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# Complexities of Pastoral Change and Transition in the Megachurches of the Baptist General Conference, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and Presbyterian Church (USA)

Sheila Strobel Smith  
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COMPLEXITIES OF PASTORAL CHANGE AND TRANSITION  
IN THE MEGACHURCHES OF THE BAPTIST GENERAL CONFERENCE,  
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA,  
AND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA)

by

SHEILA STROBEL SMITH

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Luther Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment of

The Requirements for the Degree of

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ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

2010

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## ABSTRACT

*Complexities of Pastoral Change and Transition  
in the Megachurches of the Baptist General Conference,  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and Presbyterian Church (USA)*

by

Sheila Strobel Smith

The emergence of the megachurch in the United States represents a unique phenomenon which was shaped by a variety of cultural, political, economic, and religious forces. Megachurches have grown exponentially in recent years and now exercise unprecedented influence on the religious landscape in this country. Accompanying this phenomenon is a new and unique group of leaders who have guided these congregations through periods of rapid growth and substantial organizational change.

It is anticipated that many megachurches will encounter significant challenges in the future as the current senior pastors retire. Since existing research on megachurches has focused primarily on the congregations, little is known about the personal and professional characteristics of these pastors, and how, if at all, these pastors and congregations have prepared for changes in pastoral leadership. Protecting the sacred relationship between pastor and congregation is critical because the disruption of the sacred trust impacts the faith and spiritual practices of the pastor(s), staff, and congregation, as well as local and global ministries.

These issues were explored in twenty-two megachurches in three denominational systems – the Baptist General Conference, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and Presbyterian Church (USA). The results include a detailed description of the personal and professional characteristics of the senior pastors, and provide new insight into the

importance of relationships in their lives and ministries. The unique characteristics of these megachurches, as well as their relationships in the local community and around the world, contribute to the complexities of pastoral change and transition.

Historically, most of these megachurches have responded to, rather than prepared for, the inevitable departure of the senior pastor, which resulted in the disruption of the sacred relationship between the pastor and congregation. Many adhere to congregational or denominational policies which discourage, even preclude, any succession planning. Several pastors and congregations in the Baptist General Conference and Presbyterian Church (USA) are employing alternative approaches which promote continuity of leadership rather than disruption. The biblical, theological, historical, and theoretical resources engaged in this study support the anticipation of changes in pastoral leadership, rather than the reactionary approach currently utilized by many congregations.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,  
let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely,  
and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us . . .*  
*Hebrews 12:1*

This has been a humbling experience. Though I was expected to do individual research, I did not accomplish this by myself. Throughout this long journey, I depended on the grace of God, and “so great a cloud of witnesses” who sustained me through their steadfast love and prayers. Their faith carried me through the wilderness and across the finish line – for *this* race. There many more races to run so we must continue to pray as we discern God’s will for the future. There are many so people who contributed to this study that I chose to thank them privately. However, I would like to mention a few here. Many thanks to Rev. Dr. Richard Bliese, Rev. Dr. Alvin Luedke, and Rev. Dr. Mary Sue Dreier. I really appreciate the sacrifices you made so I could graduate this year. I could not have completed this research without the cooperation of the pastors, congregations, and denominations. In particular, I would like to express my gratitude to the pastors who graciously agreed to be interviewed and trusted me with their personal stories, concerns, and suggestions. Their affirmation of the importance of this research motivated me every day. I would also like to thank all of the people in the libraries I visited online or in person (see appendix Y), especially Luther Seminary, Bethel Seminary, and Metropolitan State University, whose collections and personal assistance facilitated my research. Finally, to my family and dearest friends – thank you for your unconditional love.

## PREFACE

Once upon a time, in a galaxy far, far away, I stumbled across one data point that changed my life forever. I was stunned at first, and then became concerned when I discovered that the mean age of pastors serving megachurches in the year 2000 was 52 years old.<sup>1</sup> What will happen to these congregations as these pastors retire, or accept another call before they retire? Who will lead these congregations in the future? Are these pastors and congregations prepared?

I realize that many people would not have taken notice, but in retrospect, my discovery was no accident. It was a Holy Spirit moment. God had been preparing me for this moment for my whole life. As Mordecai said to Esther, “And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14 RSV)

Why did I take notice? I am a middle-aged, late Baby Boomer who worked for a Fortune 500 corporation in which succession planning was taken very seriously. The company prided itself on promoting from within. My colleagues and I were well aware of the career path that led to the top, so it was fairly easy to predict who would be the next manager, director, or vice president. We were very sensitive to the role that experience and age played in these decisions because age and experience were often equated with a particular place on the corporate ladder. Retirement was a frequent topic of conversation

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<sup>1</sup> Scott L. Thumma, “Megachurches Today: Summary of Data from the Faith Communities Today Project.” (Hartford, CT: Hartford Institute for Religious Research) [http://hirr.hartsem.edu/org/faith\\_megachurches\\_FACTsummary.html](http://hirr.hartsem.edu/org/faith_megachurches_FACTsummary.html) (accessed January 5, 2003).



at lunch, particularly when the company's stock price was increasing. CEOs were expected to retire when they were 62 years old. Many of my colleagues retired at the earliest possible moment, some at age 55. Few stayed into their sixties.

My plans for retirement were altered by a significant career change. After twenty-one years in corporate America, I enrolled in the Master of Divinity (M.Div.) program at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. In February 2001, I attended a conference at the Community Church of Joy in Glendale, Arizona with a group of students and professors from Luther Seminary. I had never experienced a congregation so large and vibrant. I was fascinated by the complexity of the organization and the new campus. I was extremely impressed by the pastoral team and the staff. I wondered what it would be like to serve such a congregation.

After graduation in 2002, I pursued my interest in megachurches as a doctoral student in the new Congregational Mission and Leadership program at Luther Seminary. During my research for a course-related paper in the spring of 2003, I discovered that the mean age of pastors serving megachurches in the year 2000 was 52 years old. As I mentioned earlier, that data point changed my life forever.

My immediate concern led to additional research specifically focused on the pastors of megachurches. I was amazed to discover that though interest in megachurches was increasing, little research had been done on the pastors, individually or collectively. My observations were confirmed by Dr. Scott Thumma when we met for the first time in Norfolk, Virginia at the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion/ Religious Research Association (SSSR/RRA) annual meeting in October 2003. He encouraged me to continue my research on the pastors while he focused on the megachurches.

I spent the next year studying a sample of sixty-seven senior pastors serving the largest megachurches in the United States. The findings of this exploratory research confirmed my concerns about what I began to call “the impending transfer of leadership.” In this sample, the average age of the pastors in the sample was 54 years in 2004 and almost 30 % of the pastors were more than 60 years old.<sup>2</sup> They had served the current congregation for an average of 23 years. I realized that these congregations had little or no experience with pastoral transition.

The sheer potential for retirement was staggering enough, without taking into consideration other changes such as acceptance of another call, illness, or even death. In addition, I was amazed to discover that half of the pastors in the sample were the founding pastor and another 35% were leading these congregations when they became megachurches. These pastors had grown with these congregations, but no one knew much about them.

When I presented my findings at the 2004 SSSR/RRA annual meeting in Kansas City, I recommended that additional research be specifically focused on the pastors serving megachurches and the issues related to pastoral transition in these congregations utilizing a mixed methods research design. I have spent many years attempting to answer the countless questions in my head. Who are these pastors? Where did they come from? How have they changed over the years – personally and professionally? What does it take to lead a megachurch? Who could/would/should succeed them? Are these pastors and congregations prepared for “impending transfer of leadership”? What is God’s preferred future for these leaders and congregations?

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<sup>2</sup> Sheila Strobel Smith, “Megachurches: The Complexities of Leadership Transition” (paper presented at the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Kansas City, MO, October 2004).

This study is the next step in the exploratory process of understanding who these pastors are, and the complexities of pastoral change and transition in megachurches. I pray that the results of this study will benefit the kingdom of God by increasing awareness of the “impending transfer of leadership.”

*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do,  
do everything for the glory of God.*

*I Corinthians 10:31 (NSRV)*

Sheila Strobel Smith  
April 2010

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AARP	American Association of Retired People
ALC	American Lutheran Church
ARDA	American Religious Data Archive
ATLA	American Theological Library Association
BGC	Baptist General Conference
CGT	Church Growth Today
ELCA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
FBCD	First Baptist Church of Dallas
HIRR	Hartford Institute for Religious Research
IACG	Institute for American Church Growth
IMC	International Missionary Council
ISRR	Institute of Social and Religious Research
LCA	Lutheran Church in America
MM	Mixed Methods
NAE	National Association of Evangelicals
NSRV	New Revised Standard Version
PC(US)	Presbyterian Church in the United States
PC(USA)	Presbyterian Church (USA)
PK	Pastor's Kid
PTP	Project Test Pattern
QUAL	Qualitative
QUAN	Quantitative
RCA	Reformed Church of America
ROTC	Reserve Officer's Training Corps
RSV	Revised Standard Version
T&T	Tashakkori and Teddlie
UPCUSA	United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America
VCP	Vacancy Consultation Project
WATD	Worship Attendance

## DEDICATION

Moses said to the Israelites, “Now this is the commandment  
—the statutes and the ordinances—that the Lord your God charged me  
to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy,  
so that you and your children and your children's children  
may fear the Lord your God all the days of your life, and  
keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you,  
so that your days may be long.

Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently,  
so that it may go well with you, and  
so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey,  
as the Lord, the God of your ancestors, has promised you.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone.

You shall love the Lord your God  
with all your heart,  
and with all your soul,  
and with all your might.

Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart.  
Recite them to your children and talk about them  
when you are at home and when you are away,  
when you lie down and when you rise.

Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead,  
and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

Deuteronomy 6:1-9 NRSV

Finally, organization is, to a large extent, a means of overcoming the limitations mortality sets to what any one man can contribute. An organization that is not capable of perpetuating itself has failed.

An organization therefore has to provide today  
the men who can run it tomorrow.  
It has to renew its human capital.  
It should steadily upgrade its human resources.

The next generations should take for granted what the hard work and dedication of this generation has accomplished. They should, then, stand on the shoulders of their predecessors, establish a new “high” as the baseline for the generation after them.

An organization which just perpetuates today’s level of vision, excellence, and accomplishment has lost the capacity to adapt. And since the one and only thing certain in human affairs is change, it will not be capable of survival in a changed tomorrow.

