temple building of Gudea of Lagash, Moses, and Solomon and the connections between the mythical chronicles of temple building observed in the Ras Shamra manuscript and the Babylonian *Enuma elish*. Following the same techniques of Kapelrud, Bruce Satterfield, the author of *In Historical Tests and Building Inscriptions*, analyzed other ancient Mesopotamian text that make reference to temple building. Satterfield considered and then weighed them to the ten standard features found by Kapelrud. According to Sumerian mythology, the first temple built was

to the Enki at Eridu (Van Buren 293). Satterfield acknowledges Thorkild Jacobsen who supports the notion that the god Enki "was god of the underground fresh waters that come to the surface in rivers, pools, and marshes" (Satterfield 2). Satterfield stated, which can be said was rationalized by Buren, "Later temples were founded in conformity with the ordinances and ritual of Eridu" making the pattern of construction of Enki's temple of the Abyss the prototype for all other temples (Satterfield 3). Satterfield later concluded after his research that:

The tradition of temple building in ancient Mesopotamia, though covering over 2,500 years, is uniform in style. Beginning with Enki's temple of Abzu in Eridu, with its "ordinances and ritual," and concluding with the texts of temple rebuilding from the Hellenistic period, a common thread can be traced linking the different traditions of temple building. In so doing, the validity of Kapelrud's comparison of two different temple traditions is confirmed, reaffirming that even divergent religions can share commonalities. (Satterfield 27)

Gordon's view of the Ancient Near East perspective shows why David wanted to build a fixed dwelling place for God. God's ark, housed in a tent, was a reminder of Israel's previous nomadic existence. Nevertheless, in David's new role as king, the brand image became increasingly important because David was now burdened with the responsibility of showing that Yahweh was not inferior to any other gods. The desire to do better that emerges from this text appears to be the same burning desire that brands the AME Church's mission for God's people. Therefore, brand image plays a significant factor in how others view God in and through people. The notion of branding and brand

imaging also causes one to consider whether the way churches are built and maintained says a lot about how followers reverence the God that they serve.

Spiritual Leadership

With the advent of a new century, it is generally accepted that an emerging and exponentially accelerating push for a global societal and organizational shift is an upward trajectory. From this awareness has grown a call for further holistic leadership that unites the four fundamental spheres that define the nature of human permanence, the body (physical), mind (logical/rational thought), heart (emotions, feelings), and spirit (Moxley 1999). One of the influential driving energies behind this phenomenon is technology that has spawned greater communication access through social media and the internet, which pushes for reform at light-year speed. Reacting on these forces will demand a significant organizational transformation to a radically different organizational training paradigm from the conventional centralized, standardized, and formalized bureaucratic corporate form based on a fear, which has been the principal organizational paradigm since the start of the industrial unrest (Ancona et al. 2004; Moxley 1999).

A person's spirit is the essential source or animating energy traditionally considered the supernatural, life-affirming power in self and all mortal beings (Anderson 2000). It is a state of fond connection with the personal self or more powerful values and virtue and appreciation of the truth of people's inner essence (Fairholm, 2000). For example, as part of their spiritual pilgrimage, people struggle with what this means for their work (Mitroff & Denton, 1999). There is an emerging and quickening call for spirituality in the workplace. Well known corporations such as Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, BioGenex, Aetna International, Big Six accounting's Deloitte and Touche, and law

firms including New York's Kaye, Scholer, Fierman, Hays & Handler are benchmarking models usually doled out in churches, temples, and mosques (Mitroff and Denton, 1999). A significant shift is also taking place in leaders' private and professional lives as several of them more profoundly integrate their spirituality and their work. Most would concede that this synthesis leads to positive shifts in their relationships and effectiveness (Neal, 2001). There is also confirmation that workplace spirituality applications lead to favorable personal results such as increased joy, peace, serenity, job satisfaction, and commitment. They also achieve improved productivity and decrease absenteeism and turnover (Giacalone and Jurkiewicz, 2010).

Spiritual leadership is an emerging paradigm that can lead to organizational transmutation and the development of positive organizations where human welfare and organizational performance can coincide and be maximized. Fry, Matherly, Whittington, and Winston acknowledged that "the emerging fields of positive organizational scholarship and workplace spirituality are discussed as two areas within the field of organization studies that have important implications for servant leadership" (Fry et al. 2). Fry extends spiritual leadership theory by exploring the concept of positive human health and psychological well-being through recent developments and scientific research on workplace spirituality, character ethics, positive psychology, and spiritual leadership. These areas provide a consensus on the values, attitudes, and behaviors necessary for positive human health and psychological well-being (Fry et al. 5).

Recently Whittington and his associates have developed a model of spiritual leadership they refer to as legacy leadership. Legacy leadership incorporates and extends the characteristics of servant leadership and is consistent with spiritual leadership theory.

The most basic premise of legacy leadership is that legacy leaders must exhibit the values and attitudes of spiritual leadership and that a legacy leader's behavior is consistent with their internal motivation, and these motives are in turn anchored to an external standard and vision based on selfless service (Fry et al. 8–9). Legacy leadership theory is presently proposed as an extension of the best of both the servant leadership and transformational leadership paradigms. Whittington explained, "the legacy of the leader's influence is perpetuated through the follower's incorporation of legacy principles into their lives as they become leaders" (Whittington et al. 749). Interestingly, the pericope established in 2 Samuel 7 depicts King David having the leadership qualities and characteristics mentioned earlier. Moreover, while David desired to build God a temple, God in turn established David's legacy forever because of David's servant leadership and his spiritual leadership rendered unto God. Leadership research matters to this dissertation because the motives and motifs found in servant leadership, spiritual leadership, and legacy leadership identify the importance of effective leadership, which is needed to promote a church's brand image.

Leadership Perspective

Leadership plays a crucial role in the context of 2 Samuel 7. The Ancient Near East perspective, when raised, shows kings' responsibility to their god(s). One must also consider the outcomes that appear due to ineffective leadership and how that looked from the external viewpoint. Gordon revealed an essential piece of the conversation when he noted, "A god who lacked a proper temple was in danger of being regarded as critically inferior." According to the complete observation of the research, the research suggested that what a king or leader accomplishes or not with reference to their gods impacts what

they deem to be significant. David's desire catered to an essential thing he considers above all else, God.

David's leadership role as king played a significant factor in his desire to build God a temple. His leadership role also played a significant factor in the brand image he desired not only for himself but the world to see. When one considers Gordon's view of kings in the Ancient Near Eastern context, ineffective leadership would have tarnished their deity's brand image and themselves as leaders. Dockery notes that observation of an organization's image and mission that "organizations usually prosper in addressing their specific missions as their leaders remain active, effective, and focused. By contrast, when these leaders leave, die, retire, or most significantly fail, the organization's ability to sustain its mission can falter." Dockery further states, "the quality, passion and character of leadership cast vision, creates structure, and drives the staffing of mission as well as the effective marketing and successful fund-raising required to fulfill the mission" (Dockery 25).

David's new role as King resulted from his activeness, effectiveness, and determination focused on shifting God's brand image. David's vision for God was exalted just as God exalted him. Before David died, he cast his vision for constructing God a temple and raised funds needed to pass along to his son Solomon to continue the building project. Although God admired David's desire, God did not permit David to build the temple but established an everlasting covenant with David to ensure his son Solomon would carry out his wishes. It can be said that David not being sanctioned to build the temple did not correlate aspects of ineffective leadership. Instead, it was just the opposite. Because of David's effectiveness in leadership and victories in wars, God prohibited him

from building the temple. However, through an everlasting covenant with David, God established David's royal brand image as king with the same passion David desired to do for God by taking God's Ark from a tent to a temple. The text reveals the importance of branding and brand image for both God and David. The text also shows the influence of Near Eastern thought regarding effective leadership and how that impacts the viewed image of leaders and their gods.

King David exhibited the characteristics and attributes for both effective and ineffective leadership according to the Deuteronomist viewpoint. Alison Joseph claims that, "of the more than forty monarchs who rule the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, only three are said to be like David, the paradigm of the good king" (Joseph 20).

Deuteronomists, in their use of a royal archetype, examines the notions of "good and bad" kings by exploring if they did evil or right in the eyesight of YHWH. Joseph further explains:

In Kings, prototypes of individual kings (David as the model for the good king and an anti-David for the bad king) are laid out, allowing the reader to consider each king and his individual acts on micro and macro levels: what did this king do and how do his character and reign fit into the larger history of Israel and Judah and reflect the way YHWH works in history. (Joseph 23)

According to Deuteronomistic History, 2 Samuel 7 highlights two significant themes, namely the Davidic promise and the temple. The Davidic promise and the temple themes are based on the effectiveness of David's leadership practices and his representation of God. Miner and Bickerton contend that, "Christian leadership is of concern within churches and Christian organizations because its leaders are the public

representatives of Christ to a secular world" (Miner and Bickerton 277). David's desire to build God a temple was David's representation of God's superiority to the secular world. God blessed David and his royal dynasty because of the effectiveness of David's leadership as King. David's kingship, a prototype that explores good and bad leadership, revealed that effective leadership has its roots in the branded image of God portrayed to the community. God's branded image resides in a multiplicity of things when looked at on a micro and macro level, including the physical structure's maintenance and upkeep.

Clarine Jacobs, author of *A Phenomenological Exploration of Ineffective Leadership Experiences from the Perspectives of the Followers*, reflects upon Pelletier's observation, "Understanding ineffective leadership is vital to organizations as understanding effective leadership" (Jacobs 18). Jacobs further writes, "It has been suggested that the cause of ineffective leadership is a result of a confluence of components. The toxic triangle in ineffective leadership results when dysfunctional or ineffective leadership act together with susceptible followers in encouraging environments" (Jacobs 53). Ineffective or destructive leadership is a multifaceted operation termed the "toxic triangle" with three interrelated components: destructive leaders, susceptible followers, and conducive environments. Cheng transcribes, "ineffective or destructive leadership is a spectrum...even the best CEOs make mistakes, and even the most abusive leaders can produce positive results for the organization"(Cheng 6). Cheng's evaluation describes the AME Church, other religious denominations, and their respective leadership on both spectrums. For instance, the AME Church is the oldest and first independent African American established denomination in the United States. Richard Allen was a shrewd businessman. He merged business

practices and the church together in every facet of the life of the AME Church to further its growth and missional effectiveness. According to the observation of the research, Richard Allen and other leaders made some significant decisions that advanced the AME Church and HBCUs to where they are today (Kimball 2011). However, ineffective leadership within religious organizations, including the AME Church's ranks, had neutralized the AME Church's progression in many rural communities. The perspectives of Jacobs, Pelletier, and Chen lead one to consider how David and Richard Allen have similar characteristics and attributes in relation to what effective leadership is and how God can bless leadership effectiveness. Notwithstanding, like David's sons, many of Allen's sons and daughters have shown what ineffective or destructive leadership can do and how God is displeased with the branded image the leader and the church projects.

Servant Leadership

In his seminal work *The Servant as Leader* first published in 1970, Robert Greenleaf neologized the term "servant leadership." Spears declares, "The words *servant* and *leader* are usually thought of as being opposites. In deliberately bringing those words together in a meaningful way, Robert Greenleaf gave birth to a the paradoxical term servant leadership" (Spears 26). Greenleaf's definition of servant leadership states, "if one is a servant, either leader or follower, one is always searching, listening, and expecting that a better wheel for these times is in the making" (Greenleaf 2002). He goes on to explain that:

Natural servants are trying to see clearly the world as it is and are listening carefully to prophetic voices that are speaking now. They are challenging the pervasive injustice with greater force and they are taking sharper issue with the

wide disparity between the quality of society they know is reasonable and possible with available resources, and, on the other hand, the actual performance of the whole range of institutions that exist to serve society.” (Greenleaf 2002)

Farling, Stone, and Winston assert that "Greenleaf's view is in agreement with Burns contrast of transformational leadership with transactional leadership. Both Burns and Greenleaf focus on others in the leadership process" (Farling et al. 51). The already established pericope revealed that David expected "a better wheel was in the making for these times," as Greenleaf so eloquently terms it. David's servant leadership allowed him to desire to build God a temple as he listened to the prophetic voices that resonated inside of him.

Larry Spears, author of *Character and Servant Leadership: Ten Characteristics of Effective, Caring Leaders*, expanded upon Greenleaf's concept and developed ten main characteristics of a servant leader. Spears writes:

My work currently involves a deepening understanding of the following characteristics and how they contribute to the meaningful practice of servant leadership. These ten characteristics include: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community. (Spears 27-29)

Danah Zohar, in her book *Rewiring the Corporate Brain*, focuses on quantum sciences and leadership. She states, “Servant-leadership is the essence of quantum thinking and quantum leadership” (Zohar 146).

The Spears framework of the ten characteristics places listening as foremost among all characteristics. According to Spears, “Leaders have traditionally been valued

for their communication and decision-making skills. Although these are also important skills for the servant leaders, they need to be reinforced by a deep commitment to listening intently to other” (Spears 27). He also states, “Listening also encompasses hearing one’s own inner voice. Listening, coupled with periods of reflection, is essential to the growth and well-being of the servant leader” (27). With regard to empathy, Spears writes, “General awareness, and especially self-awareness, strengthens the servant leader. Awareness helps one in understanding issues involving ethics, power, and values. It lends itself to bring able to view most situations from a more integrated, holistic position” (27). Perhaps, then, a relationship between listening and empathy has value to overall leadership outcomes.

Spears asserts the following about conceptualization in his scholarly work:

Servant leaders seek to nurture their abilities to dream great dreams. The ability to look at a problem or an organization from a conceptualizing perspective means that one must think beyond day-to-day realities. The leader who wishes to also be a servant leader must stretch his or her thinking to encompass broader-based conceptual thinking. (28)

“Closely related to conceptualization, the ability to foresee the likely outcome of a situation is hard to define, but easier to identify;” according to Spears. “Foresight is a characteristic that enables the servant leader to understand the lessons from the past, the realities of the present, and the likely consequence of decision for the future. It is also deeply rooted within the intuitive mind. Foresight remains a largely unexplored area in leadership studies, but one most deserving of careful attention” (28).

Spears concurs with the definition of stewardship held by Peter Block, author of *Stewardship and The Empowered Manager*. Stewardship is, "holding something in trust for another." Spears continues:

Robert Greenleaf's view of all institutions was one in which CEO's, staffs, and trustees all play significant roles in holding their institutions in trust for the greater good of society. Servant leadership, like stewardship, assumes first and foremost a commitment to serving the needs of others. It also emphasizes the use of openness and persuasion, rather than control. (29)

Out of the ten characteristics of servant leadership mentioned by Spears, five stand out in the context of 2 Samuel 7. David listened to his "own inner voice." Spears pointed out that the listening characteristic is two-fold in the sense that a servant leader must be skilled in listening to others and to themselves. The empathy that is displayed in the text is noted in the fact that David had self-awareness about how he was living and where the Ark of God was being housed. David viewed the situation from what Spears calls a "integrated and holistic position." From a conceptualization perspective, David's willingness to dream bigger than his day-to-day realities prompted the desire to build God a temple. According to Spears, David's foresight, "closely related to conceptualization," allowed David to assess his "past, present, and future realities." Stewardship was at the heart of David's desire to build God a temple. As previously noted, at the heart of any shepherd is stewardship. As mentioned, stewardship, which is the adopted definition for this study, is "holding something in trust for another," noted by Block. Servant leadership appears to be at the core of David's desire to build God a

temple. The characteristics of servant leadership, according to Spears research, should be at the heart of effective leadership.

The Small Church

The author of *Effective Small Churches in the Twenty-first Century*, Carl Dudley, warranted that "small churches should have died in the past quarter-century," by all odds. "Small Churches," according to Dudley, "have a will to live against all odds considering the forces allied against their success (Dudley 2010). Dudley further contends:

The phenomenal growth of their opposite, the megachurches of several thousand members, have dominated the religious landscape. At the same time, denominational organizations, once central to small-church identity, have declined in total members, financial support, and influence, reducing a once crucial lifeline of aid and encouragement. (Dudley 2010)

Adding to the long list of the small church's struggling existence, technology and its use are at the forefront of its problems. E. Larson and R.D. Marcotte confirm that religious environments are not utilizing the web and the internet to their full potential (Marcotte 2010; Larsen 2000). Joel Arthur and Chris Rensleigh raise a critical question, "Can small churches sit on the fence when it comes to employing the services of web technology?" (Arthur and Rensleigh 2015). Another question arises, which is, "Can small churches sit on the fence when it comes to employing branding and brand image in the twenty-first century?" The inadequacy of understanding the progress and difficulties of branding position upon religious organization, especially the small churches in the twenty-first century, illustrates the relevance and need for this research study.

Brian Miller mentions, "A large percentage of every denomination is made up of smaller churches that have attendance figures of less than 100 people" (Miller 6). Stephen Burt and Hazel Roper classify small churches of fewer than 100 people within two distinct divisions. The smaller is called "The Family Church" (2-35 at worship). This church infrequently has a full-time pastor or minister. The pastor or minister in those churches labors as a chaplain. Burt and Roper illustrate the dynamics of these churches by affirming that, "Not only does the Family Church feel like family to its participants, in some instances, the church literally is family. The Family Church is a relational entity, functioning as an organism rather than as an organization... In this relational structure authority is given to people rather than to positions or offices" (Roper and Burt 23). The other of the two church sizes is termed "The Pastoral Church" (35-90 at worship). This is a single cell church, which means that it functions with one leader, and this leader is usually the pastor" (Roper and Burt 25).