Peter F. Drucker  
The Effective Executive  
1966



CHAPTER 1  
INTRODUCTION

*It will be a thrill to look across America in the year 2000  
and see tremendous institutions in every significant city carrying  
out fantastic programs to heal human hearts, to fill human needs;  
enormous centers of human inspiration where people rally  
by the thousands and tens of thousands on Sundays –  
and gather seven days a week for spiritual and personal growth.  
These tremendous spiritual-growth centers;  
these dynamic inspiration-generating centers;  
these great family-development centers will be proof positive  
of a renewed, revitalized and resurrected institutional church.*

*Robert Harold Schuller<sup>1</sup>*

Remarkably, Schuller's vision has become a reality for hundreds, perhaps thousands of congregations across the United States. Since he wrote these words in 1974, the institutional church has been renewed, revitalized, and resurrected by a new generation of pastoral leaders, many of whom were mentored by Schuller. They now exercise unprecedented influence on the religious landscape in the United States and around the world.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Harold Schuller, *Your Church Has Real Possibilities* (Glendale, CA: G/L Regal Books, 1974), 1-2. When this book was published, Schuller was the pastor of the Garden Grove Community Church in Garden Grove, California. Weekly attendance exceeded 5,000 persons at two services on Sundays. This book summarizes the techniques taught by Schuller to thousands of church leaders at the Institute for Successful Church Leadership from 1970 – 2005.

<sup>2</sup> At least twenty of the *50 Most Influential Christians in America* in 2006 were serving megachurches. "The Top 50 Most Influential Christians in America," *Church Report*, January 2007. For example, the pastors of the megachurches in Houston were instrumental in providing care for the victims of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. See Francis Helguero, "Nation's Largest Megachurch Works with Partners to Aid Hurricane Victims." (Washington, DC: Christian Post) [http://www.christianpost.com/article/20050916/3857\\_Nation%27s\\_Largest\\_Megachurch\\_Works\\_with\\_Partners\\_to\\_Aid\\_Hurricane\\_Victims.htm](http://www.christianpost.com/article/20050916/3857_Nation%27s_Largest_Megachurch_Works_with_Partners_to_Aid_Hurricane_Victims.htm) (accessed September 16, 2005); Denis Staunton, "Churches Play Crucial Role in Disaster Relief," *Irish Times*, September 16, 2005. In addition, several pastors have been

Many of these pastors began their ministries in the mid-1980s with a few people in their own living room or with a small congregation. By the mid-1990s, thousands of people gathered in massive worship centers during multiple services each weekend. These congregations, now commonly called *megachurches*, have grown exponentially in size and number from ten in 1970 to more than 1,000 in 2006.<sup>3</sup> The average worship attendance (WATD) in the 50 largest megachurches in the United States ranged from 9,500 to 43,500 persons per week in 2008.<sup>4</sup>

The increasing complexity of these congregations and scope of the pastor's responsibilities create a constant tension between secular and sacred. These pastors are often compared to corporate CEOs because they manage multi-million dollar budgets, supervise large staffs, champion local and global initiatives, write books and articles, teach at renown colleges and universities, speak at seminars, and serve on numerous boards.<sup>5</sup> Some laud them as charismatic, visionary, and entrepreneurial, while others criticize them for their personal and professional success.<sup>6</sup>

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very outspoken on a number of issues including global warming and the AIDS crisis in Africa. Phillip Jordan, "Rick Warren Hosts Aids Conference to Reverse Evangelicals' Neglect." (Jacksonville, FL: Associated Baptist Press) <http://www.abpnews.com/706.article> (accessed December 2, 2005); Margo Roosevelt, "Evangelicals Go Green," *Time*, February 8, 2006; Holly Lebowitz Rossi, "Evangelical Embrace New Global Priorities," BeliefNet) [http://www.beliefnet.com/story/168/story\\_16822\\_1.html](http://www.beliefnet.com/story/168/story_16822_1.html) (accessed February 9, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> A megachurch is typically defined as a Protestant congregation with an average weekly worship attendance of more than 2,000 persons. John N. Vaughan, *The Large Church: A Twentieth-Century Expression of the First-Century Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 11. For Vaughan's annual statistics on megachurches, see John N. Vaughan, "The 100 Largest U.S. Churches," *Outreach Magazine*, Special Issue 2006.

<sup>4</sup> "The 100 Largest U.S. Churches," *Outreach Magazine*, Special Issue 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Luisa Kroll, "Megachurches, Megabusinesses," *Forbes*, September 17, 2003; William Symonds, Brian Grow, and John Cady, "Earthly Empires," *Business Week*, May 23, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Some of these pastors have become celebrities in recent years. For example, both Joel Osteen and Rick Warren were featured by major magazines in August 2008. Karl Taro Greenfeld, "God Wants Me

It is the sacred interpretation of charisma and relationships that applies here, not the secular focus on charismatic personalities and organizational success. Charismata are gifts of the Holy Spirit. A pastor should not “be able to inspire people because he has charisma but his ability to inspire people is evidence of his charisma.”<sup>7</sup> These pastors were called through the power of the Holy Spirit, not hired. They have committed their lives to inviting people into relationship with Jesus Christ and encouraging believers to live into their faith in response to God’s gift of grace.

Acceptance of this invitation reflects the intimate nature of the relationship between the pastor and every soul in the congregation. A sacred trust develops between the pastor and the congregation as they share life’s most intimate moments including birth and death, illness and recovery, and marriage and divorce. The people watch and listen as the pastor interprets God’s word, celebrates baptisms, and breaks bread at the Lord’s Table. They refer to the pastoral leader as “my pastor” in contrast to employees of corporations who typically refer to “the CEO.”

Ultimately, the relationship between the pastor and congregation will be dissolved for personal and professional reasons, voluntarily or involuntarily. When congregations

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to Be Rich,” *Conde Nast*, August 2008; David Van Biema, “The Global Ambition of Rick Warren,” *Time*, August 18, 2008. Others have faced congressional investigations or criminal charges. For example, a congressional investigation of the financial records of several megachurches was launched in November 2007. Jennie Jarvie, “Is Prosperity a Blessing from God or a Crime?,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 12, 2008; Suzanne Sataline, “Tax Collectors Test Churches’ Hospitality,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 19, 2008. The resignation of Ted Haggard from New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and as president of the National Association of Evangelicals in November 2006 for alleged sexual misconduct received national media attention. See Rita Healy, “A Mega-Scandal for a Mega-Church,” *Time*, November 3, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Elmer L. Towns, *America’s Fastest Growing Churches: Why 10 Sunday Schools Are Growing Fast* (Nashville, TN: Impact Books, 1972), 148-49. His chapter on charismatic leadership provided a groundbreaking analysis of charismatic leaders in large, fast-growing congregations.

react to pastoral vacancies rather than plan for pastoral changes, the period between installed pastors may last months, even years, depending on the circumstances.

But, a pastoral change in a congregation of any size is more than an organizational issue. It is a matter of faith. Disruptions in the sacred trust impact the faith and spiritual practices of the pastor, staff, and congregation, as well as local and global ministries. Children and adults may be adversely impacted by stress and ambiguity as they respond to the situation emotionally, spiritually, and financially. Some may decide to stay, some may decide to worship elsewhere, and others may choose to shop for groceries.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Many of the current pastors, and a key constituency of the megachurches – the Baby Boomers, will reach retirement age during the next decade. A majority of these pastors are either the founder or grower, with an average tenure of 23 years.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, many of the largest congregations in the United States have little or no experience with pastoral change and transition.

Since existing research on megachurches has focused primarily on the congregations, little was known about the personal and professional characteristics of these pastors, much less the qualifications necessary for leading these congregations in the future. Even less was known about how, if at all, these leaders and congregations

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<sup>8</sup> Smith, “Megachurches: The Complexities of Leadership Transition”. *Founder* - the first installed pastor and the installed pastor when worship attendance exceeded 2,000. *Grower* – Installed pastor (not founder) who was instrumental in leading the congregation when worship attendance exceeded 2,000. Analysis of the 50 largest megachurches in 2008 reaffirmed the 2004 findings: the majority of the senior pastors (92%) were either the founder or grower; the 31 founders were 53 years old with an average tenure of 23 years; and the 15 founders were 55 years old with an average tenure of 22 years. “The 100 Largest U.S. Churches.”

have prepared for any changes in pastoral leadership. Therefore, I concluded that additional research on these leaders and congregations was needed, particularly in anticipation of changes in pastoral leadership.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the little-known phenomena of pastoral change and transition in megachurches in order to describe who the pastors and congregations are, and determine how, if at all, they are addressing pastoral change and transition. The secondary purpose was to develop a methodology in this exploratory phase that would facilitate future research.

Twenty-two megachurches in three denominational systems – the Baptist General Conference, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and Presbyterian Church (USA)<sup>9</sup> were explored in order to: a) create a thick description of these pastors and congregations; b) analyze current processes in order to identify issues and opportunities for improvement; c) give voice to their concerns, ideas, and recommendations; and d) frame relevant questions for future discussion and research.<sup>10</sup> Given the descriptive and

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<sup>9</sup> Brief profiles of the Baptist General Conference, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and Presbyterian Church (USA) are included in appendix Q. The Baptist General Conference changed its name to Converge Worldwide in June 2008.

<sup>10</sup> The phrase “thick description” was coined by British philosopher Gilbert Ryle in two essays titled “*Thinking and Reflecting*” and “*The Thinking of Thoughts*” which were reprinted in Gilbert Ryle, *Collected Papers: 1929 - 1968*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (London: Hutchinson, 1971). The phrase was later popularized by American anthropologist Clifford Geertz who defined thick description as an explanation or a deeper meaning given to a behavior or event. Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpreted Theory of Culture,” in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1977), 10.

exploratory purposes of the research, this study began without any a priori hypotheses,<sup>11</sup> and was guided by two primary questions:

- (1) What are the characteristics of these pastors and the congregations they serve?
- (2) How, if at all, have these pastors and congregations addressed pastoral change and transition?

### **Research Methodology**

The research process was guided by Stebbins' Concatenated Exploration Process (figure 17) in order to explore the little-known phenomena of pastoral change and transition through the collection and analysis of quantitative (QUAN) and qualitative (QUAL) data. By design, the process relied on descriptive statistics during this phase. The variables, processes, and methodologies that emerged from this research provided the foundation for the recommendations for future research in Chapter 7.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following list includes definitions for the critical terms used in this study.

- *Church and Congregation* – Refer to appendix A.
- *Denomination* – a large group of religious congregations united under a common faith and name and organized under a single administrative and legal hierarchy<sup>12</sup>
- *Ecclesiology* – the study of the church in an effort to understand its nature and mission<sup>13</sup>
- *Judicatory* – a governing body of a religious organization or denomination

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<sup>11</sup> Tashakkori and Teddlie suggest that the purpose of the study in exploratory research is “typically stated in terms of research questions” instead of hypotheses. Abbas Tashakkori and Charles Teddlie, *Mixed Methodology: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 53.

<sup>12</sup> *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/denomination> (accessed March 16, 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Roger Haight, *Christian Community in History: Historical Ecclesiology*, 3 vols., vol. 1 (New York, NY: Continuum, 2004), 17.

- *Leadership Transition* – the process of transferring knowledge and responsibilities from one leader to another within an organization
- *Megachurch* – a Protestant congregation with an average weekly worship attendance of more than 2,000 persons
- *Mixed Methods* – research in which the investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or program of inquiry.<sup>14</sup>
- *Multisite* – physical extensions of one congregation. Refer to appendix A.
- *Polity* – the form of governance of an organization, church, nation, or state
- *Qualitative data* – typically textual in nature, consisting of written or spoken words, but may also include video recordings and photographs as well as narrative text<sup>15</sup>
- *Quantitative data* – categorical data, with either enumeration or measurement within categories<sup>16</sup>
- *Succession Planning* – an intentional, disciplined, and pro-active process for identifying and preparing leaders at every level of an organization.<sup>17</sup>

### **Delimitations**

The scope of this study was limited to the congregations in the Baptist General Conference (BGC), Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and the Presbyterian Church (USA) (PC(USA)) with an average worship attendance in excess of 2,200 for five years (2000-2004) as reported by the individual congregations to the national governing bodies of these denominations. This study focused on pastoral changes initiated by the senior pastor, particularly those which were not caused by

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<sup>14</sup> Charles Teddlie and Abbas Tashakkori, *Foundations of Mixed Methods Research: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches in the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2009), 7.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph A. Maxwell and Diane M. Loomis, “Mixed Methods Design: An Alternative Approach,” in *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research*, ed. Abbas Tashakkori and Charles Teddlie (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), 249.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Robert M. Fulmer and Jay Alden Conger, *Growing Your Company's Leaders: How Great Organizations Use Succession Management to Sustain Competitive Advantage* (New York, NY: AMACOM, 2004), 8.

significant conflict, misconduct, or malfeasance which would require additional resources such as counselors, attorneys, investigators, civil authorities, or judicatory representatives. Detailed analysis of personal or congregational financial data was not included the scope of this study.

### **Limitations**

The results and conclusions of this study apply to the pastors serving the twenty-two megachurches in the BGC, ELCA, and the PC(USA). The limited number of cases (maximum n=22) decreases the generalizability of the findings. In addition, only one ELCA pastor participated in the interviews so the ELCA perspective may be underrepresented. The methodology of this study may be transferable in order to study other pastors serving megachurches in the United States, especially those in traditional denominations.

The geographic distribution of the congregations in these denominations may affect the data in this study, though any bias was unintentional. The physical location of the megachurches in these denominations was not considered when the denominations were selected. The majority of the congregations in the BGC and ELCA are located in the Midwest (55%) and West (41%), which is consistent with the overall denominations' geographic distributions. In particular, nine of the congregations (41%) in the BGC and ELCA are located in Minnesota, specifically in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area. Though this was very convenient for conducting research, it was not intentional.



### **Ethical Considerations**

The purpose of this study was accurately and adequately represented to all participants. The national offices of the BGC, ELCA, and PC(USA) were aware of this study. All data received directly from the ELCA and PC(USA) were released with approval by the appropriate parties at their national headquarters.

Appropriate precautions were taken to protect the persons, congregations, documents, and data involved in this study. All of these data were considered confidential and were treated as such by all persons involved in this research, including myself, the data base programmer, and transcriptionist. Data were continually monitored during the research process in order to assure validity and accuracy. Inclusive language was used as appropriate.

Seven interviews were digitally recorded with the pastor's approval. These conversations were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. The quotes from the interviews which appear in Chapter 6 were edited for clarity and to protect the identity of the pastor as appropriate.

I claim and retain intellectual property rights to all data and information collected during this study. I will not use these data and information for any purposes outside of this study, future research, and related publications. I do not have any Social Security numbers, bank account numbers, salaries, or any other highly sensitive data for any persons in the study.

### **Significance of the Study**

Exploration of the little-known phenomena of pastoral change and transition in megachurches confirmed that the future for many of these congregations is at risk because few have prepared for the impending transfer of leadership. Protecting the sacred relationship between pastor and congregation is critical because the disruption of the sacred trust impacts the faith and spiritual practices of the pastors, staff, and congregation, as well as local and global ministries.

Detailed personal and professional profiles of the pastors reveal the importance of relationships in their lives and ministries. In addition, the particular characteristics of megachurches, as well as their relationship with the local community and around the world, contribute to the complexities of pastoral change and transition.

Biblical, theological, historical, and theoretical resources provided the foundation for anticipating changes in pastoral leadership, in contrast to the reactionary approach currently utilized by many congregations. Interviews with a select sample of these pastors revealed their concerns with interim ministry, and their interest in succession planning.

The exploratory research process implemented in this study (figure 18) provided recommendations for future research topics and a research process design. Continued exploration of pastoral change and transition in megachurches will require additional criteria for defining, describing, and classifying megachurches.

### **Outline of Chapters**

Relationships are the focus of this study, particularly the relationship between pastor and congregation. Given the sacred nature of this relationship, biblical and

theological perspectives on pastoral change and transition are explored in Chapter 2. The patterns, themes, and processes encountered in the biblical narrative are evaluated from a historical perspective in Chapter 3 through the stories of key leaders who influenced the emergence of the megachurch. The reactionary approach to pastoral vacancies is compared to proactive planning for pastoral change and transitions in Chapter 4. A review of the related research literature which informed this study is presented in Chapter 5 in addition to an explanation of the research methodology. The results for the two research questions (1) *What are the characteristics of these pastors and the congregations they serve?* and (2) *How, if at all, have these pastors and congregations addressed pastoral change and transition?* are presented in Chapter 6. These results are interpreted biblically, theologically, historically, and theoretically in Chapter 7, in addition to recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2  
BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

*Do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord,  
so that it may go well with you.  
Deuteronomy 6:18a*

In keeping with the exploratory nature of this study, the purpose of this chapter was to discover how, if at all, biblical and theological perspectives inform pastoral change and transition in congregations. Guided by the two research questions, I first explored specific sections of the biblical narrative 1) the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) and Joshua; 2) the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John); and 3) the Acts of the Apostles, in order to identify themes, patterns, and processes.<sup>1</sup> Second, I examined Miroslav Volf's proposal for a participative model of the church that is grounded in the image of the Triune God.<sup>2</sup> His relational approach stresses the importance of the participation of the congregation, laity and officeholders, in the transmission of faith through their ministry and decision making.

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<sup>1</sup> In order to manage the scope of this analysis, these books were purposely selected to provide insight on leadership selection, development, and transition processes in the Hebrew and New Testaments. I chose these particular books because I was interested in exploring these processes in the stories of Moses and Joshua, Jesus and the apostles, and the apostle Paul. In addition to the texts selected here, there are multiple opportunities for further research throughout the biblical narrative including I and II Samuel, I and II Kings, and Paul's epistles.

<sup>2</sup> Volf's detailed argument was originally published in Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*. Sacra Doctrina (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1998). A summary of his argument appeared in Miroslav Volf, "Community Formation as an Image of the Triune God: A Congregational Model of Church Order and Life," in *Community Formation in the Early Church and in the Church Today*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002).

## **Biblical Perspectives**

*And I will walk among you,  
and will be your God, and you shall be my people.  
Leviticus 26:12*

The dominant theme that emerged from this analysis was the importance of relationships. Genesis reveals that divine design for all of creation is based upon the relationship within the Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Adam and Eve were created in the image of God, to be in relationship with a relational God, with other humans, and with all of creation.

God intends that these relationships be sustained from generation to generation so that “men, women, and children, as well as the aliens residing in your towns, . . . may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God and to observe diligently all the words of this law, and so that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God” (Deut. 31:12-13a). Though called to be faithful and obedient, humans repeatedly violate the divine design through their sinful behavior and suffer the consequences of neglecting their relationship with God and all of creation. Despite their frailties, God remains faithful, loving, forgiving, and committed to being in relationship with them.

The biblical narrative bears witness to the unlikely people chosen and empowered by God in order to establish, sustain, and restore relationships with all of creation. Their stories are explored in three sections of the biblical narrative – the Pentateuch and Joshua, the Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles – in order to identify patterns, themes, and processes that inform the research questions.

## The Pentateuch and Joshua

*God blessed them, and God said to them,  
“Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it;  
and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air  
and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”  
Genesis 1:28*

God is described as one who creates, elects, saves, promises, blesses, gives the law, and judges in these texts.<sup>3</sup> As such, God is portrayed as a relational God, one who is “present and active in the world, enters into a relationship of integrity with the world, and both world and God are affected by that interaction.”<sup>4</sup>

Humans, created in the image of God from the dust of the earth, are called to be obedient and faithful to God as they care for all of creation. Their sinful behavior negatively impacts relationships on multiple levels including: between humans and God; among humans, particularly within families and communities; between humans and the land; and within the self.<sup>5</sup>

The relationships between God and humans were manifested in different ways. The LORD God spoke directly with Noah, Abraham, and Moses. God was visible to the Israelites as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. The Israelites witnessed God’s command over creation through the plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, and providing manna in the desert. God communicated through visions and dreams with Jacob and Joseph. Emissaries such as “the angel of the LORD” appeared to Abraham, Hagar, Jacob, and Moses.