W. Curry Mavis defines small churches in this fashion: "churches with Sunday morning Congregations and Sunday schools of fewer than 150 may be considered as smaller" (Mavis 9–10). Theodore W. Johnson provides four arrangements for churches when he defines the different sizes of churches as family (1-50), pastoral (51-150), program (151-350), and corporation (351 and over) (Johnson 32). Alice Mann further arranges two distinct classifications for churches that possess fewer than 100 people in them. First, she describes the "family-size church" (up to 50 adults and children at worship). She defines this church as:

A small church organized around one or two matriarchs or patriarchs who are often the heads of extended biological families in the church. The pastor functions

in a chaplain role, leading worship and giving pastoral care. A pastor who challenges the authority of a family-size patriarch or matriarch or presumes to be the primary leader of the congregation generally will not stay long. (Mann 77)

The second division she terms the "pastoral-size church" (50-150 at worship). She defines this church by affirming:

The pastor is the central figure, holding together a small circle of leaders. Two or three major "fellowship groups" compose the congregation, but each member expects personal attention from the pastor. The pastor's time is largely taken up maintaining direct pastoral relationships with each member, coordinating the work of the leadership circle, and personally leading worship and small group programs, such as Bible study. (77)

In his book, *Prepare Your Church For the Future*, Carl George denotes three arrangements that would fit into churches with fewer than 100 people within them. The chief he terms a "mouse-size" church, which is comprised of (3-35) people, and he lists as a "house group." The next, he terms a "cat-size" church which is comprised of (35-75) people, and he lists it as a "small church." The latter is termed a "lap dog-size" church, which is comprised of (75-200) people and is defined as a "medium church" (C. F. George 1984). All of this confirms that there are various conceptions as to what constitutes a small church. For this research, the figure was set at 50 members or fewer in a Sunday morning worship service for the purpose of this dissertation.

Small churches, in comparison to mega-churches, struggle with the concept of branding. The church's struggle with branding raises the question: do the small churches have a future and do they really want to grow? John Kessler advocates that "small

churches in the United States and Canada are a large proportion of the total number of churches and therefore deserve closer attention. More than half of the Christians who worship in the United States and Canada do so in just 1/7 of the churches in these two countries" (Koessler 1992). Given this partiality concerning larger churches, one might assume that the day of the small church has passed. Nevertheless, Lyle Schaller, a well-known examiner of American churches, describes that most churches in North America are small despite this phenomenon:

The small church is the normative institutional expression of the worshipping congregation among the Protestant denominations on the North American continent. One fourth of all Protestant congregations on this continent have fewer than thirty-five people in attendance at the principal weekly worship service, and one half average less than seventy-five. (Schaller 1982)

According to Schaller's statistics, Kessler submits, "the majority of those entering pastoral ministry will serve a small congregation. Yet, most training programs appear to gear themselves for the larger church" (Koessler 176).

Conceivably enough, the most vital human determinant influencing the small church's ministry is the congregation's own self-perception. Megachurches view themselves as an institution. Large churches such as megachurches lean heavenly toward business models. The pastor's capability to be an administrator is an essential measure of his effectiveness. On the other hand, small churches, unlike megachurches, are more likely to view themselves as a family. In the smaller church, the pastor is considered more of a "father" figure than a CEO. "This kind of image," according to Koessler, "can pose a problem for pastors whose training has primarily emphasized skills applicable in

an office setting such as management and administration. This is especially true of pastors who serve in small towns and rural communities where the relational dynamic is a community as well as a congregational trait” (Koessler 177).

Rufus Adebayo and Jeevarathnam Govender disagree with Koessler on the notion that small churches embrace a more business model approach. Rufus and Govender assert, "The dimensions of marketing as an enabler for churches to fulfill their social responsibility, suggest that there is an unbalanced philosophy on what the Bible teaches about the church." They go on to say:

This can be traced to a pragmatic orientation and the introduction of the business paradigm for ministry. The argument for the business paradigm is that if the local church is a business organization, and if the local church wants to be a successful business, it must experience a growing share of its market area and have an established business philosophy. (Adebayo and Govender 16)

Bethany Conrad agrees with the view of Adebayo and Govender. Conrad argues, “marketing is a part of nearly every aspect of business. Without marketing, businesses would have very little means of communication.” She carries further in saying, “It is an essential part of promotion and growth. The same is true within the church. Churches often stray from advertising for a variety of reasons, but marketing and promotion can be a very effective way of fulfilling the Great Commission in a new, unique, and modern way” (Conrad 3). The function of communication in a business or other organization is the foundation that everything is constructed upon. James DiSanza heeds, "A person's success in business or professional career depends in large measure on the ability to communicate with others" (DiSanza 1). DiSanza’s train of thought defers from that of

Adebayo and Govender. Conrad, whose views are more in line with DiSanza adds, "Without communication, an organization can't function. The purpose of any organization is in some way to communicate information. Whether that information is the effectiveness of a product or the quality of service, every company or organization communicates something" (Conrad 4). The research highlights that branding and brand image are a part of marketing and effective communication, which is necessary for growth and fulfillment of the church's mission.

Megachurch

Branding remarkably exists in what are distinguished as megachurches (Einstein 2007; Gilley 2005; Ostwalt 2012). A megachurch is a congregational church that equates to 2,000 or more attendees per weekend (Gilley 2005; Sosnik et al. 2007; Thumma and Travis 2007). Often nondenominational megachurches are surveyed as driving Protestant Christianity apart from a large number of diverse Protestant denominations nearer to a more centralized one based on establishing a new nondenominational tradition (Ellingson 2007). Megachurches, according to Sosnik et al, in their book, *Applebee's America: How Successful Political, Business, and Religious Leaders Connect with the New American Community*, affirm that "megachurches typically rely on a charismatic leader (pastor) with a natural ability to market their product, which goes far beyond selling the concept of God"(Sosnik et al. 2007). Megachurches primarily gained notoriety due to the baby boomer generation that comprehensively repudiated the Christian religion of their childhood and established a spiritual quest for something new but meaningful (Russell, 2013; Gibbs, 2009). Due to their cultural and congregation focus, megachurches began meeting this need. Essentially, they have created (and are still developing) a product to be

marketed to America. It is a new denomination with a new tradition (Mead 19). According to Aaron James, in his journal article, *Rehabilitating Willow Creel: Megachurches De Certeau, and the Tactics of Navigating Consumer Culture*, “megachurches often offer a wide variety of participatory and service opportunities including family events, recreational sporting leagues, and community-focused outreach ministries (James 2013). James also states that “qualities of megachurches are ‘innovative or progressive’ worship services that combine an extensive assortment of multimedia technology and contemporary music stylings (James 24). Mead contends, “in addition, they have lessons or sermons that are delivered in a very causal and conversational style by a pastor or leader who is dressed casually. This is intended to suggest to members of the congregation that such causal and comfortable dress is not only acceptable, but desirable as well” (Mead 19). Gibbs additionally asserts, behind their partitions that megachurches also “maintain a high profile through their publishing, leadership conferences, and association of churches that look to them for inspiration and resources” (Gibbs 87).

Mead writes:

So, in a nutshell, the megachurch message is, We’re different. But we’re still church. It’s an interesting dichotomy that hinges upon 1) continue association with the factions of western Christianity that have been the prevalent mode of Christianity for centuries, and 2) a shift toward a more mainstream and cultural focus. Megachurches typically aim for an appeal that walks the line between traditional church culture and contemporary popular culture. (19-20)

Ostwalt characterizes this as the "secularization of traditional religion," suggesting that it is not a failure or disappearance of religion but rather a "conformity to secular life and popular culture." He goes on to state that "Christian tradition has been altered by mass media, geographical mobility, democratization, and the rapid social change characterizing contemporary life." Furthermore, according to Ostwalt, "they use television, drama, movies, games, technology, and other brands of secular entertainment to explore the supernatural" and "to attract those who might otherwise not attend church" (Ostwalt, 2012). This embodiment of the secular starts a distinct brand inside the general megachurch. It distinguishes them uniquely (not all churches are so keen to identify with secular culture) without effectively isolating them from general Christianity. In the end, particular churches such as these are significantly marketed and inspired by modern culture (Giggie and Winston, 2002; Middelmann, 2004; Ostwalt, 2012). Paul Tracey, Nelson Phillips, and Michael Lounsbury, in their book, *Taking Religion Seriously in the Study of Organizations*, conferred, "through attracting church attendees and cultivating individuals' relationships with the local and global Christian church, megachurches encourage participation and identification essential building blocks of effective community. they also distinguish themselves from other congregations" (Tracey et al., 2014).

For this dissertation, mainstream denominations, for example the AME Church, will be viewed in terms of megachurch status. As noted herein, a megachurch is any congregational church with 2,000 or more in attendance every week. The AME Church personifies those characteristics. Further, investigating this aspect of the research will add to existing literature on the topic. However, mainstream denominational megachurch

status is not limited to the AME Church but any mainstream denomination.

Megachurches and mainstream denominations differ in how they view the concept of branding and its significance. The above-mentioned scholarly research on small churches, megachurches, and denominational centralization to small-church identity is why this dissertation is essential. Based on the research, if mainstream denominations considered branding and its significant influence like megachurches do, they would invest in small church branding because it affects the denominational brand image.

Branding Prospective

Dr. Peter White argues, "God identified the Israelites as a unique brand in a foreign land; for this reason, one would expect that the concept of branding would be a major tool for modern-day churches." White contends, "On the contrary, church branding has been pushed away from the centre stage of theological discourse, and it is regarded as undermining and weakening the Christian's commitment to God and religion" (White 1). Partick Hanlon, the author of *Primal Branding*, recognizes seven principles of branding that naturally converge with religion. (1.) Creation describes the story of a product's creation. (2.) Creed is a slogan or tagline that conveys purpose and summons people to action. (3.) Icons provide a visible depiction of a product that leads to immediate recognition. (4.) Rituals give purpose to routine actions. (5.) Non-believers are an identifiable crowd that helps define everything a product is not. (6.) Sacred words are used to ascribe worth to a brand's expectations, and (7.) a character leader implements vision and connection to members (Hanlon 2006). In her journal article entitled, *Communicating Church Branding Through Anniversary Services*, Kate Mead describes a similar list created by brand specialist Martin Lindstrom, comparing

religiousness to brand faithfulness. Mead writes, "Through neuroscience studies, Lindstrom found similar brain activity in devout Christians and committed brand followers" (Mead 10). She further explains:

Lindstrom's book, *Buyology* (2008), describes a study performed in 2006. In this neuroscientific study, two neuroscientists from the University of Montreal analyzed sixteen nuns from the Carmelite order. The study was intended to record which portions of the brain respond with neural activity when individuals discuss profound religious experiences as compared to deep human interaction experiences. The study found that different parts of the brain were active for each of these two scenarios. Perceived experiences with God and experiences with human individuals have different patterns of activity with the brain. (11)

No one spot in the brain responded expressly to religious considerations. The study did find, according to Lindstrom, that "when it comes to religion and faith, a number of integrated, interconnected brain regions work simultaneously and in tandem" (Lindstrom 108). Mead writes:

Later, when Lindstrom considered the willingness of individuals to purchase items that have religious or spiritual significance, he began to consider the connections that religion and non-religious branding may innately have in common. After interviewing 14 prominent leaders of various world religions, Lindstrom discovered a list of nine characteristics of successful branding that mirror those of religion. (11)

The list that Lindstrom produced is exceptionally related to Hanlon's list. Lindstrom list includes:

1. A *clear vision* is the cornerstone of religion. Without this vision, one religion (or brand) would not stand apart from the rest.
 2. A *sense of belonging* displays that place where individuals can become one in a larger community.
 3. An *enemy* unites a religion by encouraging unification in its distinction from the external “enemy.”
 4. Religion is full of *sensory appeals*. The sights and smells of a religious service involve multiple senses in the experience of the religion’s brand.
 5. *Storytelling* is the basis of religion’s oral tradition.
 6. *Grandeur* points to grand cathedrals that announce religion’s prominence.
 7. *Evangelism* is the undeniable power of word-of-mouth promotion.
 8. *Symbols* consistently point to a particular religion or brand can be immediately identifiable.
 9. *Rituals* are consistent actions that add to the imagery and purpose of religion.
- (Lindstrom 2008)

Realizing these natural links between religion and branding presents a springboard for a research subtopic of church branding. It appears that branding combined with religion is needed to brand a church to become more identifiable and powerfully effective within its community.

Branding is a mechanism that complements a religious organization's purpose. Some church pastors have embraced this aspect of church branding and use branding vocabulary to express their overarching church purpose. Peter Metz, in his book *Marketing Your Church to the Community*, asserts, "church branding attempts to

stand in the gap, enabling a church to define and market itself to a variety of potential congregants" (Metz 2010).

Josh Gregory agrees with White in the fact that "Marketing has traditionally conjured thoughts of business manipulations or the scheming to lure unwilling customers" (Gregory, *The Marketing and Branding of the Church in America* 1). Now branding is observed not as a negative business idea but as a positive mechanism for any organization to "facilitate and expedite satisfying exchange relationships" (McDaniel 1989). Organizations that are for-profit identify the value of a well-established brand image. The best 100 brands in the world all have brand power over \$1 billion. Graham Dover writes:

A brand, a distinct image, and identity, helps companies to differentiate themselves from their competition. In contrast, non-profit organizations have not seen branding as essential. However, recent research shows that non-profit organizations with a high branding orientation (i.e., those that perceive themselves as a brand) experience increased: revenue; member and public awareness; and strategic focus. (Dover 4)

The church has always been guilty of demonizing what it does not understand. In this regard, it is worthwhile to further explore what branding and brand image is. The word "brand" originated from the word *brandr*, a word taken from the Ancient Norse context meaning "to burn." Branding is the process of giving meaning to a specific company or organization, products, or services by creating and shaping a brand in consumers' minds (Shadel 2014). According to Kornberger, "It transforms how we manage an organization's identity, its culture, and innovation" (Kornberger xi).

The Barna Group did a research study to determine if Americans support businesses and brands with an overtly Christian attachment. The study revealed, "that those who would support Christian branded enterprises significantly outnumber those who refrain from such brands because of the faith connection" ("Do Americans Support Christian Businesses and Brands?"). According to Barna:

Overall, about two out of every five adult consumers (43%) said they would be receptive to this type of transaction (with 27% of adults strongly so). While most respondents claimed to be indifferent (51%), only (3%) indicated that an overt connection to the Christian faith would make them less likely to do business with this type of vendor. In other words, a product or service managed according to Christian principles generated a positive-to-negative ratio of 14 to 1. ("Do Americans Support Christian Businesses and Brands?")

David Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group, commented:

Overall, faith affects many aspects of the economy, not only because of the sheer size of the Christian public but also in terms of the breadth of sectors it touches. Also, faith and spirituality directly influence the popular, new emphasis among many businesses to focus on the cause marketing, connecting an existing brand to a social or humanitarian cause. Yet, without a proper understanding of faith, it is easy to underestimate that their religious profile significantly influences the causes consumers resonate with. ("Do Americans Support Christian Businesses and Brands?")

David Aaker emphasized that "branding is increasingly considered a contemporary development that continues to reshape an organization's identity" (Aaker

70,78). However, the notions of branding and brand image in and of itself is not a new phenomenon. An enthusiastic reading and study of the Acts of the Apostles will reveal that the church devised a brand of being mission-minded, Spirit-filled, and communal-living. It was out of this branding mindset that the early followers of the way in Antioch were tagged “Christians.” and “Christian” became the brand name associated with those who follow the teaching of Jesus both then and now (Harrelson 1978). The brand image of Christianity began with the labeling of differing belief practices, and out of that came various denominations, each proposing something similar but not the same as the other kind. Some churches provide status; some have provided salvation, and some have provided health, wealth, and prosperity. Today's churches in America range from churches that cling to their traditions to churches that tailor themselves to the target market they are attempting to attract.

Churches and other faith-based institutions started to advance themselves in brand marketing to acknowledge the "spiritual marketplace," a phenomenon coined by Wade Roof (1999). According to Mara Einstein:

This marketplace arose due to a confluence of social changes: working replaced church as a place for social connection; in the cultural upheaval of the 1960s religion moved from being ascribed to being attained, as baby boomers widely rejected the faith of their families; by the 1990s religious consumers (or “seekers”) could learn about and sample an expanded range of spiritual alternatives provided via cable TV and the Internet. (Einstein 2008)

Einstein further notes that, "fundamental, to these newer marketing initiatives is religious branding. Branding changes a commodity into a named product that consumers readily

remember and have particular associations with” (Einstein 2008). Branding presents information to customers through a sequence of symbols, language, and mythology to increase awareness, change viewpoints, or produce sales. "Faith brands" like the Alpha Course or branded pastor's names like Joel Osteen or T. D. Jakes are cases of religious branding.

Noted scholar Riza Casidy concurs with Harris Stevens, author of *Increasing Member Commitment in a Church Environment*, regarding the image of church with a community lens. Accordingly, “a church with a ‘good name’ in the community (that is, positive ‘brand image’) is likely to have more committed members and will not suffer from as much member-switching behavior as other churches that are less well regarded (Stevens et al. 1997). Casidy advances, "a positive identity is also a key component of effective positioning and targeting strategy”. Nevertheless, Shawchuck observed, "a responsive church will actively take steps to develop its brand image and position because this determines that target publics it will attract." (Kotler and Wrenn 205) The assertions mentioned earlier suggest the extreme importance of branding and brand image for religious organizations in attracting others in attendance. It also shows how both the church and business go hand in hand as they both use brand image as a marketing strategy to attract their intended audience.

Brand Image

Brand image theory was introduced in the 1960s by Ogilvy. Ogilvy considered brand image as a series of associations that the consumer link to the product's quality, price, history, and other elements (Ogilvy 1983). From the relationship benefits aspect, C. Whan Park, Bernard J. Jaworski, and Deborah J. MacInnis defined brand image as, "The

customer's overall view and feeling to the brand's symbolic, functional and experiential benefits" (Park et al. 1986). Kevin Keller proposed the customer-based brand equity model. He established that brand image refers to "the set of associations linked to the brand that consumers hold in memory" (Keller 1993). Brand image is formatted during the process of customers developing the relationship with the brand. Therefore, brand image is set in the minds of customers and is associated with the brand name, associations, and attributes (Aaker 1991). Keller further affirms, "It is an overall awareness to the brand basing on the reactions to the brand associations" (Keller 1993).