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<sup>3</sup> Terence E. Fretheim, *The Pentateuch*. Interpreting Biblical Texts (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 44-51.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

Though there are numerous relationships in the Pentateuch to consider, I chose to focus on God's relationships with three specific leaders – Moses, Aaron, and Joshua – in order to identify patterns, themes, and processes. My analysis focused on God's involvement with the selection of these leaders, followed by their preparation and development, and finally, the transition from one leader to the next leader(s).

### **Selection**

God intended that the divine-human relationship would be sustained through the transfer of God's blessing from generation to generation within selected families, beginning with Adam and Eve. This process was effective for several generations until the descendants sinned against God by neglecting the sacred relationship. God typically intervened by choosing a new leader through whom the blessing would again be transferred. The cycle of blessing, human sinfulness, and divine intervention is repeated throughout Genesis by the descendants of Adam and Eve, Noah, and Abraham.

Beginning with Isaac, son of Abraham, the blessing was transferred from father to son(s) just prior to the patriarch's death.<sup>6</sup> The complexities of this process were quite significant in this context considering that the patriarch often had multiple wives, concubines, and handmaids bearing children.<sup>7</sup> A variety of factors influenced who became the next patriarch including:

- Marriages within the family tree were very common and intended to preserve the genetic heritage.

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<sup>6</sup> Before he died, Abraham gave the land and all his possessions to his son, Isaac, who was later blessed directly by God, not by his father (Genesis 25:5, 11).

<sup>7</sup> An excellent study of this phenomenon was written by Ktziah Spanier, "Aspects of Fratriarchy in the Old Testament" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1989).

- There was a hierarchy among the wives, concubines, and handmaids. Children of concubines and handmaids never receive the primary paternal blessing.
- The role of the mother was critical for determining who received the paternal blessing. Frequently, there was deliberate deception of the father by the sons and their mothers.
- Firstborns are often deprived of their inheritance.
- Firstborn sons of each mother are trained as leaders within her household.

This pattern continued until Isaac's grandchildren (Jacob's children, the Israelites) were enslaved in Egypt. Family relationships, particularly between fathers and sons, continued to be important in the selection process throughout the Pentateuch. After God's intervention through Moses (see below), God established a new covenant with the entire community and other patterns of leadership selection emerged.

### Called by God

There are numerous people in the Pentateuch who were called directly by God to fulfill God's purposes. Noah, Abraham, and Moses were chosen to serve when God intervened after a crisis or a situation of distress. Others were chosen under less stressful, even controlled, situations such as Aaron and Joshua.

### *Moses*

Moses, a descendent of Levi, was adopted by the Pharaoh's daughter as an infant.<sup>8</sup> He was raised with all the privileges of an Egyptian prince in the Pharaoh's household.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The story of Moses begins in Exodus 1. Genetic heritage becomes an increasingly important factor from this point forward, particularly for the descendents of Levi, the third son of Jacob and Leah. Moses (his Egyptian name meaning "drawn out of the water") parents were Jochebad and Amram. Moses' mother was the daughter of Levi. Her brother Kohath was the father of Amram. In other words, Amram was Levi's grandson, and Jochebad's nephew and husband. Her name means "Yahweh's glory." At birth, Jochebad and Amram named their third born child Chaver – meaning "friend." Moses' grandfather Levi called him Avigdor – meaning "father, protector." His older siblings were Miriam and Aaron. Tracey R. Rich, "Moses, Aaron and Miriam," <http://www.jewfaq.org/moshe.htm> (accessed August 7, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Moses' adopted mother intended for him to become the next Pharaoh. His grandfather and other Egyptian leaders were concerned about this possibility. Louis H. Feldman, "Philo's View of Moses'



God called out to Moses after God heard the Israelites' cry for help while they were enslaved in Egypt. While most of the persons called by God simply obeyed, Moses exemplifies the reluctant leader. When Moses heard the voice of God calling to him out of the burning bush, Moses hid his face.<sup>10</sup>

After God explained that Moses had been chosen to liberate the Israelites from Egypt and return them to the promised land of Canaan, he quickly protested by arguing that he was ill-equipped due to his speech impediment, so God gave him the ability to perform signs. He continued to resist God's assurances of support until God angrily suggested that Moses' brother Aaron speak on his behalf. God established such a uniquely personal relationship with Moses that only Moses was permitted to communicate face-to-face with God.

#### *Aaron and the Priesthood*

Unlike his younger brother, Aaron did not protest or question God's request to speak for Moses.<sup>11</sup> Aaron, their sister Miriam, her husband Hur, and Joshua became Moses' closest advisors. Aaron's speaking abilities and credibility with the Israelites

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Upbringing," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 64, no. 2 (2002). Moses was marginalized between his Hebrew heritage and adopted Egyptian family because he knew that his grandfather was persecuting the Israelites. Moses may have been present when Jethro, one of the Pharaoh's counselors, was dismissed because of his "friendly attitude" toward the Israelites. (*B. Sota* 11a, *B. Sanhedrin* 106a, and *Exodus Rabba* 1:9). Judith Reesa Baskin, *Pharaoh's Counsellors: Job, Jethro, and Balaam in Rabbinic and Patristic Tradition* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983). The tension culminated when Moses angrily killed an Egyptian who was abusing Hebrew laborers. Moses fled to escape the Pharaoh's wrath. It is possible that he intentionally sought refuge with Jethro, who had become a pagan high priest in Midian. Moses later married Jethro's daughter, Zipporah. Moses was shepherding Jethro's sheep in the wilderness when God called out to him from the burning bush.

<sup>10</sup> Moses' encounter with God typifies a "call narrative" which includes some or all of the following elements: 1) a theophany or divine appearance; 2) introductory word; 3) divine commission; 4) objection by the person; 5) reassurance by God; and 6) a sign. Terence E. Fretheim, *Exodus. Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1991), 51.

<sup>11</sup> See chap.2, n. 10. Aaron did not object, need reassurance by God, or request a sign.

were valuable assets during the preparation for the exodus.<sup>12</sup> Initially, Aaron's primary responsibilities were to gather the people together and communicate God's word to them.

Later, God chose Aaron and his sons to serve as priests, assisted by the Levites.<sup>13</sup> God's divine design for the priesthood included provisions for succession, leadership development, rites of ordination, and a training manual.<sup>14</sup> God intended that each generation would mentor and prepare the next generation to become priests. In the presence of God and the Israelites, Moses carefully followed God's instructions for the preparation and ordination of Aaron and his sons. The following process lasted seven days: *Washing, investiture, and anointing* (Exodus 29:4-9); *Purification* (vv. 10-14); *Propitiation* (vv.15-18); *Ordination* (vv.19-21); *Homage* (vv. 22-27).<sup>15</sup>

#### Called by the Community

Though God plays a dominant role in the Pentateuch, the community also participated in the selection and development of leaders. After Moses led the Israelites out of their bondage in Egypt, he became the official arbiter of God's covenant with

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<sup>12</sup> After Aaron performed signs for the elders and all of the people, they believed him and worshipped God. Aaron negotiated with the Pharaoh, performed signs, and initiated the first three plagues.

<sup>13</sup> God chose the Levities to make atonement for all of the Israelites by serving as caretakers of the tent of meeting, and to serve Aaron and his descendants (Numbers 8:14, 18-19).

<sup>14</sup> See Leviticus 8-9.

<sup>15</sup> Wayne A. Meeks and Jouette M. Bassler, *The HarperCollins Study Bible: New Revised Standard Version, with the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1993), 132. Note the superiority of prophet over priest in that Aaron was trained by and still answers to Moses. There are two notable provisions in the text – the priestly vestments are to be passed on from father to son (Ex 29:29-30), and the priests and Levites could only serve between ages 30 and 50 (Numbers 4).

Israel.<sup>16</sup> When the role overwhelmed Moses, additional leaders were chosen from the community to serve as elders, judges, and officers.

Near the end of the journey, Moses and Aaron violated the trust and the relationship in front of the Israelites when they disobeyed God's instructions for providing water from the rock at Mirabah. God responded by announcing to Moses and Aaron that they would die before the Israelites reached the promised land. Neither of them argued with God. Remarkably, Moses first reaction was to ask God to appoint someone else to lead the Israelites into the promised land so they would not be abandoned.

God chose Joshua, son of Nun, a man filled with the spirit, to be Moses' successor. Joshua, a descendent of Joseph, had faithfully served as Moses' assistant and field commander for forty years. He had found favor with God particularly when he was sent to spy on the Canaanites.<sup>17</sup> Like Aaron, Joshua did not question or comment when Moses informed him of God's plan.<sup>18</sup>

God actively involved both Moses and the Israelites in the selection process. Though Joshua was clearly God's first and only choice, and endorsed by Moses, Joshua

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<sup>16</sup> Creach suggests that "Moses accepted the role of covenant mediator because the people realized that to see the fire of God on the mountain meant death. The great lawgiver agreed to stand between the people and God knowing that, as one "from among [the] people" (Deut. 18:15), he too would die after seeing God's glory." Jerome F. D. Creach, *Joshua*. Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 2003), 120.

<sup>17</sup> Caleb, a descendent of Esau, accompanied Joshua on the reconnaissance mission to Canaan. They were the only two spies who provided positive reports and were the only two allowed to cross over into the promised land. See Numbers 13.

<sup>18</sup> See chap. 2, n. 10 and n. 11. Unlike Moses, Joshua did not object, need reassurance by God, or request a sign.

stood before the chief priest as the community discerned God's will through the Urim stones (Exodus 28:29-30, Numbers 27:18-23).

Two primary patterns for leadership selection were found in the Pentateuch and Joshua. In the beginning, God alone selected the leaders but over time, God actively involved the current leader and the community in the selection process. Whether they were called by God, or called by the community, these leaders were called to sustain the relationship between God and creation. Their leadership skills were developed through their relationships and experiences with God and the community.

### **Leadership Development**

Leaders were typically developed through relationships and experiences, which were often intertwined. In addition to the relationship with God, mentors and members of the community contributed to the development of these leaders. Mentors included previous leaders, blood or adopted relatives, members of the community, or strangers. In some cases, the mentors would not have considered themselves as such, but their influence was still important. These relationships usually evolved over many years, such as with Joshua, who served as Moses' assistant for forty years.

The relationship between protégé and mentor was not always cordial. Nevertheless, Laban, Potiphar, and Pharaoh prepared Jacob, Joseph, and Moses for future leadership roles. In each of these situations, the protégé benefited from the power, position, and wealth of the mentor. Jacob and Moses married their mentors' daughters.

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, the Midian priest, exemplifies a perceptive and caring mentor.<sup>19</sup> For example, when he recognized that Moses was working too hard and needed help (Exodus 18:13-27), he made several valuable recommendations which benefited Moses and the Israelites:

- Teach the statutes to all of the people so that they know what to do
- Select able men from among the people, who are trustworthy and hate dishonesty
- Establish an organizational hierarchy
- Give proper authority to them so that they can make appropriate decisions
- Handle only the most important cases yourself

The tension throughout these stories is “who will be the successor?” As noted earlier, the common expectation was that the first-born son would succeed the father, but there are many examples where this did not occur for a variety of reasons. It is also unclear as to whether Joshua expected to be Moses' successor.

As for Aaron and his sons, God intended that each generation would mentor and prepare the next generation to become priests. Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, were in training long before they were ordained. They accompanied Moses, Aaron, and the elders when they went up the mountain to see God. As the oldest son, Nadab was destined to become the chief priest. However, Nadab and Abihu died on the same day they were ordained for disobeying God's ordinances for worship. Consequently, Eleazar eventually succeeded his father as the chief priest, though he probably did not expect to do so.

Leaders in the Pentateuch were greatly influenced by their relationships with God and other humans, and their life experiences, which were often intertwined. Some of the

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<sup>19</sup> See chap. 2, n. 9.

protégés succeeded their mentors, others did not. Examples of transitions from one leader to another are presented in the next section.

### **Transitions**

Three key examples provided insight into the importance of the involvement by God and the community in leadership transitions. The first two examples involve the transition from one leader to another. The third example illustrates the decentralization of power from Joshua to the tribal leaders.

#### Aaron to Eleazar

God instructed Moses to take Aaron and his son Eleazar up Mount Hor for the transition. Moses removed Aaron's vestments and placed them on his third-born son Eleazar. After Aaron died on the mountain top, Moses and Eleazar returned to the Israelites waiting below. Aaron did not bless his sons before he died on Mount Hor. The Israelites mourned for thirty days.

#### Moses to Joshua

The process of leadership transition from Moses to Joshua was more complicated than from Aaron to Eleazar (Numbers 27:18-19, Deuteronomy 31).

- Moses requested a successor after learning that he would not be allowed to complete his mission.
- God chose Moses' successor and instructed Moses how to proceed.
- Moses gathered all of the Israelites together to explain that he would not be accompanying them into the promised land. He quickly assured them that God himself, then Joshua, would cross over the Jordan before them. Moses promised that God would enable them to conquer their enemies and take possession of the land. He encouraged them to be strong and bold, to have no fear, and assured them again that God would never fail or forsake them.
- Moses addressed Joshua in the presence of the Israelites. Moses advised Joshua to be strong and bold – two qualities that he would need in order to

lead the stiff-necked Israelites into the promised land and take possession of it. Moses assured Joshua that God would go before him, be with him, and never fail or forsake him.

- Moses wrote down the law given to him by God and entrusted it to the Levites. He commanded the Levites and elders to observe the law and teach it to their descendents so that they would learn to trust the LORD.
- As Joshua stood before all of the Israelites, Eleazar the priest inquired of the Urim stones.<sup>20</sup>
- Moses laid his hands on Joshua thereby sharing his authority as God had commanded.
- Moses and Joshua presented themselves to God in the tent of meeting where God appeared in the form of a cloud and commissioned Joshua saying, “Be strong and bold, for you shall bring the Israelites into the land that I promised them; I will be with you” (Deuteronomy 31:32).

When they emerged from the tent, Moses – the greatest prophet, the human closest to God – sang about God’s faithfulness to their ancestors. He reminded the Israelites that their future depended on their continued relationship as God’s chosen people. Then Moses blessed each tribe by name before he died there in the land of Moab, at the Lord’s command (Deuteronomy 34:5).

### Joshua to Community

God reaffirmed his relationship with Joshua after Moses died. He reminded Joshua that his success depended on knowledge and observance of the law. God remained with Joshua as he led the Israelites into the promised land of Canaan and throughout the struggles to conquer it. Joshua presided over the allocation of territory to each tribe. The Levites were sent to live among the other tribes who were to provide for their needs.

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<sup>20</sup> The Urim and Thummim stones were part of the breastplate of judgment on the high priest’s ephod originally worn by Aaron (Exodus 28:3). They were cast like dice in order to discern the will of God on matters impacting the entire nation. In this situation, Yahweh commanded that Eleazar, the son of Aaron and current high priest, to cast the stones in the presence of the Israelites in order to discern God’s will regarding Joshua as the next leader. The text does not indicate the result but one assumes that the stones affirmed Joshua because Moses immediately laid hands on Joshua and commissioned him (Numbers 27:21-22). Henry Snyder Gehman and John D. Davis, eds., *The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1970), 967-68.

Before his death, Joshua gathered the leaders of Israel together to present themselves before God. Since leadership of the Israelites would no longer be centralized, each tribe was to select their own leaders. Joshua prepared them for the transition and commanded them to choose who they would serve saying, “As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15). The leaders affirmed that they would serve and obey the LORD so Joshua wrote the words of the new covenant in the book of the law and set a large stone near the ark to bear witness to their commitment. Joshua accomplished everything that God asked him to do, including decentralizing leadership responsibilities from himself to each tribe.

After Joshua died, the tribal leaders forgot about their relationship with the God who had liberated their ancestors from Egypt, and the people began to sin. The people of Israel suffered for generations due to their disobedience and lack of leadership from the tribal leaders. God heard their cries and decided to intervene by raising up judges to provide leadership for them. Their continued disobedience was exacerbated by the lack of succession planning by the judges.

### **Pentateuch and Joshua Summary**

God’s intentional efforts to sustain relationships with, and among, humans pervades these texts.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, God’s direct involvement with leadership selection, development, and transition decreased as the community’s involvement increased. Two patterns of selection were discovered – called by God and called by community. Leaders were primarily prepared through life experience as members of the community, guided

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<sup>21</sup> Due to the complex and frequently intertwined nature of these stories, the findings are intended to be informative, not necessarily normative or prescriptive.



by God, and often a human mentor. Beginning with Moses, the transfer of wisdom and authority from one leader to another was made in the presence of God and the community. Now the focus shifts to the New Testament, in order to explore if, and how, the Gospels inform leadership selection, development, and transition.

### The Gospels

*For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will,  
but the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me,  
that I shall lose nothing of all that he has given me,  
but raise it up on the last day.*

*This is indeed the will of my Father,  
that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life;  
and that I will raise them up on the last day.*

*John 6:35-40*

God's involvement in the selection, development, and transition of leaders in the Pentateuch and Joshua was explored in the previous section. Some of the patterns, themes, and processes identified in the previous section are repeated in the Gospels. The focus here is on the involvement of Jesus Christ, the incarnate son of God, in the selection, development, and transition of leaders in the Gospels.

### Selection

The cycle of blessing, human sinfulness, and divine intervention was repeated throughout the Hebrew Bible as the Israelites struggled to bear witness to their relationship with God. The covenant between them was not fulfilled. The prophets promised that God would send a deliverer.

*The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant  
with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.  
It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors  
when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—  
a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord.  
But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days,  
says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts;  
and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.  
No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the Lord,"  
for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord;  
for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.*  
*Jeremiah 31:31-34*

Two patterns of selection, similar to those in the Pentateuch – sent by God and called by Jesus – were found in the Gospels. The responsibility for the selection of leaders now shifts from God to Jesus, the Son of God, *the one who came from heaven*, to be the deliverer. These texts also bear witness to *the one who came before Jesus* – John the Baptist, and *the ones who came after Jesus* – the apostles.

#### Sent by God

God's involvement with the selection of leaders culminates in the Gospels. The importance of relationships, particularly within families, continues here as two cousins are sent by God to fulfill God's promise of a new and everlasting covenant.

#### *John the Baptist*

*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.  
He came as a witness to testify to the light,  
so that all might believe through him.  
He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.  
The true light which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.*  
*John 1:6-9*<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> "C. H. Dodd argues that a threefold schema in verses 6-8 controls the subsequent sections of chapter 1 that deal with the Baptist: (1) John was not the light (v. 19-27), (2) John came to bear witness to the light (v. 29-34), and (3) through John's agency all might become believers (v. 35-37) (*Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965], 248-49)." David J.

God sent an angel to Zechariah, a descendent of Aaron serving as a priest in the sanctuary, to announce that Zechariah and his barren wife Elizabeth had found favor with God.<sup>23</sup> They would be blessed with a son, to be named John, who would prepare the way for the savior soon to come. Filled with the Holy Spirit, John grew strong, living in the wilderness, wearing robes made of camel hair, and eating locusts and honey.<sup>24</sup>

### *Jesus, the Son of God*

Several months after Elizabeth became pregnant,, an angel of the Lord appeared to a young maiden named Mary, announcing that she had found favor with God.<sup>25</sup> Though a virgin, she conceived and bore the Son of the Most High God through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ, the incarnate son of God, was sent by God to establish a new and everlasting covenant so that all who believe in him would have eternal life (John 3:16, 26).

### Called by Jesus

Jesus began his ministry when he was about thirty years old. He understood the importance of the mission he was sent to accomplish and that he could not do it alone. Unlike God's direct commands to leaders such as Noah, Abraham, and Moses, Jesus literally invited people to *come after* him. Like Aaron, they did not challenge the invitation.

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MacLeod, "The Witness of John the Baptist to the Word: John 1:6-9," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160, no. 639 (2003).

<sup>23</sup> Elizabeth was a descendent of Aaron and the tribe of Judah.

<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth and Zechariah were also filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:41, 67).

<sup>25</sup> Mary was Elizabeth's first cousin, a descendent of Judah through the house of David.

Jesus chose the apostles himself – no job descriptions, resumes, or committees. The first four apostles were literally drawn out of the water just like Moses. Jesus invited men that he knew, or who knew each other, including two sets of brothers – Simon Peter and Andrew; and James and John, sons of Zebedee and Salome, who were Jesus' first cousins on his mother's side.<sup>26</sup> Andrew and Simon Peter were disciples of John the Baptist when they met Jesus.