Lishan Xie, Yaoqi Li, Haizhong Wang formulates that "Keller and Aaker's researches arouse the marketing scholars and practitioner's attention to the brand image field, such as defining the brand image, how to measure it and how to build valuable brand equity" (Xie et al. 6). A vast amount of studies were focused on measurement models of the brand image, such as Aaker's brand equity model (Aaker 1991), the customer-based brand equity rendered by Keller (Keller 1993), the multidimensional customer-based brand equity scale offered by Yoo & Donthu (Yoo and Donthu 2001), Kim & Kim's rendition of the four element brand equity model (Kim and Kim 2005), and Grace & O'Cass's service brand association model (O'Cass and Grace 2003).

Marketing & The Church

With the emergence of televangelists like Oral Roberts and Jim Bakker, megachurch branded religious websites like T. D. Jakes' Potter House Ministry, religious best-sellers, namely the *Left Behind* series, and box office hits like *The Passion of the Christ*, it is no wonder why many authors have written that "religions and spiritualities

adapt to the emergence of consumer society” (Carrette and King 2004; Einstein 2011; Gauthier and Martikainen 2013; Nardella 2014). Carlo Nardella discusses that;

The mixture of faith and business has become increasingly evident. On the one hand, religious organizations employ sophisticated marketing techniques to attract various resources, including members, volunteers, funds, and public support. On the other hand, the business world appropriates religious and spiritual content to publicize and sell its products and services. (Nardella 1)

It has been declared that shopping and consuming may become the new religions of the time, making the link between religion and branding even more natural (Shachar et al. 2011). The modernization process is thought to have influenced both the situation of individuals and religious organizations and their secular competitors. For example, Joerg Stolz and Jean Usunier contend, "a religious consumer society is made possible because of modernization leads, on an individual level, to the following critical consequences" (Stolz and Usunier 3).

First, Stolz and Usunier add, "it leads to a breakdown of religious norms. Before the 1960s, there was general pressure on individuals to be members of religions and to have the same religion as their parents. Depending on the various context variables, there could also be pressure to believe and practice" (Stolz and Usunier 3). Stolz and Usunier further explain, expounding on the view of Hugh McLeod, "in many western countries, the 1960s were a time when a "cultural revolution: took place, sweeping away among other things the important religious norms” (McLeod, *The Religious Crisis of the 1960s* 2007). Second, according to Stotz and Usunier, "modernization leads to an increased individual freedom to choose, emphasizing the freedom and duty of individuals to decide

for themselves in all matters important to them, including religious identity, practice, and belief" (Stolz and Usunier 4). Stolz and Usunier affirm that "the third consequence of modernization is a change in values" (4). They assert, according to Rinallo, Maclaran, and Stevens work, "Traditional values linked to authority and duty are replaced by self-realization and individualistic values" (Rinallo et al. 2016). "In the religious field," Stolz and Usunier proclaim, "this can be seen as a replacement of the semantic of "religiosity" by "spirituality" (4). Fourth:

Modernization also leads to growing disposable income. This gives individuals a wider range of options, especially concerning secular leisure, which may compete with religious options. A fifth consequence is rising individual security. The invention of welfare schemes, various types of insurance, improved biomedical services, etc. give individuals a level of security unprecedented in history. This in turn competes with the reassuring function of religious beliefs and practices.

Sixth, we find an increased exposure to mass media and social media (TV, radio, internet, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp, etc.). Individuals spend more and more time exposing themselves to and interacting with mass media and social media. This increases the possibility of getting information about all kinds of religions, but equally about all kinds of secular matters. Finally, modernization leads to growing individual mobility. Individuals travel increasingly long distances and start to think of their world (and possibly their religious and spiritual involvement) in terms of options that have a price, that may be consumed and have to be chosen according to individual preference. (Stolz and Usunier 4)

Stolz and Usunier conclude, “drawing these points together,” that “modernization creates rules according to which individuals have the right to choose, gives them the resources to actually be able to make choices, and provides representations and values that legitimate religious consumer behavior” (4). Modernization transforms not only the demand but also the supply-side of things. There are two points of paramount consideration. First, religious organizations have emerged from influential societal institutions to voluntary associations in which individual association is optional. “Historically,” Stolz and Usunier noted that, “this has happened at different pace and in very different ways in different places, but the result seems rather similar in western countries.” They further express, “In most European countries, for example, in the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century, some Christian churches were established institutions to which individuals often belonged by traditions and which were linked multifunctionally to many other societal institutions (the power structure, schools, hospitals, media etc.)” (4). Stolz and Usunier hinge off Hugh McLeod view stating, “while the nineteenth century saw the guarantee of freedom on religion for individuals, the twentieth century and twenty-first century led to an ever increasing loosening of the relationship between formerly established churches and the state, with a simultaneous emergence of religious diversity” (McLeod 2000). According to Christian Smith:

In the U.S., with its separation of church and state very early in its democratic development, denominations took the form of voluntary associations earlier than in Europe. Nevertheless, in the U.S. also, there were some (protestant) denominations that strongly controlled society and again we find an increasing

loosening of these ties in the nineteenth century and twentieth century. (Smith 2003)

Stolz and Usunier, in addition to Smith, assert:

In effect, both in the U.S. and Europe, this led to a situation in which all religious groups are increasingly seen as some kind of voluntary associations among other comparable to sports clubs or philanthropic societies. Like all other voluntary associations, religious organizations now have to compete for membership's and for their member's time, donations and energy and like all other voluntary, associations, they are therefore forced to engage in some form of marketing and branding. (Stolz and Usunier 5)

Second, Stolz and Usunier support the theory that "modernization not only turns religious organizations into voluntary associations, but also puts them into the situation of a generalized religious-secular competition" (5). Einstein and Mottner established the concept of generalized religious-secular competition in marketing research. The process has not received the recognition it merits in the sociology of religion and economics of religion (Gill and Lundsgaarde 2004; Gruber and Hungerman 2008; Stolz 2009; Stolz and Tanner 2017). Stolz and Usunier emphasize the following:

Religious organizations typically fulfill a whole range of human needs - and for every need, they may find themselves competing with emerging secular organizations and institutions. Thus, a religious organization may offer salvation promises like spiritual healing or security - but secular biomedicine, the welfare state, or insurances offer competing goods. A religious organization may offer a religious ideology that explains much about the world - but education, science,

and secular ideologies may do likewise. Individuals with depression can demand the religious good "pastoral care" - but they can also choose the secular competitor "psychotherapy". The need for social contacts can be satisfied by the religious good "active membership in a religious community" - but there exist secular competitors, such as sports clubs, neighborhood networks, etc. (Stolz and Usunier 5)

Several scholars subscribe in some manner to the theory that modernizing processes and their impact both on the demand and supply side have driven both to widespread religious markets and to less religiosity. On the opposite hand, there has admittedly been an escalating number of individuals preferring religious "products" that were explicitly marketed by religious businesspeople. Alternative devoutness, a kind of "consumer religion," has conferred considerable growth. In contrast, there has been a definite trend towards more limited religiosity for numerous individuals. Considering religion was not designated anymore and since people were now "candid about choosing," they were also free to decide no creed, no faith, no tradition. This pointed to a surge in "fuzzy religiosity" (Storm 2009; Voas 2009) and to a growth in the abundance of secular individuals. Due to this enhanced level of freedom, religion also lost its prior influence in the choice of a spouse, leading to a branded rise in the abundance of religiously-mixed couples as well as in couples with only one partner having a religion (Voas 2003). Further observation yields a concurrent process of marketization, individualization, and secularization. Most of the literature views those methods as respectively self-governing, which is misleading. Preferably, they are part of one universal process.

Theological Foundations

Augustine is credited with the earlier usage of the phrase *missio Dei*, which relates to the doctrine of the Trinity to illustrate an aspect of God's work that the church and the faithful experience. However, contemporary use of the concept in a more comprehensive way is closely associated with a conference of the International Missionary Council held in 1952 in Willingen, West Germany (Kemper 2014). Cristian Sonea explained, in a text read at the Brandenburg Missionary Conference in 1932, the protestant theologian Karl Barth became one of the first theologians who defined mission as a work of God Himself. Also, in *Die Mission als theologisches Problem* (1933), Karl Hartenstein affirms the same principle, and some years later, at the Tambaram meeting of IMC (1938), the declaration of German delegates represented a new stage in understanding mission as a work of God (Sonea 71-72). Sonea further suggests that Karl Barth's influence on missionary theology was crucial, and this was very obvious at the Willingen meeting of IMC 1952, where the content of the *missio Dei* doctrine was clearly presented for the first time even though the terminology used was somewhat differently (Sonea 72).

According to Timothy C. Tennent, from then on missionary theology has faced a radical change of paradigm, involving the transfer of the emphasis from an interpretation of mission inside the autonomous anthropology to its understanding as a work of God, the Holy Trinity (Tennent 105–158). Ion Bria utilizes *missio Dei* to rediscover the theological basis of mission. According to Bria, *missio Dei* indicates how ecclesiology is related to missiology and vice-versa:

Missio Dei is not a matter of rhetoric. It means that the confession of the truth revealed in Jesus Christ, the revelation of the risen Christ, is fundamental for the

church's identity. The Holy Spirit constitutes the historical church with Jesus Christ, and the church has to live and witness its identity with Him until He comes again, through the world and sacraments. (Bria 53)

Tennent's view points back to Peter White's argument, which suggests that "Christian organizations and branding are not at war, nor are they mutually exclusive. Instead, the church is regarded as a cohesive organism that learns to adapt or find better ways of doing things in response to its environment and God's mission" (White 2019). White further contends that by "reading the Acts of the Apostles, one understands that the church developed a spirit-filled, communal-living, and mission-minded brand. It was out of this that early believers in Antioch were called 'Christian.' The title 'Christian' became a brand name and brand identity for believers and followers of Jesus Christ" (White 2019).

Our House and God's House

2 Samuel 7:1-3 has a few foundational theological concepts worth exploring to establish a ground for this dissertation further. For instance, the idea of "compare & contrast" stands out in the text. In a period of rest, David "compared & contrasted" his house versus God's house, which was a dwelling place behind curtains. David's house was constructed out of cedar. Cedarwood was exceptionally priced. Living in a cedarwood house in David's time implies that David lived in an extravagant, elegant place. Cedar trees were the tree of choice because they exemplified strength, beauty, and lasting durability. Scripture often depicted cedar as a symbol of royalty. David, newly appointed as king, compares and contrasts his opulent place of living against God's dwelling place.

The comparing and contrasting that takes place while David is conversing with the prophet Nathan is typical of an Ancient Near Eastern king. David developed an internal conflict that created a desire to build God a house. The text infers that leaders should examine where they are in conjunction with God's permanently fixed position in their lives. This examination of God's place in their lives implies that the criticality of God's image, including His dwelling place, matters. Once David compared and contrasted his living situation with God's, David concluded that the representation of God's dwelling place did not reflect the essence of God. While Israel was wandering in the wilderness, the "tent of meeting" or "tabernacle" was ideal for a nomad people. God was constantly on the move with God's people, and for that reason, the tent that God instructed Moses to build was perfect (Exodus 25:8-9). However, through comparing and contrasting, David has ushered in a new way of looking at the reflective branded image of God in the life of Israel.

Whelchel takes the concept of comparing and contrasting a step further when the notion is examined that 2 Samuel 7:2 is concerned with "stability and instability." Whelchel communicates, "Houses are mentioned 15 times in this chapter because they are physical structures, houses connote stability, durability, permanence. This is the connotation David articulates in 2 Samuel 7:2 when he contrasts his own living situation with that of the ark of God" (George 19). Whelchel goes on to say, "David's house of cedar is, among other things, fixed, stable, and permanent, while the 'tent' in which the ark dwells is not. 'House' also connotes other things, including 'temple' and dynasty,' and those connotations are interpreted generally to convey stability" (George 20).

A Matter of The Heart

King David is usually characterized as "a man after God's own heart." This locution is acquired from 1 Samuel 13:14, where Samuel the prophet censures David's predecessor, King Saul, for his defiance to God's command. The focus, for this project's sake, is not on Saul's defiance but instead on the nature of God's heart as it relates to David and David's heart as it relates to God, which has been noted in David's desire to build God a temple. George Athas highlights Paul Borgman's assertion that "1st Sam 13:14 is about David's disposition." Athas explains, "unfortunately, he does not provide any detailed analysis that might give a rationale for this position" (Athas 192). On the other hand, Mark George does endeavor to give a justification for David's disposition. George argues in his examination of 1 Sam 16-31 that "the extended overlap between Saul's demise and David's rise is for the purpose of comparing their respective characters" (George 442). George further extends his analysis by assuming that "1st Sam 13:13-14 asserts something about David's heart." He states, "while saying that Yhwh favors David is important, since it makes Yhwh a character whose motives can be examined, such a statement pushes aside consideration of David and the questions of what the nature of his heart is (other than saying it is a heart after Yhwh's own heart)" (George 446). Athas interjected that, "George rightly picks up in the broader narrative's intention to show David as a better man than Saul. He argues that this is not so much a contrast as an outshining: 'David does what Saul does, and more'" (Athas 192).

Athas observed and then proclaimed:

It is understandable, then, that when Yahweh sends Samuel to anoint Saul's replacement, he tells the prophet to ignore external appearances, for Yahweh looks at the heart (1 Sam 16:7). David evidently has the internal qualities that

make him fit for leadership. However, George seems to transfer the importance of 1st Sam 16:7 directly onto 1st Sam 13:14. One can understand why he does this since both verses talk about hearts, and it is right to see the two verses informing each other within the wider narrative, as they both help to fashion the Davidic apologia. (Athas 193)

James Kouzes and Barry Posner assert, “Developing leadership capacity is not about stuffing in a whole bunch of new information or trying out the latest technique. It’s about leading out of what is already in your soul. It’s about liberating the leader within you. It’s about setting yourself free. It’s about putting your ear to your heart and just listening” (Kouzes and Posner 98). Doris Gomez, the writer of *The Heart of a Leader: Connecting Leading and the Inner Life*, agrees with Kouzes and Posner while stretching the concept of the heart further by stating, “The heart is implicated as the center of vital functions, as the seat of life and mind, of feeling, understanding, and thought. The heart is also the setting for one’s innermost being and one’s soul. It is the core of our human self and according to those who study the self’s role, the coordinating center for our action in the world” (Gomez 2).

Parker Palmer defines heart “as the place where intellect and emotion and spirit will converge in the human self” (Palmer 11). Notably, no expression or notion in the exhibit of language and human cognition harvests as much consideration as the idea of the "heart." According to Gomez, an online keyword search of the word heart in the Bible yielded 743 results, and “Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible cites the heart 826 times” (2). However, Gomez denotes:

We consciously give emotions less respect than they deserve because of what we are taught by our culture: “Don’t wear your heart on your sleeve. And conventional education elevates this “folk wisdom” to the status of “philosophical truth” by demanding that we stifle feely,” apparently imagining that disdain (also an emotion) will settle the issue. But the fact that good leadership requires emotional intelligence has been demonstrated time and again by leadership researchers. (Gomez 2008)

Gomez concludes:

The challenges of leadership are both practical and deeply personal. Ultimately, they must lead us to reflect on what we are committed to and what futures we desire to create. Such questioning and understanding is essential to our effectiveness as educators, trainers, coaches, leaders. Our inward turn, therefore, is not idle self-absorption but is, in fact, critical to our effectiveness as leaders. Leaders must make a courageous decision to diligently examine their hearts in order to identify areas of needed change and growth. (Gomez 3)

Gilbert Fairholm writes, “Our individual sense of who we are, our true, spiritual self, defines us. It creates our mind-set, defines our values, determines our actions, and predicts our future behavior.” Fairholm continues by stating, “As such, spirit is a part of leadership and always has been, whether the individual leader knows it or consciously uses this fact in developing his or her leadership approach. To leave spirituality out of our thinking about our leadership (or followership) is to diminish our theory, perhaps to make it irrelevant” (Fairholm 1). Kouzes and Posner, based on the assumption that all leadership commences from within, claim that “Becoming a leader begins with an

exploration of inner territory as we search to find our authentic voice. Leaders must decide on what matters in life, before they can live a life that matters” (Kouzes and Posner 90).

Understanding matters of the heart as it relates to King David was important to this research because it points to David’s exploration of self. Examining self is a true characteristic of an effective leader. Self-exploration also keeps a leader grounded to the spiritual matters that shapes them at the core of their beingness. It also helps leaders stay in tune with their emotions. When the heart is unchecked and unexamined within, ineffective leadership is what Warren Bennis compares to “incompetent doctors who do more harm than good. A leader without the benefit of his internal work can become what he calls ‘carriers’ making their follower ill” (Gomez 4).

David’s Heart in Chronicles

In contrast to 2 Samuel 7, several differences are noted in Chronicles concerning the story of David and his desire to build the temple for God. The Chronicler channels David’s reign more considerately on the temple than the Books of Samuel and Kings, originating essentially with the dynastic oracle. Troy Cudworth formulates that, "Although the Chronicler maintains most of the wording from 2 Samuel 7, most notable Nathan's charge to David to ‘do all that is in your heart’ (v.3), he removes the concept of rest from the oracle (Cudworth 207). The Chronicler repudiates the assertion that Yhwh has given David rest from all his neighboring enemies (cf. Sam 7:1 // 1 Chr 17:1). The Chronicler emphasizes David's arrangements for the temple most prominently with his significant addition in 1 Chronicles 22-29. In 22:7 and 28:2, the Chronicler has David reveal to both Solomon and Israel's leaders that he "had it in his heart" to build a house

for Yhwh, but that Yhwh denied him. Cudworth pens, "Following each of these texts, David concludes the speeches with exhortations to finish the temple project. He tells all leaders, 'Now set your heart and soul to seek Yhwh your God. Arise and build the sanctuary of Yhwh God'" (Cudworth 208). Cudworth further maintains that:

With David's final prayer in 1 Chr 29:10-19, the Chronicler has David emphasize the importance of a heart for the temple one last time. At the beginning of v. 17, David claims that out of an upright heart, he has made all these preparations for the temple, "I know, my God, that you test the heart and have pleasure in uprightness. In the uprightness of my heart, I have freely offered all these things. (Cudworth 208)

However, the matter of the heart still applies in 2 Samuel 7. The heart's importance in David's desire to build God a temple is the same importance that God substantiates in the text when God establishes David's "house" or "dynasty" forever. God's action suddenly becomes a direct reflection of the leader's heart. Remarkably, God's brand image must be the unswerving desire of the man or woman of God. God looks at the reflectiveness of God's heart in humanity and how it is demonstrated in the hearts of God's leaders. As a result, God then remunerates those with a desire to brand God's image with a spirit of excellence as David so desired.