Two patterns of leadership selection, similar to those found in the Pentateuch, were encountered here – sent by God and called by Jesus – marking the transition from God, the Father, to Jesus, the Son of God, who became the primary source of call. Interestingly, the importance of relationships continued in the Gospels in that many of the leaders called by Jesus were either related to him, or each other.

### **Leadership Development and Transitions**

As in the Pentateuch, leaders were developed in the Gospels through relationships, experiences, and events which were often intertwined. This was particularly true for the complex relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus, who are the primary mentors in the Gospels. Therefore, leadership development and transition are combined here to facilitate the discussion. The importance of families, mentors, and communities continued in the Gospels.

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<sup>26</sup> James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also Simon Peter's business partners (Luke 5:10).

## John the Baptist

By God's design, John preceded his cousin Jesus throughout their lives.<sup>27</sup>

However, "the traditional view of John as a prophet who merely foreran Jesus and then stepped aside...is unsatisfactory. John was much more influential than Christians have often thought, and...Jesus and the early church were very much heirs of John – continuing and developing his theology and baptism."<sup>28</sup>

John's primary concern was gathering followers who would repent and be baptized before the savior arrived. Many journeyed into the desert to meet him and were baptized, promising to follow the lifestyle John espoused.<sup>29</sup> Some remained with him while most returned to their homes, believing that they were "a cleansed remnant awaiting the Coming One and the eschaton to follow."<sup>30</sup>

Since baptism was understood as the entry rite for becoming a follower of John, it is logical that John was reluctant when Jesus came to be baptized.<sup>31</sup> Becoming a disciple of John "would guarantee that Jesus would be seen as being in harmony with John's teaching and in fact extending John's message to its fulfillment."<sup>32</sup> Consequently, Jesus

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<sup>27</sup> Both of their ministries end with their arrest and horrific deaths.

<sup>28</sup> Daniel S. Dapaah, *The Relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth: A Critical Study* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005), 143.

<sup>29</sup> For an excellent explanation of John's distinctive ritual and its significance, see Robert L. Webb, "John the Baptist and His Relationship to Jesus," in *Studying the Historical Jesus*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 187-97.

<sup>30</sup> William B. Badke, "Was Jesus a Disciple of John?," *Evangelical Quarterly* 62 (1990): 198.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*: 196, 200. Badke notes that Jesus' submission to baptism by John should "not be seen as a recognition of personal sin, nor as some sort of foreshadowing of his death, but as the logical act of a righteous man."

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*: 198.

had to submit to God's prophet in order to do God's will (Matthew 3:15). In the process of doing so "the one who will save his people from their sins . . . consecrates himself to his vocation by joining the sinful multitude in the waters of the Jordan."<sup>33</sup> The importance of the event is amplified by the presence of the Holy Spirit and the audible voice of God.

After Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit and publicly blessed by his Father, he receded into the desert from which his cousin came to face the ultimate challenge – Satan. Scholars believe that John continued to gather and baptize disciples in anticipation of them following Jesus, who was also baptizing nearby.<sup>34</sup>

#### Jesus the Savior

John's arrest and imprisonment marks the transition from John to Jesus (Matthew 4:12). After Jesus moved from Judea to Galilee, he proclaimed a new message, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." (Matthew 4:17) Badke suggests "the transition from John to Jesus was a gradual one, probably because John's followers were resistant to any thought of abandoning John. But the Baptist himself, through statements like, 'He must increase and I must decrease' (John 3:30), broke the conventions of the day, paving the way for Jesus' ministry to grow and flourish."<sup>35</sup>

Like John, Jesus knew that he would decrease as others increased, so he prepared the twelve apostles for his inevitable departure.<sup>36</sup> Jesus outlined his expectations for their

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<sup>33</sup> Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew*. Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993), 21.

<sup>34</sup> Badke, "Was Jesus a Disciple of John?," 204.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> "Jesus' relational approach demonstrates the key elements of a mentoring relationship including: (1) casting and communicating a life vision, and (2) teaching through: (a) verbal instruction, and (b)

personal and professional behavior in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1 – 7:29). He modeled appropriate behavior, particularly the importance of prayer and self-care. Jesus knew that teaching and mentoring were not sufficient so he tested their abilities and their faith.

Jesus willingly shared his authority and power with the apostles so that they could learn from their own experience. He sent them out to proclaim the message of repentance and authorized them to cast out demons. Jesus also taught them how to expand the ministry through others. He prepared another seventy disciples and sent them out in pairs with specific instructions.

Like Moses, Jesus spent his final days on earth preparing the ones who came after him to complete the mission he had begun.<sup>37</sup> Despite Jesus' preparations, the apostles were devastated by his death and shocked by his appearance to them after his resurrection three days later. Jesus continued to prepare them during the next forty days, ultimately sharing his authority with them as Moses had done with Joshua. The transition occurred when he commissioned them saying:

*"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.  
Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,  
baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,*

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experiential learning in the context of (c) a secure, mutually committed relationship; (3) intimate relationships with mentees (protégés), in which they are allowed to determine some of the direction of teaching based on questions and life circumstances, and; (4) enduring life-long relationships, though they may vary in frequency of contact. According to these criteria, Jesus truly was the ideal mentor." Ron Belsterling, "The Mentoring Approach of Jesus as Demonstrated in John 13," *Journal of Youth Ministry* 5, no. 1 (2006): 79.

<sup>37</sup> "Jesus signaled his understanding of the transition by doing something gifted leaders do: he gave responsibility back to the people who made up the body, organization, and community. He did not play the role of the all-knowing expert or authority, the one who has the answer for every question and situation. Rather, he gave the work back to the people to whom it belonged. This is the crucial task of leadership." Anthony B. Robinson and Robert W. Wall, *Called to Be Church: The Book of Acts for a New Day* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2006), 42.

*and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.  
And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

*Matthew 28:19-20*

Just as God reassured their ancestors, Jesus promised that he would abide with them forever. But Jesus knew that his presence was not enough, so before he ascended into heaven, Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would soon empower them to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth. The blessing would now be transferred through the Holy Spirit.

### **Gospels Summary**

As in the Pentateuch, leaders were developed in the Gospels through relationships, experiences, and events which were often intertwined. Jesus, the Son of God, became the primary source of call. The importance of community increased as the ultimate transition from Father to Son occurred. John the Baptist and Jesus were the primary mentors in the Gospels. Both prepared their followers to succeed them which expanded the leadership base within the community from one to many. The Gospels foreshadow the importance of the Holy Spirit whose role will be revealed in the Acts of the Apostles.



## The Acts of the Apostles

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship,  
to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon everyone,  
because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles.*

*All who believed were together and had all things in common;  
they would sell their possessions and goods and  
distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.*

*Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple,  
they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts,  
praising God and having the goodwill of all the people.  
And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.*

*Acts 2:42-47*

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the agent of faith, the communities formed by the ones who came after Jesus called others out of darkness into the light and sent others to do likewise. They bore witness to the gospel through word and deed without ordained ministers and pulpits. The nature and form of these communities changed over time, influenced by culture, context, and traditions.

Many of the patterns, themes, and processes identified in the previous sections are repeated in the Acts of the Apostles. In the Gospels, the responsibility for the selection of leaders shifted from God to Jesus, the Son of God. Now, the responsibility shifts again as the community and the Holy Spirit become involved in the selection, development, and transition of leadership.

### **Selection**

After the ascension, the focus shifts from Jesus to the apostles. The process moves from dependence on individual leaders to communal discernment through the power of the Holy Spirit, from baptism with water to baptism with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11), and from the Jews to the Gentiles. The primary responsibility for the selection process

shifts from Jesus to the apostles to the community, first through the use of the traditional Urim stones, then through the power of the Holy Spirit. However, Jesus surprises everyone by calling Paul to spread the good news to the Gentiles.

### Called by the Community

After the ascension of Jesus into heaven, the remaining eleven apostles decided to replace Judas Iscariot, the apostle who betrayed Jesus. His departure was unexpected and no succession plan had been established for the apostles.

In response to the situation, they combined traditional practices with new elements to create a communal selection process. First, they established selection criteria which separated apostles (those who had been with Jesus from his baptism by John until Jesus' ascension) from disciples, thus an organizational hierarchy. Then, the community selected two men from among the apostles, prayed to the Lord for guidance, and cast lots using the Urim stones to make their final decision.<sup>38</sup> Matthias was chosen to become the twelfth apostle.<sup>39</sup> This event was immediately followed by the arrival of the Holy Spirit.

As with Moses, the apostles could no longer manage all of the needs of the rapidly growing community. Wisely, they gathered the community together to discuss

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<sup>38</sup> This story is reminiscent of the communal discernment by the Israelites over Joshua. See chap. 2, n. 20. The apostles never cast lots again after they were filled with the Holy Spirit. Samuel Tilden Habel, *The Twelve Apostles: A Study of Twelve Extraordinary Men Who, by Successfully Completing Their Amazing Mission, Changed the Course of History* (Ft. Lauderdale, FL: Creighton's Restaurant Corporation, 1956), 129-31.

<sup>39</sup> Leadership is now based upon qualifications and divine choice. It is derived both from "the bottom up" – from the ranks of those persons whom the prayerful community chooses to lead – and from the "top down" – as a gift of a gracious God who does not leave his community bereft of the guidance that it needs to fulfill its mission. Leadership is not an optional matter for the community nor is it some later invention foisted upon a once free and democratic church by authoritarians seeking power. Valid leaders link the church to the events which originated the church and become, by their own work and witness, the means by which the church fulfills its mission. William H. Willimon, *Acts. Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1988), 24.

roles and responsibilities. Since the apostles felt called to proclaim the word, they suggested that seven leaders be chosen by the community to attend to other tasks. These leaders were to be full of the spirit and of wisdom (Acts 6:4).<sup>40</sup> The community willingly choose seven men to stand before the apostles, who prayed over them, and laid hands on them before they began their work.<sup>41</sup>

### Called by Jesus

Though Jesus Christ was no longer on earth in human form, his presence was accessible in the preached word of his apostles. The promise to Israel was now realized by means of the word.<sup>42</sup> But God intended that all of creation would be reconciled, including the Gentiles. Reaching the outsiders required divine intervention.

Saul was uniquely qualified for the task. He was born in Tarsus to Jewish parents, devout Pharisees and descendents of the tribe of Benjamin. Since his parents were Roman citizens, he also bore the Latin name of Paul. Saul was educated at the school of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) and later became a tentmaker (Acts 18:3). As a young man, he actively participated in the growing persecution of Jesus' followers.