Research Design Literature

The dissertation method for the Doctor of Ministry is an "action-reflection-action" method. In the process, the doctoral student functions as a resident contextual theologian acting to initiate a ministry intervention for the particular context that addresses a discrete dilemma critically so that the faith community may continue its journey of becoming in

society. The doctoral student's goal in the method highlights them functioning as a practical theologian in the community practicing:

1. Theology as a communal activity-faith relating to others.
2. Theology as a formative activity-faith shaping identity.
3. Theology as a critical activity-faith seeking understanding in practice.
4. Theology as a public activity-faith expressing itself in the marketplace.

(Sensing xix)

Research as praxis for the Doctor of Ministry process produces theory from the data collected. The theory produced brings more comprehensive possibilities for utilization in the field of study and perhaps creates new knowledge (Sensing 161). There are ethical concerns when working with human subjects, and these factors are eminent. Research integrity pertains to the intercommunications between the researcher and the participants. The research practices are guided by four core principles: no impropriety, benignity, autonomy, and equality. The research principles are designed to preserve the participants and guarantee that they are not physically, emotionally, financially, or otherwise harmed. Each participant signed an informed consent form. An "informed consent" means individuals' knowing consent to participate as an exercise of their choice, free from any element of fraud, deceit, coercion, or similar unfair inducement or manipulation (Sensing 34). The Institutional Review Board application expects each researcher to complete the National Institutes of Health Offices of Extramural Research training course "Protecting Human Research Participants."

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were performed for this project. It is thought that the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods presents a more

enhanced insight into the research problems and questions than using one of the methods independently (Creswell, 2014; Frels and Onwuegbuzie, 2013; Hong and Espelage, 2011). Moreover, Venkatesh sponsors seven goals for mixed-methods research: complementarity, completeness, developmental, expansion, corroboration/confirmation, compensation, and diversity. They are defined as follows:

1. *Complementarity* – to obtain mutual viewpoints about similar experiences or associations.
2. *Completeness* – to ensure total representation of experiences or associations is attained.
3. *Developmental* – to build questions from one method that materialize from the implications of a prior method or one method presents hypotheses to be tested in a subsequent method.
4. *Expansion* – to clarify or elaborate on the knowledge gained from a prior method.
5. *Corroboration/Confirmation* – to evaluate the trustworthiness of inferences gained from one method.
6. *Compensation* – to counter the weaknesses of one method by employing the other.
7. *Diversity* – to obtain opposing viewpoints of the same experiences or associations. (Venkatesh et al., 2013)

Mixed Method Research can be characterized from other designs according to the following: a) they offer a rationale for the design, researchers provide the reader with a justification for the use of both quantitative and qualitative designs; b) they include

gathering quantitative and qualitative data, researchers clearly communicate that both quantitative and qualitative data was used in the study; c) they consider priority, the researchers indicate which method design data carries more emphasis; d) they consider sequence, the researcher explains the data gathering order (sequential or concurrent) for the reader; e) they match the data analysis to a specific design type, this can be difficult because researchers are not limited to convergent, explanatory, exploratory, or embedded design types; and f) they diagram the procedures used in the study, researchers provide the reader with some type of visual of the procedures used (Creswell, 2014).

Some strengths of mixed methods research include: a) they point out that words, photos, and narratives can be used to add meaning to numbers while numbers can add precision to words, photos, and narratives; b) they can handle a wider range of research questions because the researcher is not limited to one research design; c) they can present a more robust conclusion; d) they offer enhanced validity through triangulation (cross validation); e) they can ass insight and understanding that might be missed when only a single research design is used; and f) they can increase the capability to generalize the results compared to using only qualitative study designs (Cronholm, 2011).

Some weakness of mix methods research include: a) they can be difficult for a single researcher especially when the two designs are best used concurrently, in this case the study might require a research team; b) they can be more time consuming and expensive when concurrency is involved; c) they require that the researcher(s) learn multiple methods to combine them knowledgeably, defend the use of multiple methods, utilized them professionally, etc.; and d) they are not without conflict because methodological purists maintain that researchers should work within either a quantitative

or a qualitative research design never mixing the two designs in a single study (Cronholm, 2011).

The ethical considerations that pertain to the quantitative and qualitative methods research also pertain to mix methods research because mix methods research is a combination of the two designs. For example, quantitative studies require researchers to obtain permission, protect anonymity, avoid disruption of sites, and communicate the purpose(s) of the study accurately while qualitative studies require researchers to communicate the purpose(s) of the study accurately, avoid deceptive practices, respect the study population, respond to potential power concerns, and confidentiality. All of these ethical issues are also ethical issues for mix methods research (Creswell, 2014).

According to Scott Thumma, the quantitative method and procedures in this project adhere to questionnaires and surveys. Questionnaires can be effective tools in congregational research but must be carefully focused and interpreted. The questionnaire or survey can be an excellent method to ascertain various beliefs and attitudes of a congregation (Thumma 217). Using questionnaires and surveys, the sample group must embody the congregation as a whole, not a distinct subgroup (Thumma 219). A particular advantage to questionnaires and surveys is the capacity to hear from more people than it would be possible to interview (Thumma 227). One limitation of the questionnaire or survey is that the data collected is only as good as the questions (Thumma 227).

The qualitative method used in this project is interviewing clergy persons within the ranks of the AME Church. The qualitative lens exhibits five characteristics. The researcher used questions in the interviewing process to demonstrate the four aspects of the qualitative lens, which (1) set the stage, (2) asked for information about the

intervention, (3) asked for specific information, and (4) sought the opinions of the participants (Sensing 88). Focus groups have the group's synergy, presenting richer data than individual interviews might provide (Sensing 120). Nevertheless, the very advantage of group synergy may also be a weakness. In some cases, the group interaction may hinder individual expressions (Sensing 120). Therefore, this researcher used the qualitative method of interviewing to enhance the investigative process of the project.

Summary of Literature

2 Samuel 7 yielded invaluable insight into how one must endeavor to incorporate brand image as a high priority in the church's life. David provides an essential attitude on how leaders and lay folk alike must desire a more excellent and progressive view of God's image portrayed through God's people. Leadership represents a vital function in the context of 2 Samuel 7. The Ancient Near East perspective showed a king's loyalty to their gods. For a god to lack the proper temple showed the god's inferiority. The research placed David's leadership under a microscope. One of the microscopic lenses that was used to view David's leadership was "The Servant as Leader," coined by Robert Greenleaf. From this awareness has grown a call for further holistic leadership that unites the four fundamental spheres that define the nature of human permanence, the body (physical), mind (logical/rational thought), heart (emotions, feelings), and spirit, highlighted by Russ Moxley. One of the influential driving energies behind this phenomenon is the use of technology that has spawned greater communication access through social media and the internet, pushing for reform at professedly light-year speed.

The research took into account the effectiveness of small churches in the twenty-first century. With the expectation of the small churches dying out, Carl Dudley pointed

out, “Small Churches, have a will to live against all odds considering the forces allied against their success.” Dudley further noted that, “the phenomenal growth of their opposite, the megachurches of several thousand members, have dominated the religious landscape” (Dudley 2010). The literature led to a further examination of the small church’s comparator, the megachurch. In the discovery, the literature yielded the remarkable existence of branding and brand image in the life of the megachurch versus its small church counterpart. According to the literature, branding is not a new concept in the biblical context. Dr. Peter White revealed a number of ways that God branded the chosen people who became a nation with a brand and brand image associated directly with God. Partick Hanlon recognized seven principles of branding that organically focalize with religion that are proclaimed throughout both the Old and New Testaments.

Further insights clued to the impact branding and brand image has on the brain responses when associated with religion. Consumer society has adapted to the emergence of televangelists. Consumer society has also adapted to branded religious websites; best-selling religious author and movies center around the religious perspective and cater to a specific branded religious audience. Marketing and the church go hand in hand. God's branded image in the community influences the life of the church within its respected community. Businesses' embodiment of the image they brand for their mission, products, goods, and services is vital to their success. The same concept applies to the church as well. The way the community and those outside of the community view God's image through the lens of a church and its people is equally important.

This project emerged around David's desire to establish a brand image for God based on the unmerited favor of God he finds in his lived reality. David's same

progressive passion is the same progressive desire that the AME Church and other small churches across religious boundaries must use to reflect their founding ancestors' mission. The Ancient Near Eastern perspective of temple building, kings, and their relation and adoration to their gods are of utmost importance. Every aspect of the AME Church and other small church organizations is essential when casting God's branded image to the world, which includes, but is not limited to, how the church building looks and is maintained. Based on the literature view, the central argument is that the AME Church and other small church organizations can do a better job of branding God's image that reflects the church's mission in every aspect of its life.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

To respond to the questions expressed in this dissertation, the research method employed for this research project is mixed methods. According to Creswell, mixed methods is an appropriate form for fact-finding research when a pre-intervention study is conducted. Mixed methods comprises both qualitative and quantitative processes to uncover information on research questions such as those that are fundamental to this dissertation. This chapter also includes the research design, purpose statement, research questions, participants, and how results were collected and analyzed. The methods used were designed to guarantee precision, reliability, and integrity, essential aspects of mixed-method studies as indicated by Creswell (Creswell and Creswell 2017).

Qualitative Data

In this study, the qualitative method used was interviewing clergy persons within the ranks of the AME Church and non-AME faiths. The quantitative data for this research was weighted more profoundly than the qualitative data as the project intended to look for the changes in views and consciousness, which is decided by the survey (Creswell 206). The qualitative lens exhibits five informative characteristics. The researcher employed questions in the interview process to illustrate the four aspects of the qualitative lens, which are (1) set the stage, (2) asked for information about the intervention, (3) asked for specific information, and (4) sought the opinions of the participants (Sensing 88). The data from the participant interviews was essential as it rendered data that illuminated the data from the survey. Questions used for the interviews

were open-ended questions to entice the participants to discuss the project further. The interviews were recorded through Zoom. The recorded Zoom interviews by each participant were deciphered to obtain what Creswell suggests is a “general sense of the information” (Creswell 185). Analysis of each recording and their transcripts uncovered potential themes and patterns in participants’ responses (Sensing 198). The data was additionally analyzed using the themes and patterns to present information to deposit alongside the questionnaire data.

Quantitative Data

According to Scott Thumma, this project's quantitative method and procedures adhere to the questionnaire or survey method. Questionnaires can be practical tools in congregational analysis but must be precisely focused and interpreted. The questionnaire or survey can be an excellent method to ascertain various beliefs and attitudes of a congregation (Thumma 217). Furthermore, utilizing questionnaires to survey the sample group must embrace the congregation as a whole, not a distinct subgroup (Thumma 219). A distinct benefit to questionnaires and surveys is the capability to hear from more people than it would be possible to interview (Thumma 227).

In this present study, quantitative data was obtained through a survey given to each participant. The data was analyzed through the SurveyMonkey platform which the survey was created from. The data was also analyzed considering the additional information collected from the interview process. The data was analyzed further according to the respective themes and patterns that emerged for all data collected.

Nature and Purpose of the Project

To determine the extent in which denominational churches need to consider how their respective local churches within their denominational ranks are branded in communities they are residing in, one cannot refer fully to existing literature because a gap exists in research. When the small church brand and brand image is tarnished, the denomination as a whole is also tarnished and stained. How a denomination's branded image is viewed depends on how the small churches are considered in their respective communities.

The purpose of this project was to explore the mission of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in its organizational structure, processes, and outreach by investigating its leadership's effectiveness with small churches and the image it exhibits through the concepts of branding and brand image. While church congregations can be classified by many different size populations or categories, for this research, small churches comprise membership of 50 or fewer (Mann, 2001).

Research Questions

The mixed-method approach to the research question inquiry adds to the knowledge base of the importance of branding and brand image to the small church context. The core component of investigating these research question is to share the perspective reality and lived experiences of pastors, elders, and bishops of the AME Church concerning the applicability of branding in the small church.

RQ #1. How do small denominational churches employ branding and brand image in the twenty-first century?

A survey was designed to address whether or not small churches are likely to employ branding for the sake of the branded image of their denomination in the twenty-

first century. To assist one's understanding of this problem that is fundamental to this research project, questions posed to participants were designed to measure the significance that branding has in the life of the church. A survey of thirty-five questions was administered. Questions 11-21 addressed the significance of branding and brand image in the life of the church. The data from the survey was collected and analyzed to determine the participants' outcome.

RQ #2. What is the extent that small churches receive support (defined as financial resources) for branding?

The abovementioned survey was created to gather information relating to the degree that small churches receive financial resources for the explicit purpose of branding. Questions 22-27 addressed measures of support received. The data from the survey was collected and analyzed to determine the participant's outcome.

RQ #3. What are the best practices for denominations to support small membership churches in branding for the smaller and larger contexts?

The above-mentioned survey was created to gather information relating to best practices for a denomination to support small membership churches in branding for both the smaller and the larger church context. Questions 28-33 addressed those obstacles. In addition to the survey, interviews were done with participants to address all three research questions and participant observation during the interview process. The data from the surveys and interviews was collected, analyzed, and transcribed to determine the participants' results.

Ministry Context

This study was conducted at Mt. Zion AME Church in Green Cove Springs, FL. The city is home to thirty churches that represent various religious congregations. Green Cove Springs, FL has a religious adherence of 56.6 % in the Non-Denominational Church, 25% in the Evangelical Protestant Church, 11.7% in the Catholic Church, 4% in the Mainline Protestant Church, 0.2% in the Black Protestant Church, and 2.4% in all other religious organizations according to the religion statistics for the city based on Clay County data in 2010 (*Green Cove Springs, Florida Population 2021 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs)*).

Green Cove Springs is a city located along the west bank of the historic St. Johns River and since 1871 has served as the county seat of government for Clay County, Florida. The city's name originates from the three physical characteristics. "Green" refers to the perennially green vegetation characterized by its treescape and foliage. "Cove" refers to a bend in the St. Johns River creating a safe area for mooring of boats during inclement weather periods. "Springs" refers to the natural spring (one of 600 in Florida), originating from the "Floridan Aquifer" with an estimated flow rate of approximately 2,200 gallons per minute. The spring water flows into the west side of the municipal swimming pool and then flows out the east side forming a stream eventually emptying into the St. Johns River (*Green Cove Springs, Florida - History of Green Cove Springs*). The first settlers of this region some 5,000 years ago were natives referred to as aboriginals, who were drawn to the area because of the warm mineral spring. The spring (also referred to as "The Boil") was a source of nourishment and healing qualities for various sicknesses. The medicinal properties of the spring and its location along the St. Johns River served as significant contributors to the community's progress as a unique

attraction and destination for tourists during the nineteenth Century (*Green Cove Springs, Florida - History of Green Cove Springs*). This is interesting given that the current Native American population is less than one percent.

Green Cove Springs is a small town with a population of 9,125 people. According to the most recent ACS, the demographics by race of Green Cove Springs is 75.84% White, 16.45% Black or African American, 3.21% Mixed (two or more races), 3.17% Other, 1.20% Asian, 0.14% Native American, and 0.00% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander. There are 6,174 adults (1,447 of whom are seniors) in Green Cove Springs. The demographics by gender is nearly evenly distributed with males and females each comprising half the population in a 49.97% Female and 50.03% Male ratio. The educational attainment status of the population of Green Cove Springs is less than 9th Grade 2.15%, 9th to 12th Grade 8.26%, High School Graduate 29.37%, Some College 24.04%, Associates Degree 9.82%, Bachelors Degree 17.87%, and Graduate Degree 8.50%. Males make up the highest unemployed ratio of 69.88% compared to the Female counterpart at 12.50%. However, a noteworthy factor of the population is that 7.50% of Females are employed compared to their Male counterpart which are employed at 2.25% of the population (*Green Cove Springs, Florida Population 2021 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs)*).

Central to this research is Mt. Zion AME Church, which is under the African Methodist Episcopal Church denomination umbrella. Mt. Zion AME Church is a small congregation with fewer than 50 members and 15 on an average Sunday worship attendance. The assembly is predominantly a more seasoned, emeritus congregation with the median age in the low to mid-seventies. Ages of the members range from three years

to nearly 90 years old. The mature longstanding members' family ties to the church are strong. Their strong family ties and a change in pastoral leadership has helped with the church's current growth spurt in recent years. The church was organized in the 1860s and has had two different prevailing locations since. One church lasted 60 years, and the current location has lasted 88 years and counting.

Participants

Criteria for Selection

The researcher selected participants because of their roles in small churches and in the larger denomination the small churches are connected to, which constitutes the focus of this project on small church organizational branding. The research concentrated leadership on the bishop, presiding elders, and itinerant pastor of the AME Church and pastors of non-AME faith, either active or retired. There were one bishop, two presiding elders, and twenty pastors consisting of both AME and non-AME pastors of small congregations of 50 or fewer members to show the relevance of this project being applicable to small congregations across denominational platforms.

The quantitative side of this study concentrated on twenty pastors consisting of AME and non-AME pastors of small congregations of 50 or fewer members to show the applicability of this project to small congregations across denominational platforms. The quantitative side also aligns with what the research literature yields as the parameters for a small church. The qualitative side of this study concentrated on the various pastoral leadership ranks in the AME Church and non-AME faith. The diverse selection of the participants aided the structure of the mixed method of the project.

Description of Participants

The participants were both male and female with various ages, ethnicities, and educational attainments. All participants were of the Christian faith tradition regardless of the length of time. Participants were appointed by their respective denominations to the duty of a pastor. The participants for both qualitative and quantitative portions of this research meet the same criteria. The sole distinction is whether the participants are involved with the questionnaire or the direct interviews.