Unlike most Jews, Saul's Roman citizenship allowed him to travel freely. While on a mission to Damascus, Saul heard the voice of Jesus. In an instant, Jesus blinded

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<sup>40</sup> These are character traits, not skills.

<sup>41</sup> Leadership within the community of the Spirit (in Acts 6) does not provide precedents for present-day ordained ministry in that: (1) Leadership within the church arises from the community's quite mundane but utterly necessary functional needs. Therefore, the essence of ordained ministry is derivative of and accountable to the ministry of the church as a whole. (2) Leadership arises from "below" not from "above." The process of ordination should move from laity up through the hierarchy – leaders should arise from the needs of God's people for guidance and service. (3) The ordained ministry in its present form is an adaptation of the church to its leadership needs. The church creates certain types of leadership for the community to function. What the church has established, the church may change. Willimon, *Acts*, 59.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

Saul, brought him to his knees, and convicted him of his sin. Unlike Moses, Saul did not argue with Jesus about his call. Instead, Saul picked himself up from the dusty road and, though he could not see, he obediently went to Damascus.<sup>43</sup>

Remarkably, Saul never looked back. Jesus sent Ananias to lay hands on Saul, fill him with the Holy Spirit, restore his sight, and baptize him. Ananias told Saul that Jesus called him to be a chosen instrument of Christ in order to carry Jesus' name before the Gentiles and kings and sons of Israel (Acts 9:15). After a few days of training with disciples in Damascus, he began to proclaim the gospel in the synagogues.

After the ascension, the responsibility for leader selection shifted from Jesus to the apostles. The process moved from dependence on individual leaders to communal discernment through the power of the Holy Spirit, from baptism with water to baptism with the Holy Spirit, and from the Jews to the Gentiles through Paul's ministry.

### **Leadership Development**

As in the Pentateuch and Gospels, the primary methods for developing leaders were through mentors and experience, as exemplified by Barnabas and Paul. In Acts,

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<sup>43</sup> Scholars debate whether Paul's experience was a call or a conversion. Stendahl suggests that Paul's experience on the road to Damascus Road is part of his unique apostolic call and is not meant to be an example of a Christian conversion. Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1976), 11-12. Hoerber writes that "Paul's *call* to be apostle to the Gentiles is part of a profound and transforming experience. Call and conversion are both aspects of a divine revelation of Christ to Paul. The changes in Paul's life and his mission to the Gentiles are the results of this profound experience of knowing Christ." Robert G. Hoerber, "Paul's Conversion/Call," *Concordia Journal* 22, no. 2 (1996): 188. Other references on this topic include Philip H. Kern, "Paul's Conversion and Luke's Portrayal of Character in Acts 8-10," *Tyndale Bulletin* 54, no. 2 (2003); Timothy J. Ralston, "The Theological Significance of Paul's Conversion," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 147, no. 586 (1990); V. George Shillington, "Paul's Success in the Conversion of Gentiles: Dynamic Center in Cultural Diversity," *Direction* 20, no. 2 (1991).

relationships within the larger community replaced, yet imitated, intimate family relationships.<sup>44</sup>

After Pentecost, the believers began living into their new relationship with God as a community. They lived and worshiped together, shared their possessions, and cared for each other. From the beginning, leaders were developed within the community and chosen by the community. New believers were welcomed into their midst.

Barnabas became a believer, sold his land, and contributed the proceeds to the apostolic community.<sup>45</sup> After Saul's conversion, Barnabas literally "took hold of him" and introduced Saul to the apostles.<sup>46</sup> Saul was accepted into the community and began preaching in Jerusalem, then Tarsus.

Later, Barnabas recruited Saul to teach with him in Antioch; a diverse group of people who understood the importance of communal discernment through prayer, worship, and fasting. They were instructed by the Holy Spirit to set Barnabas and Saul apart for continued proclamation of the word of God to the Jews and Gentiles (Acts 13:2). After more prayer and fasting, they sent Barnabas and Saul off to proclaim the word of God to the Jews and Gentiles around the northeastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> For example, Paul often addresses the readers of his letters as "brothers and sisters."

<sup>45</sup> Barnabas was a Levite and a native of Cyprus (Acts 4:36-37). He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit, and of faith (Acts 11:24).

<sup>46</sup> Gordon L. Everett, "Relationships: The Missing Link in Evangelistic Follow-Up," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 142, no. 566 (1985): 157.

<sup>47</sup> Shortly thereafter, Saul begins to use his Latin name, Paul.

Together and separately, Barnabas and Paul developed leaders who served as itinerant missionaries, resident leaders, and household leaders. Silvanus, Timothy, and Titus are named as partners in initial missionary activity, as co-authors of epistles, or as Paul's authorized representatives. Prisca and Aquila hosted house-churches in different cities including Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus. In addition, there were many people who were served as messengers or provided financial support for Paul.<sup>48</sup>

He understood his mission as “building up nonviolent holiness cell groups, committed to a way of life in tension with their surroundings, called to sanctification through the power of God's Holy Spirit, and conformed to the way of the crucified and risen Lord.”<sup>49</sup> Paul believed in mutual responsibility and “enforced it by staying away until the church had realized and executed its duty.”<sup>50</sup>

Part of Paul's ministry was to recognize and name the work of others, to demonstrate how their service conformed to the Christ-pattern of humiliation and obedience and to the exaltation of Jesus Christ as Lord to the glory of God the Father.<sup>51</sup>

Paul's model of leadership can be viewed from three perspectives:

1. The model to which he turns is Christ, supremely depicted as the servant of the Philippian Christ-hymn
2. The model or example which he sets is his own, albeit imperfect, as 'imitation of Christ'

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<sup>48</sup> David Horrell, “Leadership Patterns and the Development of Ideology in Early Christianity,” *Sociology of Religion* 58, no. 4 (1997): 325.

<sup>49</sup> A. Katherine Grieb, “the One Who Called You...”: Vocation and Leadership in the Pauline Literature,” *Interpretation* 59, no. 2 (2005): 162.

<sup>50</sup> Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: Saint Paul's or Ours?*, 1912 (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2003), 123.

<sup>51</sup> Grieb, “the One Who Called You...”: Vocation and Leadership in the Pauline Literature,” 160-61.

3. The model which he teaches is that, in their own imitation of Christ, leaders should direct all believers to imitation of Christ.<sup>52</sup>

“Paul’s legacy, apart from his epistles, was his churches. Neither his vocation (as a restless, pioneering missionary), nor his temperament, nor his religious genius (as an ecstatic enthusiast and a somewhat exclusive theologian) seemed to fit him for the work of organization; nevertheless he knew better than anyone else how to found and build up churches.”<sup>53</sup>

In the new communities of believers, the primary methods for developing leaders were through mentors and experience, as exemplified by Barnabas and Paul. Relationships within the larger community replaced, yet imitated, intimate family relationships. Paul demonstrated how to sustain these relationships, particularly from afar, through letters and emissaries.

### **Transitions**

As the apostolic community in Jerusalem expanded, leadership was decentralized. While Peter, James, and John remained the pillars of the Jerusalem community (Galatians 2:9), other leaders became itinerant missionaries, such as Barnabas, Paul, Timothy, and Titus. Power and authority shifted from the apostles, to the itinerants, to the resident leaders, as new communities were established. However, the two transitions highlighted here – Peter to James and Paul to the community – demonstrate that changes in leadership may be unexpected and transitions may not be smooth.

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<sup>52</sup> Andrew D. Clarke, “‘Be Imitators of Me’: Paul’s Model of Leadership,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 49, no. 2 (1998): 359-60.

<sup>53</sup> Adolf von Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, trans. James Moffatt, 2 vols., vol. 1 (New York, NY: Harper, 1962), 77-78.

## Peter to James

Though some scholars argue that Peter was the rock on which Christ's church was to be built, he does not dominate the new community.<sup>54</sup> Peter remained with John and the other apostles in Jerusalem as the disciples scattered to avoid persecution. Many new communities were established without his leadership outside of Jerusalem.

Eventually, he began to visit these believers, healing the sick and raising the dead. While Peter proclaimed the gospel to a group of Gentiles in Caesarea, they received the Holy Spirit and were baptized. Upon Peter's return to Jerusalem, he explained the remarkable event to the others. His most significant contribution was helping them understand that God intended for them to be witnesses to the Jews and Gentiles.

Soon thereafter, King Herod killed the apostle James and arrested Peter.<sup>55</sup> After his miraculous escape from prison, Peter contacted a few believers to tell them that he had survived. Remarkably, he instructs them to "Tell this to James and to the believers." Then he left and went to another place (Acts 12:17). Peter was never heard from again.

As with Judas, this transition was unexpected and there was no apparent plan. Interestingly, Peter chose his own successor – James, the brother of Jesus. This transition violates the criteria established by the community earlier in that James was not one of the twelve apostles and the community was not included in the decision. Wall argues that in Peter's liberation from prison by the angel of the risen Jesus, as in God's resurrection of Jesus before him, God has exalted Peter for his obedient service and thus has given him

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<sup>54</sup> Bernard P. Robinson, "Peter and His Successors: Tradition and Redaction in Matthew 16:17-19," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, no. 21 (1984).

<sup>55</sup> James and his brother John, the sons of Zebedee and Salome, were Jesus' first cousins on his mother's side.



authority to identify his successor at his departure from Jerusalem.<sup>56</sup> Peter's departure marks the end of his ministry in the Acts of the Apostles and the beginning of intentional outreach to the Gentiles.

### Paul to Community

Barnabus' and Paul's missionary strategy depended on developing leaders within the communities. As itinerant missionaries, they prepared the resident leaders, household leaders, and community for their inevitable departure. Acts provides little evidence of the actual transitions other than Paul had left or departed. The following text is one exception, indicating that Paul exhorted them, commissioned them, prayed with them, and kissed them goodbye.