Ethical Considerations

This project was designed to reveal the significance of branding and brand image in the small denominational church context. For this purpose, an ethical strategy was of the most eminent consideration throughout the entire project. After explaining the project's goal, it was also explained that the researcher would administer a survey and perform interviews to gather information for the research.

There were no pretests or surveys given outside of the initial survey administered. The survey was created via SurveyMonkey, and it informed the participants of the right to cease their engagement with the survey at any time they deemed appropriate. As a safeguard to guarantee the participants understood what it meant to be involved in this research and to ensure they participated and were highly respected, the survey also requested their consent to be part of the research project if they clicked "yes" to continue the survey. No names or identifying factors were used in reporting the data.

Instrumentation

The instruments used for data collection were a survey and interviews. In addition, experts reviewed the survey to determine the quality and validity of the

questions asked in the survey. The survey for this research project was screened by President-Dean, Rev. Dr. Ammie L. Davis, Ph.D., of Turner Theological Seminary at the Interdenominational Theological Center, and Rev. Dr. Gregory Vaughn Eason Sr., pastor of Flipper Temple AME Church in Atlanta, GA. Each expert gave feedback on each question on the survey. Based on their feedback, questions were either edited or removed.

In addition to the survey, five interviews were conducted via the Zoom platform. Each interview was recorded and deciphered. Prior to each interview each interviewee was asked to sign a written consent form. Based on the way the participant answered the interview questions, it was determined if follow-up questions were needed to understand the participant's point of view further. The survey and interview questions were expert-reviewed to determine the quality and validity of the questions to the research project.

Expert Review

The survey screening and expert review was done by Dr. Cheryl Seals Mobley-Gonzalez, higher education consultant, equal opportunity, diversity and inclusion administrator in higher education. With over 25 years of devoted higher education service, Dr. Gonzalez has produced a strong record of leadership and management success in institutions that include two and four-year colleges and universities and regional and Tier I research universities. The survey for this research project was also screened by President-Dean, Rev. Dr. Ammie L. Davis, Ph.D., of Turner Theological Seminary at the Interdenominational Theological Center, and Rev. Dr. Gregory Vaughn Eason Sr., pastor of Flipper Temple AME Church in Atlanta, GA. Each expert gave feedback on each question on the survey. Based on their feedback, questions were either edited or removed. Both the interview and survey questions yielded minor revisions.

Reliability and Validity of Project Design

Guba and Lincoln (1982) note that while all research must have "truth value," "applicability," "consistency," and "neutrality" in order to be considered worthwhile, the nature of knowledge within the rationalistic (or quantitative) paradigm is different from the knowledge in naturalistic (qualitative) paradigm. Consequently, each paradigm requires paradigm-specific criteria for addressing "rigor," the term most often used in the rationalistic paradigm, or "trustworthiness," the parallel word for qualitative "rigor."

For quantitative methods, Guba and Lincoln (1982) also note that within the rationalistic paradigm, the criteria to reach the goal of rigor are internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity. On the other hand, they proposed that the requirements in the qualitative paradigm to ensure "trustworthiness" are credibility, fittingness, auditability, and confirmability. (Guba and Lincoln 1982). Later, their criteria were refined to credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Guba and Lincoln 1985).

Guba and Lincoln further suggest distinctive strategies to be used to achieve trustworthiness, such as negative cases, peer debriefing, prolonged engagement, and persistent observation, audit trails, and member checks. Correspondingly influential were characteristics of the investigator, who must be responsive and adaptable to changing circumstances, holistic, having procession immediacy, sensitivity, and the ability for clarification and summarization (Guba and Lincoln 1982). The survey for this research project was screened by President-Dean, Rev. Dr. Ammie L. Davis, Ph.D., of Turner Theological Seminary at the Interdenominational Theological Center, and Rev. Dr. Gregory Vaughn Eason Sr., pastor of Flipper Temple AME Church in Atlanta, GA. Both implied that the survey coincided with the research questions. The investigator evaluated

the survey and research questions against pertinent literature and found them to represent the corresponding material. The survey was disseminated before the interviews were executed.

Data Collection

This study was a pre-intervention project. This project relied on both quantitative and qualitative research to find the importance of branding and brand image in smaller congregational churches within African Methodist Episcopal Church denomination. Using both quantitative and qualitative research creates a mixed-method approach to gathering data needed to discover best practices of organizational leadership to address current African Methodist Episcopal Church structures and processes regarding branding and brand image of small membership churches within its denominational context.

Each participant received an email with a link to the survey. Once they opened the link, a declaration at the top of each survey indicated that the participant consented to be part of the research project by clicking yes. Following the survey, five selected members within the AME church and non-AME faith were selected to participate in a semi-structured question interview. Each participant interviewed was unique in their respective ranks with overlapping experiences throughout each ranking. The interviews were recorded and deciphered to gather supporting information received from the surveys. Data was collected through interviews and a questionnaire to explore knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors regarding the importance of branding and brand image issues related to small congregational churches.

Data Analysis

According to Sensing, "It is difficult to separate the activities of data collection and data interpretation" (Sensing 194). A clear definition of data analysis must be established for this project. For this project, John Swinton and Harriet Mowatt's definition of data analysis will set the precedence. Swinton and Mowatt denotes, "Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure, and meaning to the complicated mass of qualitative data that the researcher generates during the research process" (Swinton and Mowatt 57). The unification of results brought about a great deal of reflection and consideration to avoid rash judgments. Qualitative and quantitative data collection have several ways of fraternizing the data in mixed methods. In the combined method, there are two well-defined aspects of data collection in which the data is interspersed (Creswell and Creswell 208). In the approach used in the present research, the data from the surveys was considered primary, and the data collected from the semi-structured interviews is considered to provide supportive erudition. The data was analyzed for key and recurring themes, as well as contradictions and gaps.

CHAPTER 4

EVIDENCE FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

The AME church needs to consider how the local churches are branded in the communities they are residing in. When the local church's brand image is tarnished, the AME church as a whole is tarnished and stained. How the AME brand image is viewed depends on how the local churches are considered in their respective communities. Therefore, aid and support are needed from the overarching AME denomination to assist local churches within its ranks to ensure they maintain their facilities. Nevertheless, to do so, the structures of the AME denominational support and aid to the local charge must be reevaluated and changed to ensure its survival or the AME Church will continue to experience a decline in membership and the closing of its small-church doors.

This chapter intends to present the data obtained from a survey and interviews undertaken by willing participants. The purpose of the research was to explore the mission of the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church in its organizational structure, processes, and outreach by investigating its leadership's effectiveness with small churches (membership of fifty or fewer) and the image it exhibits through the concept of branding. This chapter describes quantitative data collected from the survey and qualitative data collected from interviews through mixed methods from all participants who participated in the study. Finally, this chapter recognizes five noteworthy findings accumulated from the data.

Participants

This study's quantitative side concentrated on AME and Non-AME pastors of small, medium, and large churches, focusing on the small church context across denominational platforms. The link to the survey was sent via a post on social media platforms and emailed to all pastors. Sixty-four people interacted with the survey. Out of the sixty-four, fifty-one completed the survey, which yielded an 80% completion rate. They were between 18-65 plus years of age, with 29.03% between 45-54 years of age. The demographic makeup of these participants is represented in Figure 4.1. Figure 4.2 represents the ethnicity/race of the survey participants. For example, 79.03% identified as Black or African American, 16.13% identified as White or Caucasian, less than 3.5% identified as Asian or Asian American, and 1.61% identified as having two or more races.

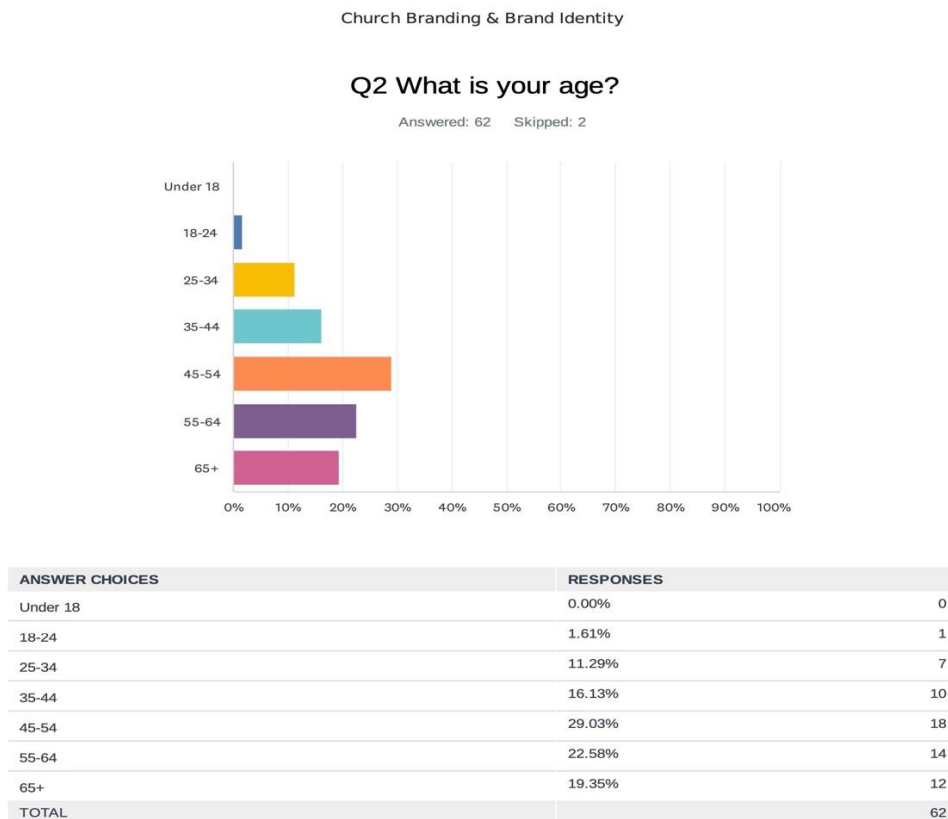
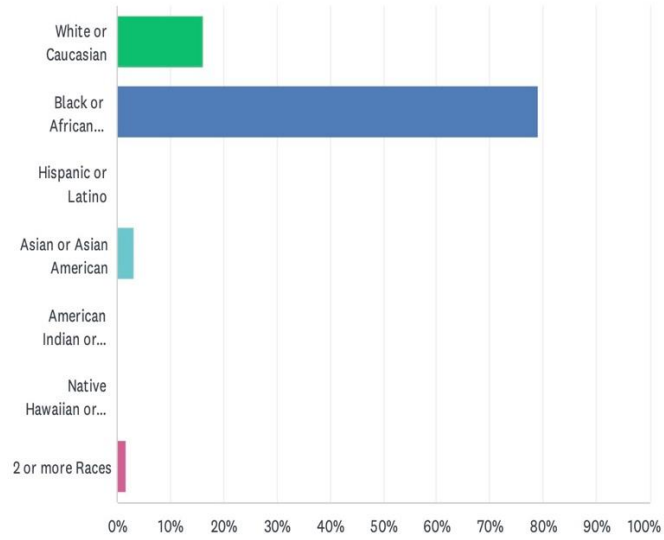


Figure 4.1 Demographics of Survey Participants

Church Branding & Brand Identity

Q3 What is your ethnicity/race?

Answered: 62 Skipped: 2



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| White or Caucasian | 16.13% | 10 |
| Black or African American | 79.03% | 49 |
| Hispanic or Latino | 0.00% | 0 |
| Asian or Asian American | 3.23% | 2 |
| American Indian or Alaska Native | 0.00% | 0 |
| Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander | 0.00% | 0 |
| 2 or more Races | 1.61% | 1 |
| TOTAL | | 62 |

Figure 4.2 Ethnicity of Survey Participants

Research Question #1: How do small denominational churches employ branding and brand image in the twenty-first century?

The tool used for collecting the answer to this research question was the survey. To assist one's understanding of this problem that is fundamental to this research project questions posed to participants were designed to measure the significance that branding has in the life of the church. Questions 11-21 addressed the importance of branding and brand image in the life of the church.

Quantitative Analysis

Of the respondents, 50.85% concur with the notion that church branding is essential, and 63.79% reported that church branding is being utilized in their church or district. On a scale from 1 to 5 (5 being the highest), a weighted average of 3.29 showed the significance of church branding being used in the church or district. The likelihood of branding assisting with understanding a pastor church's mission was very likely at 33.93%. The overall opinion of a pastor church's brand was very favorable at 48.21%. There was a 50.88% confidence rate concerning the church's image, and 48.21% agreed that branding helps their church or district grow attendance. A full 41.07% of pastors agreed that branding helps their church or district save souls and attract new members. In addition, 35.19% of pastors strongly agreed that branding and brand identity has become more evident since the COVID-19 pandemic, and 30.91% of pastors somewhat agreed that their church's branding aligns with the higher levels of their leadership or administrative operations platforms.

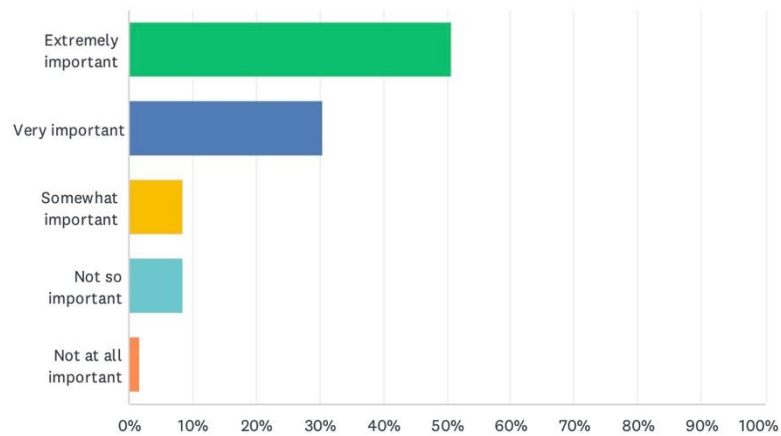
In an open column for any additional comments about the use of branding in the church, one pastor from Australia stated, "most people have very little understanding of

the existence of other brand churches, let alone the distinctive. Indifference is the prevailing social attitude toward church irrespective of the brand." Another pastor wrote, "I think branding is very important to a church. The church does not take advantage of its brand or cultivate its brand. I think if my church sought more strategically about its brand, it would easily reap some important benefits, like a greater focus on discipleship and finding motivation for its programs." A pastor in Nepal said, "congregations only need a church to worship the Lord rather than a brand." Furthermore, another pastor wrote, "I think it is a primary means of setting our church apart from others. This has to be utilized to identify who we are and how we represent Christian principles."

Church Branding & Brand Identity

Q11 Is church branding important?

Answered: 59 Skipped: 5



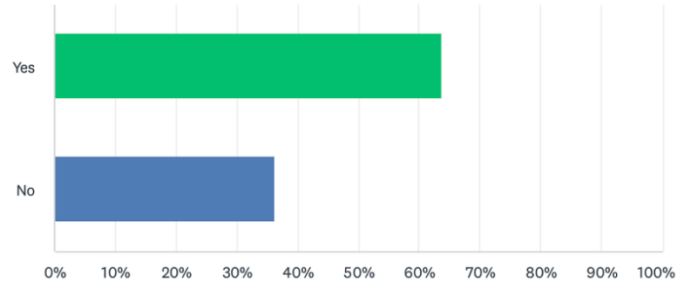
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------------|-----------|----|
| Extremely important | 50.85% | 30 |
| Very important | 30.51% | 18 |
| Somewhat important | 8.47% | 5 |
| Not so important | 8.47% | 5 |
| Not at all important | 1.69% | 1 |
| TOTAL | | 59 |

Figure 4.3 Church Branding Importance

Church Branding & Brand Identity

Q12 Is church branding being utilized in your church/district?

Answered: 58 Skipped: 6



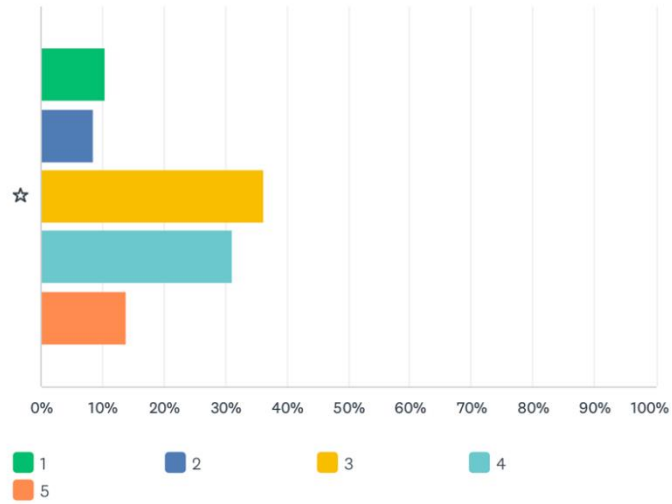
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------|-----------|----|
| Yes | 63.79% | 37 |
| No | 36.21% | 21 |
| TOTAL | | 58 |

Figure 4.4 Church Branding Utilization

Church Branding & Brand Identity

Q13 On a scale from 1-to 5 (5 being the highest), how significantly is church branding being used in your church/district?

Answered: 58 Skipped: 6



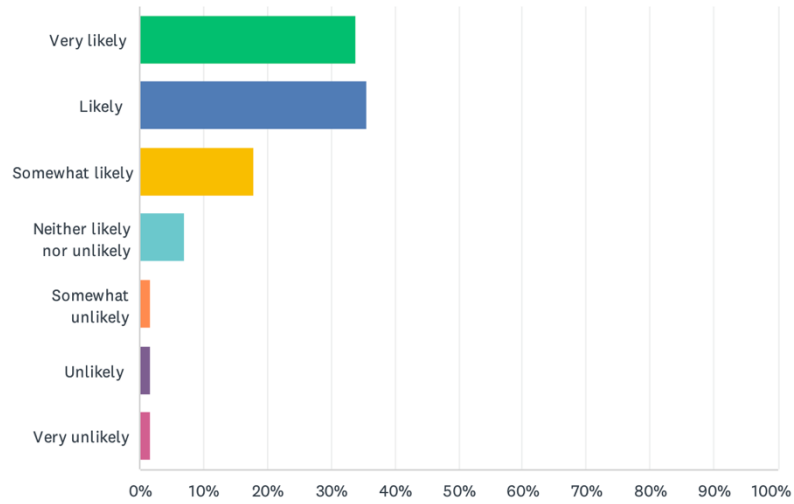
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | TOTAL | WEIGHTED AVERAGE |
|---|-------------|------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------|------------------|
| ☆ | 10.34% 6 | 8.62% 5 | 36.21% 21 | 31.03% 18 | 13.79% 8 | 58 | 3.29 |

Figure 4.5 Significance of Church Branding

Church Branding & Brand Identity

Q14 How likely does branding assist with understanding your church's mission by the members and the public?

Answered: 56 Skipped: 8



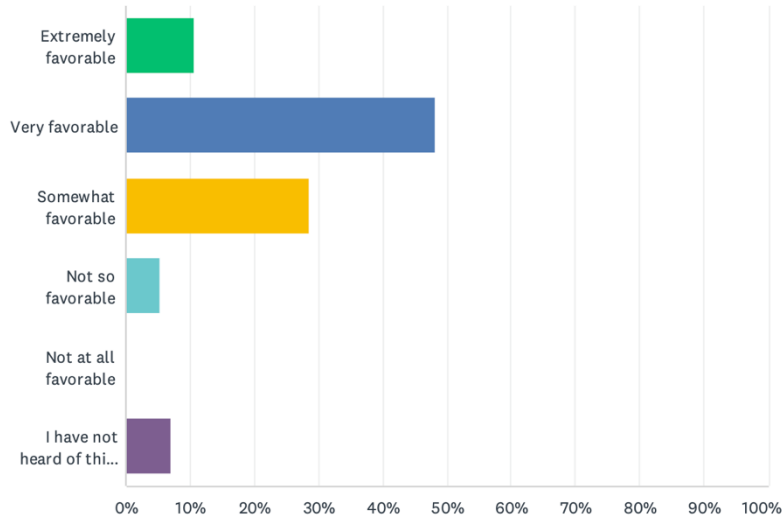
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Very likely | 33.93% | 19 |
| Likely | 35.71% | 20 |
| Somewhat likely | 17.86% | 10 |
| Neither likely nor unlikely | 7.14% | 4 |
| Somewhat unlikely | 1.79% | 1 |
| Unlikely | 1.79% | 1 |
| Very unlikely | 1.79% | 1 |
| TOTAL | | 56 |

Figure 4.6 Missional Understanding Through Branding

Church Branding & Brand Identity

Q15 How would you describe your overall opinion of your church's brand?

Answered: 56 Skipped: 8



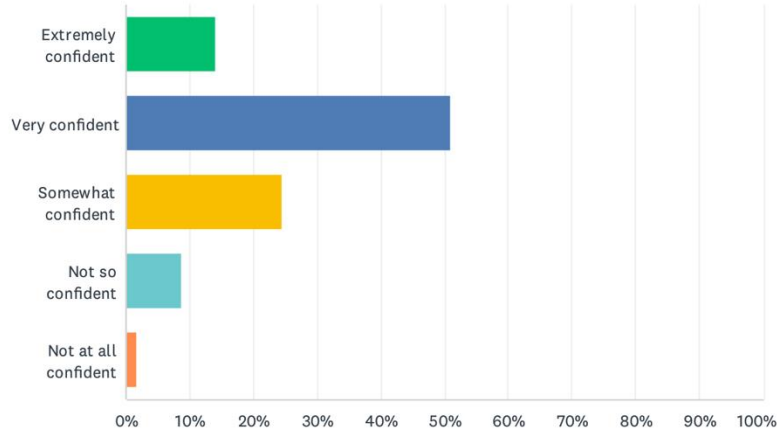
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Extremely favorable | 10.71% | 6 |
| Very favorable | 48.21% | 27 |
| Somewhat favorable | 28.57% | 16 |
| Not so favorable | 5.36% | 3 |
| Not at all favorable | 0.00% | 0 |
| I have not heard of this brand | 7.14% | 4 |
| TOTAL | | 56 |

Figure 4.7 Opinion of the Church Brand

Church Branding & Brand Identity

Q16 How confident do you feel about your church's image?

Answered: 57 Skipped: 7



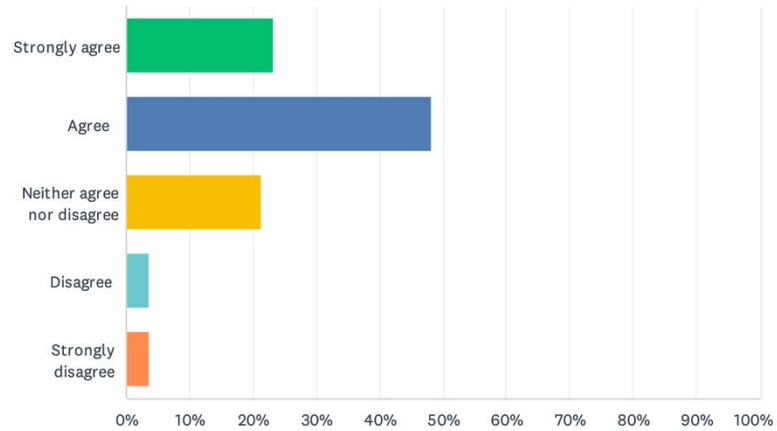
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Extremely confident | 14.04% | 8 |
| Very confident | 50.88% | 29 |
| Somewhat confident | 24.56% | 14 |
| Not so confident | 8.77% | 5 |
| Not at all confident | 1.75% | 1 |
| TOTAL | | 57 |

Figure 4.8 Confidence on Church Imaging

Church Branding & Brand Identity

Q17 Branding helps your church/district to grow attendance.

Answered: 56 Skipped: 8



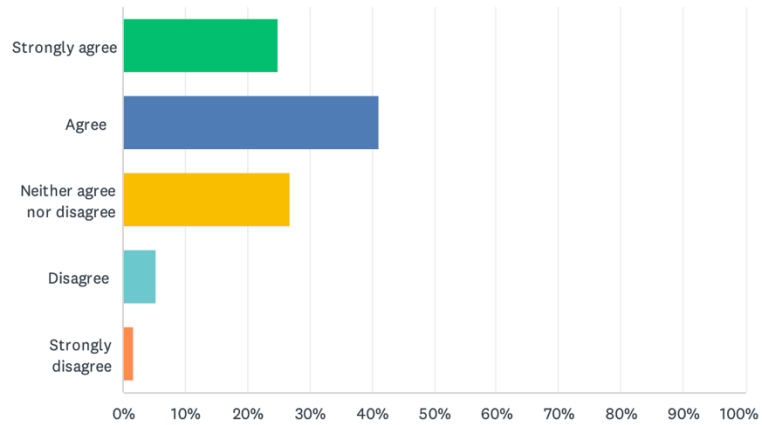
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly agree | 23.21% | 13 |
| Agree | 48.21% | 27 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 21.43% | 12 |
| Disagree | 3.57% | 2 |
| Strongly disagree | 3.57% | 2 |
| TOTAL | | 56 |

Figure 4.9 Branding Helping in Church Growth

Church Branding & Brand Identity

Q18 Branding helps my church/district to save souls and therefore attract new members.

Answered: 56 Skipped: 8



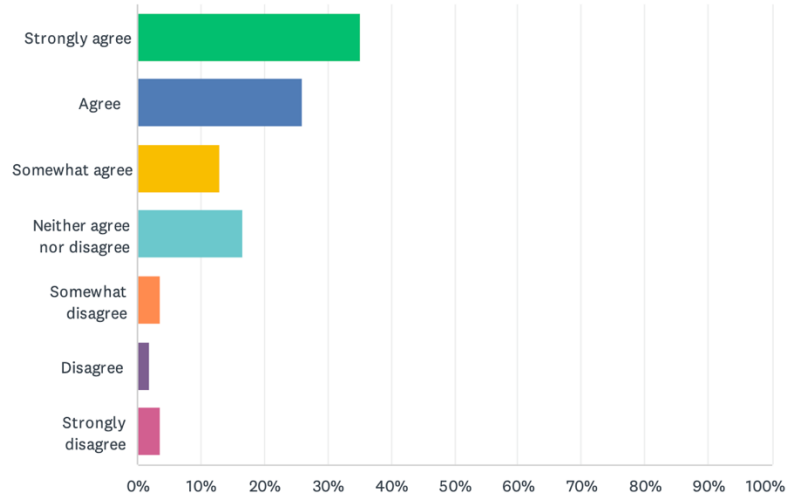
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly agree | 25.00% | 14 |
| Agree | 41.07% | 23 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 26.79% | 15 |
| Disagree | 5.36% | 3 |
| Strongly disagree | 1.79% | 1 |
| TOTAL | | 56 |

Figure 4.10 Branding Helping in Saving Souls

Church Branding & Brand Identity

Q19 The use of branding and brand identity has become more evident since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Answered: 54 Skipped: 10



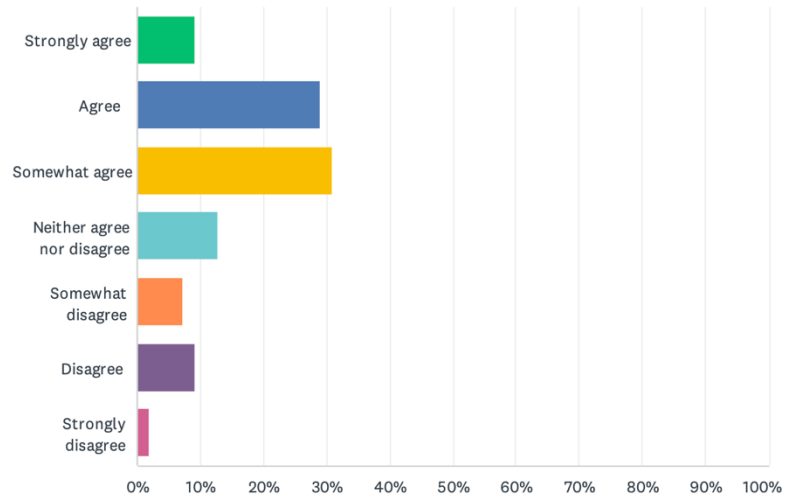
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------------------|-----------|----|
| Strongly agree | 35.19% | 19 |
| Agree | 25.93% | 14 |
| Somewhat agree | 12.96% | 7 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 16.67% | 9 |
| Somewhat disagree | 3.70% | 2 |
| Disagree | 1.85% | 1 |
| Strongly disagree | 3.70% | 2 |
| TOTAL | | 54 |

Figure 4.11 Evidence of Branding Since Covid

Church Branding & Brand Identity

Q20 I believe that my church/district branding is in line with the higher levels of leadership/administrative operations.

Answered: 55 Skipped: 9



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly agree | 9.09% | 5 |
| Agree | 29.09% | 16 |
| Somewhat agree | 30.91% | 17 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 12.73% | 7 |
| Somewhat disagree | 7.27% | 4 |
| Disagree | 9.09% | 5 |
| Strongly disagree | 1.82% | 1 |
| TOTAL | | 55 |

Figure 4.12 Branding in Higher Levels of Leadership

Qualitative Analysis

Interviewees were asked what their philosophy or belief system were about church branding and marketing and to what extent branding is evident or carried out in their church. B1R stated, "I think it's important, particularly in this day and time, that churches make themselves visible." B1R further said, "that's what branding does; it

makes you visible." B-Candidate asserted, "Well, church branding and marketing, I think it's important, and we indirectly brand and market ourselves whenever somebody comes into our church's doors. PE1R stated, "I believe the logo is important and identifies who we are." PE2A proclaimed, "Candidly, I think that church branding and church identity is critical to the church's ability to achieve her true mission." "The branding as you defined it and the identity," PE2A further stated, "is how I think we take our rightful place in the community." The statements mentioned above by the interviewees spoke to the importance of branding and brand image.

Research Question #2: What is the extent that small churches receive support (defined as financial resources) for branding?

Quantitative Analysis

Questions 22-27 addressed the importance of financial resources for branding in the church. Of respondents, 50.98% answered "No" to the fact that their church or district did not have an annual budget for marketing and branding, and 39.22% of pastors who took the survey answered that their church was not so likely to use monies obtained from special offerings to spend for branding. In addition, 32% disagreed with conducting fundraisers to use for expenses associated with branding, and 32.65% neither agreed nor disagreed with the notion that funding for branding has been evident in their church or district since the COVID-19 pandemic. However, 30.61% disagree with the fact that funding for branding was evident prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

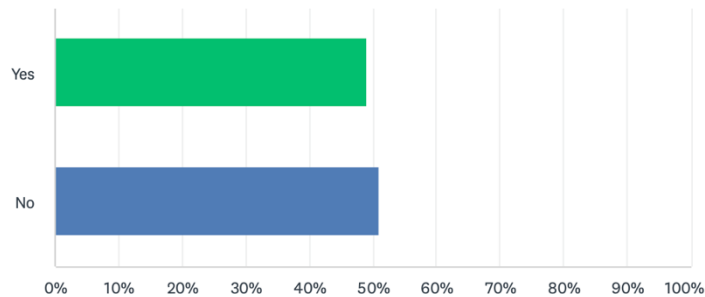
In an open column for any additional comments about the use of financial support or budget for branding in the church, one pastor stated, "little or no funds are specifically set aside for branding." Another asserted, "the physical (voluntary) outreach and

donations of goods and services of our members and partners have compensated for branding not being a budgeted item.” While another affirmed, “with the increase in virtual engagement, it was vital to increase the investment in this area.” In addition, another pastor wrote, “we do not have this in our budget, but we can vote in leadership meetings to utilize this, but it is a tough sell sometimes. This is an area that I want to improve on.” Another pastor stated, “in most instances, the black churches do not see a need to brand/market the church, or do not understand what branding/marketing does for the church.”

Church Branding & Brand Identity

Q22 Does your church/district have an annual budget for marketing and branding?

Answered: 51 Skipped: 13



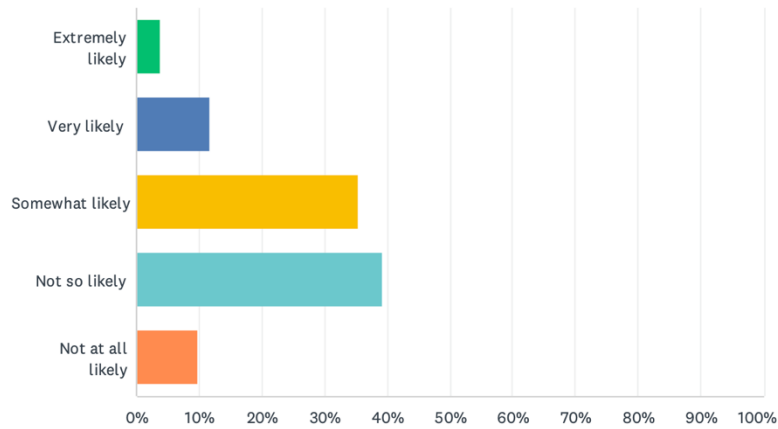
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------|-----------|----|
| Yes | 49.02% | 25 |
| No | 50.98% | 26 |
| TOTAL | | 51 |

Figure 4.13 Branding and Budgeting

Church Branding & Brand Identity

Q23 How likely is your church/district to use monies obtained from special offerings to spend for branding?

Answered: 51 Skipped: 13



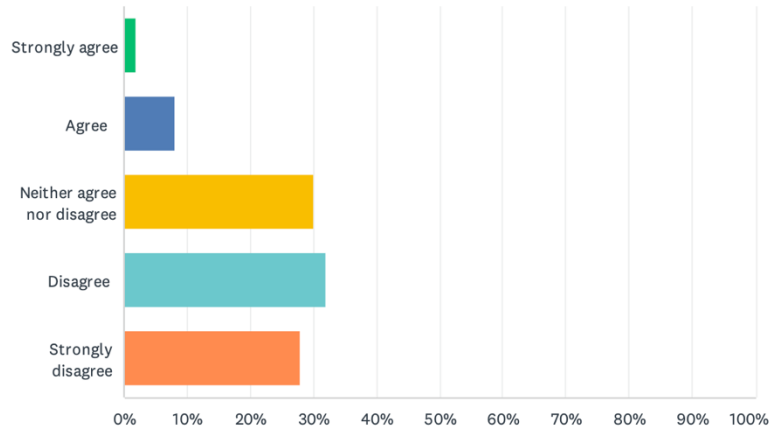
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|-------------------|-----------|----|
| Extremely likely | 3.92% | 2 |
| Very likely | 11.76% | 6 |
| Somewhat likely | 35.29% | 18 |
| Not so likely | 39.22% | 20 |
| Not at all likely | 9.80% | 5 |
| TOTAL | | 51 |

Figure 4.14 Branding and Finance

Church Branding & Brand Identity

Q24 My church/district conducts fundraisers to use for expenses associated with branding.

Answered: 50 Skipped: 14



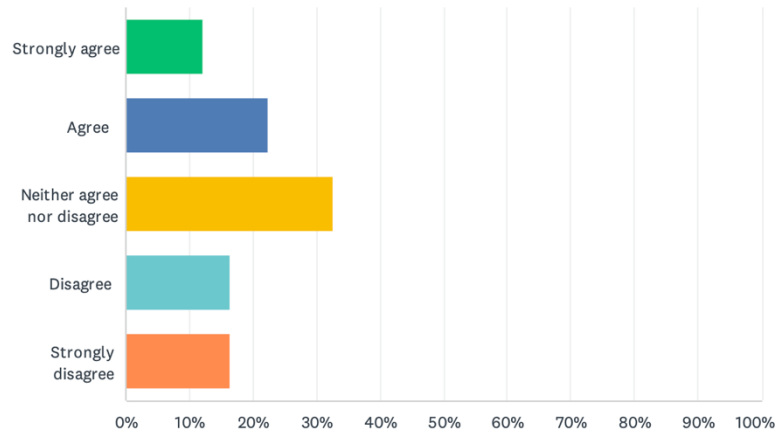
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly agree | 2.00% | 1 |
| Agree | 8.00% | 4 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 30.00% | 15 |
| Disagree | 32.00% | 16 |
| Strongly disagree | 28.00% | 14 |
| TOTAL | | 50 |

Figure 4.15 Branding and Fundraisers

Church Branding & Brand Identity

Q25 Funding for branding has been evident in your church/district since the COVID-19 pandemic

Answered: 49 Skipped: 15



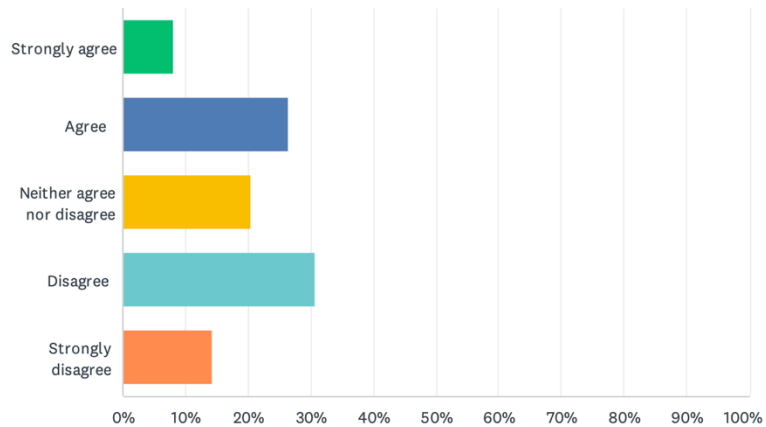
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------------------|-----------|----|
| Strongly agree | 12.24% | 6 |
| Agree | 22.45% | 11 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 32.65% | 16 |
| Disagree | 16.33% | 8 |
| Strongly disagree | 16.33% | 8 |
| TOTAL | | 49 |

Figure 4.16 Funding for Branding Since Covid

Church Branding & Brand Identity

Q26 Funding for branding was evident in your church/district prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Answered: 49 Skipped: 15



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------------------|-----------|----|
| Strongly agree | 8.16% | 4 |
| Agree | 26.53% | 13 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 20.41% | 10 |
| Disagree | 30.61% | 15 |
| Strongly disagree | 14.29% | 7 |
| TOTAL | | 49 |

Figure 4.17 Findings for Branding Prior to Covid

Qualitative Analysis

Interviewees were asked to explain how budgeting and financial resources were factored into branding and marketing for the church. B1R stated, "the discipline says that we (the pastors) should have an annual budget where branding and marketing should be a line item." B-Candidate argued, "it costs money to brand a congregation, and you have to have a budget." PE1R promoted, "I believe that budgeting goes to the heart of your ministry; you must invest in what you expect." PE1R further said, "you cannot have a thriving ministry if you're unwilling to provide the financial resources in your budget to

support them. PE2A confessed, "in our system, we are a connectional church, so budgeting and financing are cornerstone items. We don't do an excellent job teaching budgeting and finance in seminary. So, many pastors come to churches as a CEO of an organization and barely know how to manage their checkbooks." The statements mentioned above by the interviewees spoke to the importance of budgeting and finance for branding and marketing the church.

Research Question #3: What are the best practices for denominations to support small membership churches in branding for the smaller and larger contexts?

Quantitative Analysis

Questions 28-33 addressed the best practices for denominations to support churches in their branding efforts for the smaller and larger context. In the survey 28.85% of pastors were very familiar with their church's or district's advertisement through printed media, and 34.69% agreed with the notion that their church or district prominently display select colors to represent their church or district. In addition, 45.10% agreed a great deal that their church or district is visible on social media platforms, and 39.22% stated that usually their church or district has a person responsible for marketing or advertising. Also 41.18% of pastors answered that their church has a "somewhat effective" strong outreach campaign to the public to draw in members and save souls.

In an open column for any additional comments about the best practices of branding in the church, one pastor denoted, "I learned early on that our brand has the ability to give the public a quick idea of our ideology and theology so they can make a well-informed decision about membership and more importantly discipleship." Another pastor wrote, "In discussions with other clergy, some noted having an brand ambassador

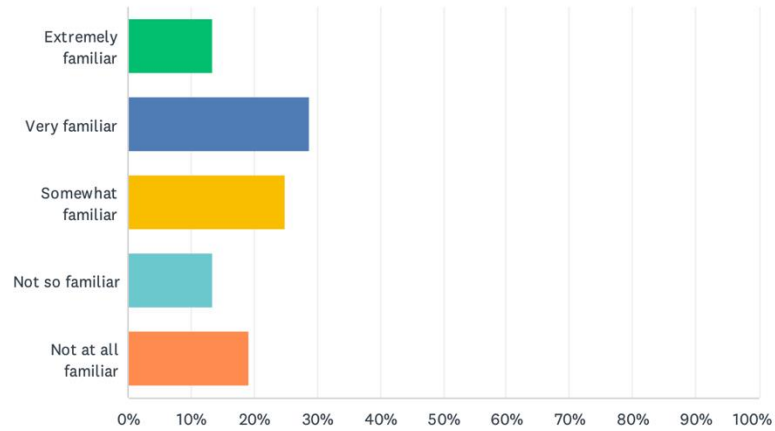
as a formal position. I am looking into models for this.” While on the other hand, another pastor confessed, “the national organization of my church has a wide presence, so advertising is not necessarily needed.” Another pastor argued, “during the height of the pandemic our church utilized social media. However, we did not have the resources (human or technology) to regularly maintain the presence. Plans are being discussed for a return to social media.” Finally, another pastor expressed:

I am from a rural church, and I believe that our members interface in the public arena in a way that promotes a sort of “brand” of our church. If we adopted this notion of branding, I wonder how much more of an impact we would have in schools, businesses, and civic organizations, because we are so small, the population and church overlaps with so many other things in the public arena.

Church Branding & Brand Identity

Q28 My church/district advertises through printed media.

Answered: 52 Skipped: 12



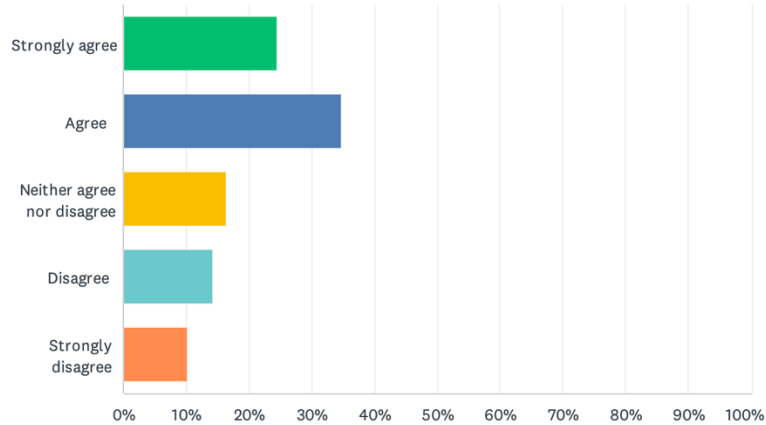
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Extremely familiar | 13.46% | 7 |
| Very familiar | 28.85% | 15 |
| Somewhat familiar | 25.00% | 13 |
| Not so familiar | 13.46% | 7 |
| Not at all familiar | 19.23% | 10 |
| TOTAL | | 52 |

Figure 4.18 Branding Through Printed Media

Church Branding & Brand Identity

Q29 My church/district prominently displays select colors to represent my church/district.

Answered: 49 Skipped: 15



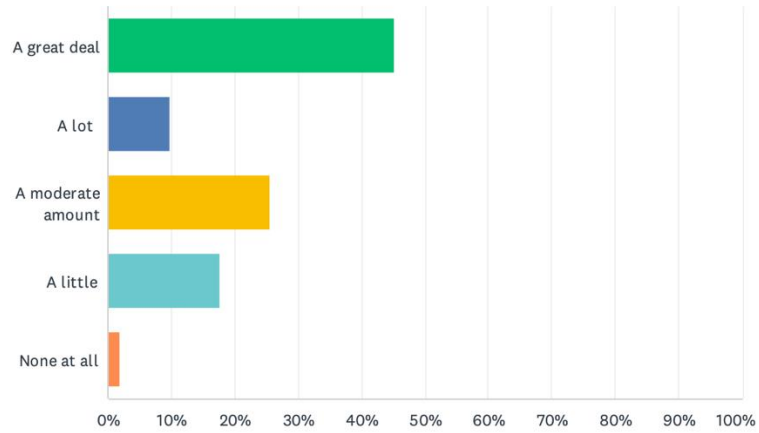
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Strongly agree | 24.49% | 12 |
| Agree | 34.69% | 17 |
| Neither agree nor disagree | 16.33% | 8 |
| Disagree | 14.29% | 7 |
| Strongly disagree | 10.20% | 5 |
| TOTAL | | 49 |

Figure 4.19 Branding Through Colors

Church Branding & Brand Identity

Q30 My church/district is visible on social media platforms.

Answered: 51 Skipped: 13



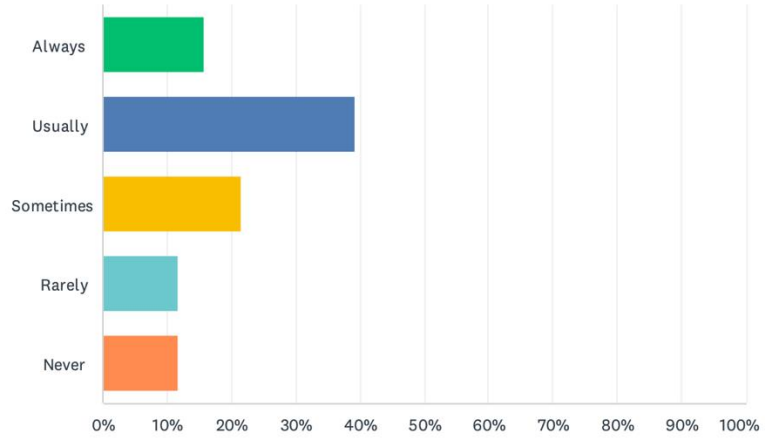
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|-------------------|-----------|----|
| A great deal | 45.10% | 23 |
| A lot | 9.80% | 5 |
| A moderate amount | 25.49% | 13 |
| A little | 17.65% | 9 |
| None at all | 1.96% | 1 |
| TOTAL | | 51 |

Figure 4.20 Branding Through Social Media

Church Branding & Brand Identity

Q31 My church/district has a person responsible for marketing/advertising.

Answered: 51 Skipped: 13



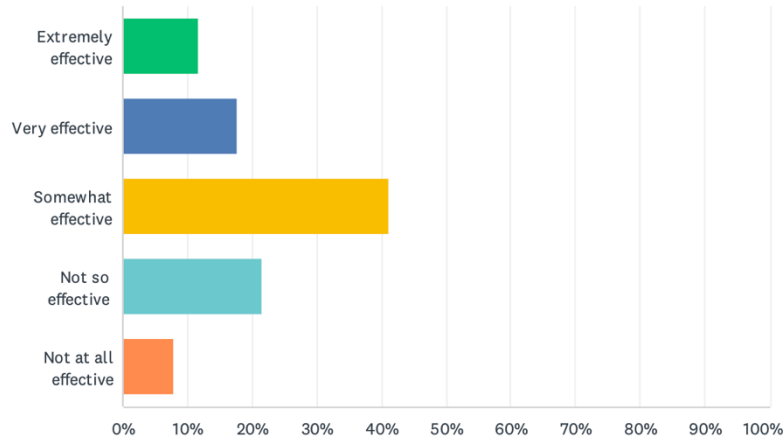
| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------|-----------|----|
| Always | 15.69% | 8 |
| Usually | 39.22% | 20 |
| Sometimes | 21.57% | 11 |
| Rarely | 11.76% | 6 |
| Never | 11.76% | 6 |
| TOTAL | | 51 |

Figure 4.21 Person Responsible for Church Branding

Church Branding & Brand Identity

Q32 My church/district has a strong outreach campaign to the public to draw in members and save souls.

Answered: 51 Skipped: 13



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|----------------------|-----------|----|
| Extremely effective | 11.76% | 6 |
| Very effective | 17.65% | 9 |
| Somewhat effective | 41.18% | 21 |
| Not so effective | 21.57% | 11 |
| Not at all effective | 7.84% | 4 |
| TOTAL | | 51 |

Figure 4.22 Branding as a Form of Outreach

Qualitative Analysis

Seeking out best practices exposes the church's challenges in meeting its branding and missional outcomes. The interviewees were asked what challenges did they believe their church faced in fulfilling the mission of the church. B1R stated, "I think the challenge is when we don't make our mission plain." B1R declared, "sometimes leaders in our congregations don't make it plain to even the parishioners what the vision or mission they see for the church. Every leader ought to have some vision for the work that

they're doing." PE1R articulated, "I believe the number one challenge is membership. Getting members exited and getting members back actively involved." PE2A declared, "I think we've got to reimagine church. We have to turn this pyramid upside down and start investing more in the churches instead of the local churches investing in the AME connection."

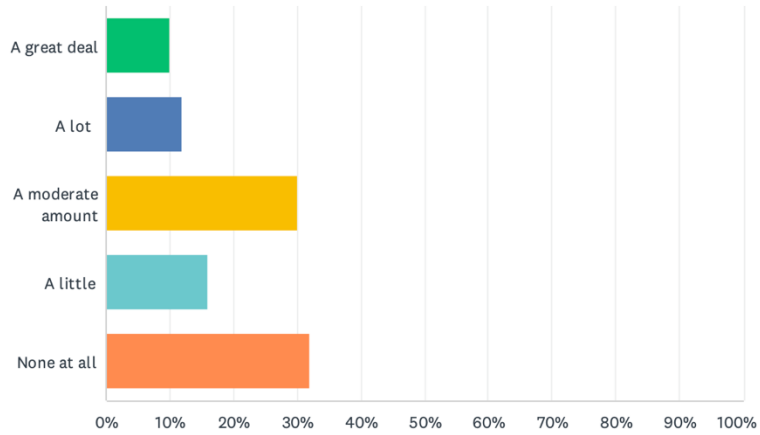
In The Future

Each survey participant was asked a final question concerning a prediction for the future. They were asked whether their church could survive without branding in the next twenty-five years; 32% answered "none at all," and 30% answered "a moderate amount." Only 10% believed "a great deal" their church could survive in the next twenty-five years without branding, while 16% suggested only "a little."

Church Branding & Brand Identity

Q35 Do you believe that your church can survive without branding in the next 25 years of its existence?

Answered: 50 Skipped: 14



| ANSWER CHOICES | RESPONSES | |
|-------------------|-----------|----|
| A great deal | 10.00% | 5 |
| A lot | 12.00% | 6 |
| A moderate amount | 30.00% | 15 |
| A little | 16.00% | 8 |
| None at all | 32.00% | 16 |
| TOTAL | | 50 |

Figure 4.23 Church Survival Without Branding

Summary of Major Findings

Several major findings materialized based on the data analysis. They are shared here in synopsis and will be further discussed in the next chapter.

Major Findings:

1. The concept of church branding and brand identity is not significant outside the states.
2. There is no probability that churches will survive without branding and marketing in the future.
3. Budgeting and proper financial planning for church branding and marketing must be a top priority.
4. Brand ownership significantly impacts missional effectiveness.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING REPORT FOR THE PROJECT

Overview of the Chapter

This chapter addresses the study's significant findings and the implications for church branding and brand image. The problem in this study was to address the need for the AME church to consider how local churches are branded in the communities they are residing in. The AME church's consideration in this matter is primary because how the AME brand image is regarded depends on how the local churches are viewed in their respective communities. Thus, the purpose of the study was to explore the Mission of the AME church in its organization, structure, processes, and outreach by investigating its leadership's effectiveness with small churches and the image it exhibits through the concept of branding. The development of the study advances the following findings.

Major Findings

First Finding: The Concept of Church Branding and Brand Identity Is Not

Significant Outside the States

Personal Observation

Before this study, this researcher thought that church and business go hand in hand. Any collection and disbursement of funds suggest that elements of business acumen are involved. Under the business umbrella, branding and brand identity add value to the company or organization. Nevertheless, during the study, while the need for church branding and brand image must be a major consideration for mainstream denominations, particularly the AME church, church branding and brand image is not significant outside the states. Pastors who took the survey from countries such as Australia, Asia, and

Turkmenistan all revealed through personal conversations via WhatsApp their understanding of the concept of church branding and brand image was limited and was not a significant matter of concern in their ministry context. After the final data collection and analysis of this study, it was clear the influential impact mainstream denominations could have on other countries through the lenses of church branding and brand image.

Literature Review

As the literature review in Chapter 2 suggests, the inadequacy in understanding the progress and difficulties of branding position upon religious organizations, especially the small churches in the twenty-first century, illustrates the relevance and need for this research study. However, the literature review does not address the lack of consideration for church branding and brand image outside of the framework of the United States. Moreover, this can be partly due to the lack of literature on church branding as a whole, the tremendous lack of understanding of church branding outside of the United States, and the value of its importance to ministry in other countries.

Biblical Foundation

The biblical foundation on which the research takes a wholistic view highlights, "In the ancient world, moreover, a god who lacked a proper temple was in danger of being regarded as critically inferior. In other countries, it had long been considered the responsibility of kings both to build and to maintain the dwellings of the gods" (Kapelrud 56). While building temples and maintaining the god's dwellings was the king's responsibility, Jesus points out in John 13:35 that the disciples would be known/branded by the love they showed to each other. Both perspectives suggest that brand image and brand identity assist in shaping the narrative of what others perceive.

Second Finding: There Is No Probability That Churches Will Survive Without Branding and Marketing in The Future

Personal Observation

Before this study, it was clear that mega-churches had cornered the market in church branding. Before COVID-19, mega-churches were more likely to employ business concepts in their CEO approach to ministry. Many small family churches, if not all, did not use the CEO approach in their ministry model pre-Covid. Therefore, many rural churches were already on the downhill slope of ministry, while mega-churches soared in online attendance and giving prior to Covid. However, during the start of this study, COVID-19 made a devastating impact on the world. It forced small family churches to find creative ways to stay connected and continue ministry differently. As a result, small family churches were unintentionally driven, due to COVID-19, to employ and embrace digital media platforms in ways they had never done before. However, after COVID-19, small family churches are still grappling with staying relevant with the church's brand image and identity online.

Literature Review

The literature review in Chapter 2 suggests, "A large percentage of every denomination is made up of smaller churches that have attendance figures of less than 100 people" (Miller 6). Dudley warranted that "small churches should have died in the past quarter-century, and yet they have the will to live against all odds considering the forces allied against their success" (Dudley 2010). Pre-Covid, Larson and Marcotte confirmed that "adding to the long list of the small church's struggling existence, technology and its use is at the forefront of their problems. And, "religious environments

are not utilizing the Web and Internet to their full potential” (Marcotte 2010; Larsen 2000). The finding of this study suggests that small churches, due to COVID-19, are looking for a paradigm shift and are starting to employ and engage the notion of the CEO business church branding and brand identity model in the digital world, whereas at one time they struggled with the concept.

Biblical Foundation

Jesus said in (Matthew 16:18), "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock, I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Yet, according to John Dickerson of the New York Times, "Evangelicalism, as we knew it in the 20th century, is disintegrating...Evangelical ministers from the United States reported a greater loss of influence than church leaders from any other country, with some 82 percent indicating that their movement was losing ground" (Gregory, *The Marketing and Branding of the Church in America* 9). Gregory writes:

The story of Christianity has resulted in many different brands of church. The church in America has changed in many ways since our nation was founded. The New York Times' David Brooks wrote this about a pastor of an American megachurch: "Americans have built themselves multimillion-dollar worship palaces," he argues. "These have become like corporations, competing for market share by offering social centers, child-care programs, first-class entertainment and comfortable, consumer Christianity." (Gregory, *The Marketing and Branding of the Church in America* 3)

It seems transparent in America's churches today that they are doing what they can to sustain and not lose members. Therefore, the concept of a competitive church

market directly connects with the idea that churches can be molded into full-fledged marketing engines by differentiating their denomination from other denominations. Thus, for the church to survive, it must be willing to reinvent itself to compete in the market of religion.

Third Finding: Budgeting and Proper Financial Planning for Church Branding and Marketing Must Be a Top Priority

Personal Observation

This researcher's personal pastoral career has made it clear that small churches do not financially plan for church branding and marketing. In fact, small churches do not see themselves in a competitive religious market at all. Consequently, this ideology hinders the small church's growth in the marketplace of religion. During the study, it was shown that active presiding elders and active pastors seeking the office of bishop take a more progressive stance on proper financial planning for church branding and marketing. Moreover, after the study, it is pronounced that a more advanced approach to effective leadership is needed in the church's branding and brand image concept of marketing.

Literature Review

Questions 22-27 in the research study addressed the importance of financial resources received for branding in the church. Of the respondents, 50.98% answered "No" to the fact that their church or district did not have an annual budget for marketing and branding, and 39.22% of pastors who took the survey answered that their church was not so likely to spend money from special offerings for branding. In addition, 32% disagreed with conducting fundraisers to use for expenses associated with branding, and 32.65% neither agreed nor disagreed with the notion that funding for branding has been

evident in their church or district since the COVID-19 pandemic. However, 30.61% disagree with the fact that funding for branding was evident prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sandra Mottner writes, “Fundraising for religious organizations is a form of nonprofit fundraising. However, in some religious organizations, fundraisings is not always seen in a positive light.” Mottner further denotes, “Christians have often heard the story of Jesus driving the money changers and merchants out of the temple (John 2:14-16).” This story, she adds:

Is often used as a metaphor for not mixing matters of money and matters of belief and faith. However, the reality is that churches and religious organizations need money with which to pay their expenses, including their ministers and priests, marketing expenses, providers of music and other services, maintenance of church buildings and property and all the other products and services needed to achieve their goals and objectives. (Sargeant and Jr 105)

Churches need financial support in area of its reality including branding and marketing.

Biblical Foundation

Several outreach agendas are sponsored by churches that need funds to accomplish their goals, and branding and brand image marketing should be at the forefront of the list.

Money is often a significant issue and need for church organizations. Not surprisingly, Christian church presiders often cite Bible passages to reinforce that giving to the church is a good idea, as in the verses of 2 Corinthians 9:7-8. However, this is in the general small church context, not to the branding and marketing issues.

As stated before, Carlo Nardella discussed that:

The mixture of faith and business has become increasingly evident. On the one hand, religious organizations employ sophisticated marketing techniques to attract various resources, including members, volunteers, funds, and public support. On the other hand, the business world appropriates religious and spiritual content to publicize and sell its products and services. (Nardella 1)

It has been declared that shopping and consuming may become the new religions of the time, making the link between religion and branding even more natural (Shachar et al. 2011).

Fourth Finding: Brand Ownership Significantly Impacts Missional Effectiveness

Personal Observation

Branding for the AME Church started when this researcher understood the meaning of the emblem and its symbolic meaning. The cross and the anvil have a symbolic and historical meaning that all African Methodists must register. The connotation of the cross is evident to anyone with a belief in God and proficiency in the Holy Bible and the Christian Church. However, the anvil, on the other hand, represents the origins which emerged from the depths of racism and bigotry, and when the founding fathers of the denomination desired to stay with Methodism, they purchased a blacksmith's shop and transformed it into their house of worship. They called it Bethel, meaning "House of God."

In the blacksmith's shop was an anvil used to beat and shape metal ore into an available and functioning object. As any blacksmith will reveal, hammers may wear down, and many a man may lose his vitality to the exhaustion from the challenging work of being a blacksmith, but the anvil never failed. A person only needs to buy one in their

entire lifetime, and it persists throughout many lifetimes. Thus is God. God cannot be beaten down, and God is Eternal. The anvil denotes the beginning and the enduring strength of the Lord and Savior that never fails. Therefore, for African Methodism, the cross and the anvil is the brand that represents a symbol of hope, salvation, and strength, the beginnings in a blacksmith shop, and the eternal ending in God's heavenly realm. It is and has been this researcher's connection to the brand and what it represents that has influenced his missional effectiveness in ministry.

Literature Review

Through this study, the literature review suggests that brand ownership is essential for missional effectiveness. As stated beforehand, after establishing in Philadelphia what is known as the "first independent Black denomination," W. E. B. DuBois would proclaim that the AME Church was "the greatest Negro institution in the world" (Whelchel 107). This assertion of W.E.B. DuBois directly reflects the brand ownership the AME Church projected through the practice of fulfilling its ongoing missional goals. Churches, small or large, that fail to acknowledge the implication of brand ownership and its significant function in missional effectiveness also fail to subsidize branding efforts.

Biblical Foundation

The biblical review in context suggests that even though God did not permit David to build a temple, David took ownership of the desire. Thus, it impacted David's missional effectiveness to ensure his son Solomon had everything needed to erect God's temple. According to 1 Chronicles 28:11-19, David gave all required to build God's temple because he took ownership, significantly impacting all that came after that. David

supplied the plans and the materials needed to build the temple because he understood that "the temple was not for man, but for God."

Ministry Implications of the Findings

First, the ministry implications of this study suggest that mainstream denominations, particularly the AME church, should look not only at the local impact on their brand but also at the world's view of their brand through the lenses of other countries and cultural perspectives. This approach can ensure that a mainstream denomination stays true to its missional objective locally and abroad.

Second, this study shows the relevance of considering the impact of branding and brand image in the marketplace of religion for a denominational church body as a whole. Every aspect of the denomination impacts the denomination regardless of the size of the church within its framework. Thus, this study will inform the practice of ministry by showing the relevance of leadership effectiveness training around branding and brand image in the religious market.

Third, budgeting and sound financial planning for small church branding and marketing must become a top priority, or the probability that small churches will survive is slim. Mainstream denominations should look at budgeting and financial planning to guarantee their smaller member churches depict the denominations' aims and branding goals and not fall by the wayside due to a scarcity of funding. The purpose is to teach and show that the church has not survived without business and finance, nor will it ever, as the paradigms of how the church operates continue to shift.

Finally, this study points to a greater need for denominations to take a more extraordinary stand on brand ownership on all levels of its ranking. Brand ownership

prompts effective missional outcomes that support the missional goals of the denomination. Once brand ownership is established, all churches can be held accountable and responsible to a higher standard regardless of the church's size within a denomination's ranks.

Limitations of the Study

Branding and brand image is not just a megachurch's need or issues. Still, it must be considered in all aspects of the church's growth and development process within and without denominational frameworks. This study only included active and retired clergy, both male and female, eighteen years and older, from different walks of faith. However, the insight gleaned from lay leadership within the church and the denomination can further enrich this study. Working with people can be a bit erratic. Therefore, unfortunately, this study did not garner the insights from an active bishop in the AME Church as desired.

Unexpected Observations

COVID-19 took the world by surprise. While there was not an anticipation of this study reaching clergy from outside the United States, COVID-19 has shown the world that technology will play a vital role in the church's life. Like technology, branding and brand image will also have the same lasting impact due to the pandemic. Also, it was surprising that church leaders outside the United States did not view church branding and brand imaging as relevant concepts to church growth and development. Another unanticipated finding was that active clergy was more pronounced in their commitment to the need for brand ownership than retired clergy, whom it was thought would be more candid about what the church needs to do to move forward without hindering restrictions.

Recommendations

This study can aid with continuing the conversation about church branding, brand imaging, and marketing. This study can also facilitate further research due to the lack of literature on this subject matter, particularly the impartation of the black church leadership growth and development. While this study is not limited in its reach, it can cross race, gender, creed, and denominational lines in its effectiveness. Therefore, mainstream denominations should take a closer look at their branded image and ensure that smaller-member churches are included in the conversation on their impact on the brand and their need for support to facilitate the denomination's missional effectiveness.

Postscript

The fantastic journey in research and collaboration with God through discernment, in every sense, has been a delight in the process of the possibilities that lie ahead for the small church context. I have loved the small church since my humble beginnings as a ministry leader and pastor. I will continue to love developing the next generation of leaders to impact the small church context. The AME Church started in a blacksmith's shop as it hammered on the anvil in the consciousness of what the church would look like moving forward. As we consider church branding and brand image for the small church, let us go back to the anvil, hammering into consciousness the importance of ensuring that the smaller churches are no longer left out of the branding conversation.

It is with great desire that denominational leaders will read this study with the knowledge that COVID-19 has taught us that we must do church differently. Furthermore, in doing so, we must make technology and church branding a part of the

leading conversation. God is doing a new thing! Let us not get left behind in what God is doing anew. More importantly, let us ensure we lift small churches along the way because their impact on the brand and the denominational missional effectiveness matters.

APPENDIXES

A. Survey Questions

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by James Pernell, Sr., a doctoral student from Asbury Theological Seminary. You are invited because you meet the criteria as Bishop, Presiding Elder, Itinerant Elder or Dean in the AME Church, and/or a Pastor of Non-AME faith.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a survey questionnaire. The duration will last up to 20 minutes. There will be no compensation. By participating, you will contribute to a gap in research on this topic. Your response will be confidential. No one will know your identity. Your name will be coded to protect your identification. I will keep the surveys and video recordings until my dissertation is written and approved. Please note that you can refuse to respond to any or all of the questions on the survey at your choosing.

If a question makes you uncomfortable in this study, you may call or write me anytime. My number is 662-394-5880, and my e-mail is jpernellsr@aol.com. Also, you can refuse to respond to any question and/or withdraw from this process should you desire.

If you have any questions about the research study, don't hesitate to contact my advisor Dr. Ed Beedle at ed.beedle@asburyseminary.edu.

Clicking "Yes" means that you have read this or had it read to you and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to participate in this study, click "No," and you will not be able to continue past this point. Participating in this study is purely voluntary. By clicking "Yes," you agree that you have been told about this study, why

it is being done, and given instructions on how to complete the survey.

Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study Signed by Clicking "Yes."

2. What is your age?
3. What is your ethnicity/race?
4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
5. What is your current religion, if any?
6. In what state is your home location?
7. In what state is your church located?
8. In your opinion, how convenient is the location of your church from your home?
9. Based on your church's anniversary, what is the age of your church?
10. How many members does your church have currently?
11. Is church branding important?
12. Is church branding being utilized in your church/district?
13. On a scale from 1-to-5 (5 being the highest), how significantly is church branding being used in your church/district?
14. How likely does branding assist with understanding your church's mission by the members and the public?
15. How would you describe your overall opinion of your church's brand?
16. How confident do you feel about your church's image?
17. Branding helps your church/district to grow attendance.
18. Branding helps my church/district to save souls and therefore attract new members.

19. The use of branding and brand identity has become more evident since the COVID-19 pandemic.
20. I believe that my church/district branding is in line with the higher levels of leadership/administrative operations.
21. You may express any additional comments about the use of branding in the church here.
22. Does your church/district have an annual budget for marketing and branding?
23. How likely is your church/district to use monies obtained from special offerings to spend for branding?
24. My church/district conducts fundraisers to use for expenses associated with branding.
25. Funding for branding has been evident in your church/district since the COVID-19 pandemic.
26. Funding for branding was evident in your church/district prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.
27. You may express any additional comments about the use of financial support/budget for branding in the church here.
28. My church/district advertises. Through printed media.
29. My church/district prominently displays select colors to represent my church/district.
30. My church/district is visible on social media platforms.
31. My church/district has a person responsible for marketing/advertising.

32. My church/district has a strong outreach campaign to the public to draw in membership and save souls.
33. You may express any additional comments about the best practices of branding in the church here.
34. How has COVID-19 heightened the awareness and need for branding and brand identity in your church?
35. Do you believe that your church can survive without branding in the next 25 years of its existence?

B. Zoom Interview Questions

LIVE INTERVIEW PROCESS VIA ZOOM PROCEDURE

PHASE I - INTRODUCTION

1. Explain to interview participants about my objective of the research project and my interest.
2. Explain how I plan to use the data collected from the interview.
3. Explain how I will share this information with my advisor professors and others who read my dissertation project.
4. Explain to participants that the primary purpose for this research project is to learn how religious leaders in churches view the subject in order to minimize bias.
5. I will provide a list of definitions so that the interview participants will understand a little bit more about the research and its purposes such there is a gap in literature on churches.
6. Ask if there are any questions and if there are questions and respond as necessary.

PHASE TWO

1. Tell me about your background and life story as it relates to your church.
2. What is your role in your church or denomination and how long have you been involved?
3. How old is your present church and share your church history?
4. What is your church location, population, location, and how do you classify your church (is it a small, medium sized large church?)
5. What is your philosophy or belief system about church branding and marketing?
6. To what extent is branding evident or carried out in your church?
7. Explain how budgeting and financial resources are factored into branding and marketing your church.

8. What challenges do you believe that your church faces in meeting the mission of the church?
9. Based on your belief system how successful do you believe you are in attracting members, meeting the mission of the church, and fulfilling the requirements of your church?
10. Reflecting on your experience, what lessons have you learned about church branding, it's impact on your church's community? Church growth or footprint? Meeting your goals/mission?

CONCLUSION

1. Let each participant know that they will receive a copy of the transcript for their review and to otherwise edit to ensure that their responses to questions are accurate by correcting errors and misinterpretations.
2. As coding occurs, the participants will review the topics to check for veracity.

C. Informed Consent Letters

Ethical Considerations

Consent Form Template Questionary

Date: _____

Dear _____

I am a Doctor of Ministry participant at Asbury Theological Seminary, and I am researching the topic The Epistemology of Branding and Brand Image In The Small Church. I want to invite you to participate in a questionnaire to assist me in gathering information to show the relevance of branding and the impact it can make in the life of the small church. I want to assure you that other than myself your responses will be kept confidential. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you are free to participate as much or as little as you choose in this questionnaire process. The questionnaire will be kept on a secure drive in my office. Once the research is completed in approximately three months, I will discard the questionnaire for an indefinite period, at least until my dissertation is written and approved. I realize that your participation is entirely voluntary, and I appreciate your willingness to consider being part of the study. Please feel free to call or write me at any time if you need any more information. My number is 662-394-5880, and my email address is james.pernell@asburyseminary.edu. My research advisor is Dr. Ed Beedle and his phone number is 317-445-6457. You may contact either of us at any time if you have questions about this study.

If you are willing to assist me in this study, please sign and date this letter below to indicate your voluntary participation. Thank you so much for being so helpful.

Sincerely,

James Pernell, Sr.,

I volunteer to participate in the study described above and so indicate by my signature below:

Your signature: _____ Date: _____

Please print your name: _____ Date: _____

Ethical Considerations

Consent Form Template Interview

Date: _____

Dear _____

I am a Doctor of Ministry participant at Asbury Theological Seminary, and I am conducting research on the topic The Epistemology of Branding and Brand Image In The Small Church. I want to invite you to participate in an interview to assist me in gather information to show the relevance of branding and the impact it can make in the life of the small church. I want to assure you that other than myself your responses will be kept confidential. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you are free to participate as much or as little as you choose in this interview process. The interview will be video, and audio recorded and then transcribed. Once the research is completed in approximately three months, I will discard the video and audio recordings and keep the transcriptions electronically for an indefinite period of time, at least until my dissertation is written and approved. I realize that your participation is entirely voluntary, and I appreciate your willingness to consider being part of the study. Please feel free to call or write me at any time if you need any more information. My number is 662-394-5880 and my email address is james.pernell@asburyseminary.edu. My research advisor is Dr. Ed Beedle and his phone number is 317-445-6457. You may contact either of us at any time if you have questions about this study. If you willing to assist me in this study, please sign and date this letter below to indicate your voluntary participation. Thank you so much for being so helpful.

Sincerely,
James Pernell, Sr.,

I volunteer to participate in the study described above and so indicate by my signature below:

Your signature: _____ Date: _____

Please print your name: _____ Date: _____

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