*"And now I know that none of you, among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom, will ever see my face again. Therefore I declare to you this day that I am not responsible for the blood of any of you, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.*

*Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son. I know that after I have gone, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.*

*Some even from your own group will come distorting the truth in order to entice the disciples to follow them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to warn everyone with tears.*

*And now I commend you to God and to the message of his grace, a message that is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all who are sanctified.*

*I coveted no one's silver or gold or clothing. You know for yourselves that I worked with my own hands to support myself and my companions. In all this I have given you an example that by such work*

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<sup>56</sup> Robert W. Wall, "Successors To 'The Twelve' According to Acts 12:1-17," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 53, no. 4 (1991): 643.

*we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "*

*When he had finished speaking, he knelt down with them all and prayed. There was much weeping among them all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, grieving especially because of what he had said, that they would not see him again. Then they brought him to the ship.*

*Acts 20: 25-38*

Transitions in the Acts of the Apostles provide an interesting contrast to those in the Pentateuch and the Gospels. The transition from Peter was unexpected and there was no apparent plan. Interestingly, Peter chose his own successor – James, the brother of Jesus. This transition violated the criteria established by the community earlier in that James was not one of the twelve apostles and the community was not included in the decision. The text does not provide any information about how James responded to the situation. As for Paul, the text provides little evidence of the actual transitions from Paul to other leaders other than Paul left or departed.

### **Acts of the Apostles Summary**

After the ascension, the responsibility for leader selection, development, and transition shifted from Jesus to the apostles. The process moved from dependence on individual leaders to communal discernment through the power of the Holy Spirit, from baptism with water to baptism with the Holy Spirit, and from the Jews to the Gentiles through Paul's ministry.

In the new communities of believers, Barnabus and Paul developed leaders from within through mentors and experience. Relationships within the larger community replaced, yet imitated, intimate the family relationships found in the Pentateuch and the Gospels. Paul demonstrated how to sustain these new relationships, particularly from

afar, through letters and emissaries. Unlike in the Pentateuch and the Gospels, transitions in Acts are less than exemplary. Despite the new selection process established by the apostles, Peter chose James as his successor, sent word to James through someone else, and walked away.

### **Theological Foundations**

*The Church is justified, fulfilled, and sanctified to the world by the gift of the Spirit.  
What is given to the Church is hers only on behalf of the world.  
An image of hope, giving mankind to the true meaning of community for the metropolis,  
the Church is no mere servant of man but a gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>57</sup>*

The communities formed by the ones who came after Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit have endured despite centuries of persecution. Though the culture and context in which they exist varies around the world, their purpose remains the same. The people of God are called and sent by the Holy Spirit to participate in God's mission of reconciliation of all of creation. It is through their faith and hope that God's love for all of creation is revealed and reconciliation can be achieved.

It was my concern over the potential loss of faith through the disruption of sacred relationships between pastors and congregations that motivated my exploration of Miroslav Volf's writings on the relationship of community in the Trinity and the church.<sup>58</sup> He argues for a polycentric or participative model of the church, grounded in the image of the Triune God, through which faith is mediated through the participation of its

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<sup>57</sup> Gibson Winter, *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1962), 209.

<sup>58</sup> Volf's detailed argument was originally published in Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*. A summary of his argument appeared in Volf, "Community Formation as an Image of the Triune God: A Congregational Model of Church Order and Life."

members, laity and office holders, who are called to engage in ministry and make decisions about leadership roles.

### The Trinity and the Church

Miroslav Volf suggests that the Protestant understanding of the church has become more about individuals than community. Interestingly, Volf begins his argument against individualism by expressing concern over the impact of the marketplace on churches in the United States, particularly megachurches. However, he readily admits that he was impressed by the Willow Creek Church who clearly envisions the church as community, grounds its identity in the Trinity, and emphasizes the nonhierarchical character of the church.<sup>59</sup>

For Volf, the nature of the church is grounded in the New Testament as God's eschatological new creation. The gathering of the people of God attests to the coming of the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ (*Already*), and participates in the communion of the Triune God today (*Now*) and in the future (*Not Yet*). Therefore, the church should not be defined or confined by institutional or organizational constructs because the church is wherever two or three are gathered in Christ's name. Theologically, the church exists *in*, *with*, and *beneath* the locally assembled congregation. A congregation *is* the body of Christ in the particular locale in which it gathers.<sup>60</sup>

In order to balance the importance of persons and community, Volf envisions the church as an image of the Trinity. He understands the Trinity as perichoresis – the

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<sup>59</sup> Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, 6.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

intimate indwelling of the three persons.<sup>61</sup> It is about an interdependence, mutuality, and reciprocity that enhances the relationship while celebrating the uniqueness and giftedness of each person of the Trinity. It is precisely as the congregation assembling in the name of Christ that the church is an image of the Trinity.<sup>62</sup>

Because every local church is a concrete anticipation of the eschatological community, it is decisive that one understand and live the relationships within a given local church in correspondence to the Trinity. . . . The Trinity indwells in the local churches in no other way than through its presence within the persons constituting those churches, since the church *is* those who gather in the name of Christ.<sup>63</sup>

It is through faith that humans are brought into relationship with the Triune God, accept salvation from God, and enter into communion with God and other believers. It is in the church where people learn how to live into their faith. This is why the church cannot be an association that one joins. Being in communion requires rebirth through faith.

Transmission of faith is a matter of survival according to Volf because relationships between believers and the Triune God, and among believers themselves, are established through faith. He believes that the mediation of faith can succeed only if those standing outside that faith are able to identify with the church communities embodying and transmitting it.<sup>64</sup> Further, Volf dares to claim that faith is not transmitted primarily by priests and pastors and academics, but rather by the loyal and inspired

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<sup>61</sup> For Volf, perichoresis “refers to the reciprocal interiority of the trinitarian persons; that in every divine person as a subject, the other persons also indwell; that all mutually permeate one another, though in doing so they do not cease to be distinct persons.” *Ibid.*, 226.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

people of God. These are the people who assemble in the name of Jesus Christ, listen to the word of God, publicly confess and attest to the work of Jesus Christ, and participate in the sacraments as a public expression of faith.

### A Participative Model for Community Formation

Volf argues that the church is a *polycentric community* in that the church lives through the participation of its members, laity and office holders, and is constituted by the Holy Spirit through the communal confession in which Christians speak the word of God to one another.<sup>65</sup> The polycentric community is grounded theologically in the Christian call to faith and in the charismata. Therefore, the call to faith and ministry is general, one-time, and permanent, whereas the particular forms of ministry change, just as do both the bearers of ministry and the situation in which they function.<sup>66</sup> However, Volf believes that “if the structures of the church really are to be the structures *of* the church rather than structures *over* the church, then the church must take precedence over its structures.”<sup>67</sup> This is important for all churches, particularly megachurches.

As a community created by the Holy Spirit, the church must encourage and engage the participation of all of its members in God’s mission of reconciliation. Volf argues that the presence of Christ, which constitutes the church, must be “mediated not simply through ordained ministers but through the whole congregation which functions

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 222, 24.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 225.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 222.

as *mater ecclesia* to the children engendered by the Holy Spirit, and is called to engage in ministry and make decisions about leadership roles.”<sup>68</sup>

Volf suggests that “conceiving the structure of the church in a consistently trinitarian fashion means conceiving not only the institution of office as such, but also the entire (local) church itself in correspondence to the Trinity.”<sup>69</sup> To do so requires the recognition that all Christians have charismata (gifts of the Spirit) and that *Christ* acts through all members of the church, not just through officeholders. Volf suggests four identifying features of charismata:

- *Confession of Christ as Savior and Lord* – Every charismata is a concrete manifestation of Christ’s grace, therefore every charismatic activity is a concrete form of confession to him.
- *Universal distribution* – Charismata are universally distributed and are universally present in the church. This requires shared responsibility and mutual subordination.
- *Charismata are interdependent* – All members have charismata but not every member has all charismata. Therefore, the charismata are to be used in service to others in the church and around the world.
- *Sovereign Spirit of God* – The Spirit bestows charismata *as and when* the Spirit chooses. The gifts of the Spirit are varied and dynamic.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Volf, “Community Formation as an Image of the Triune God: A Congregational Model of Church Order and Life,” 213. Note: Volf’s use of the words church and congregation reflect his ecclesiological perspective. He defines the church as “wherever those who are assembled, be they only two or three, profess faith in Christ as their Savior and Lord through baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Every congregation that assembles around the one Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord in order to profess faith in him publicly in pluriform fashion, including through baptism and the Lord’s Supper, which is open to all churches of God and to all human beings, is a church in the full sense of the word, since Christ promised to be present in it through his Spirit as the first fruits of the gathering of the whole people of God in the eschatological reign of God. Such a congregation is a holy, catholic, and apostolic church.” (See pp. 218-19.) I understand and concur with his use of these words in this theological context. However, in order to process the data gathered during my research, particularly for multi-site congregations, I had to define church and congregation as separate variables. The definitions in appendix A are intended to facilitate the methodology of this research, not reflect on the ecclesiology.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 232-33.

Volf distinguishes the charismata of “office” as a particular type of charismata which requires divine bestowal and ecclesial reception. It is the particular task of officeholders to be “publicly responsible for the concerns common to all Christians.”<sup>71</sup>

This involves not only representing the congregation, but also serving the congregation as congregation; it involves not only acting in the name of the congregation before God, individual members of the congregation, or the world, but also acting in the name of Christ before the congregations as a whole.<sup>72</sup>

Volf argues that ordination, as a *reception* of particular charismata, requires participation by the members of the local church. In keeping with the four features discussed above, it is their responsibility to utilize their gifts by participating in church decisions, especially the *election* of church officers. For Volf, election is a spiritual event, preceded by communal discernment, fasting, and prayer. The process should be a “complex interaction of mutual giving and accepting (or also rejecting) between officeholders and the congregation.”<sup>73</sup>

### Theological Summary

The church is a community created by the Holy Spirit, in the image of the Triune God. It is through faith that humans are brought into relationship with the Triune God, accept salvation from God, and enter into communion with other believers. It is in the church where charismata are recognized and received. It is the responsibility of the community of faithful members and officeholders to discern the will of the Spirit together

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 245-57.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 247.

<sup>73</sup> Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, 256.



in order to protect the sacredness of relationships within the community and with the Triune God.

### **Biblical and Theological Summary**

*See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God;  
that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble,  
and through it many become defiled.*

*Hebrews 12:15*

The biblical narratives explored here bear witness to the unlikely people chosen and empowered by God in order to establish, sustain, and restore relationships with all of creation.<sup>74</sup> These stories revealed divine and human involvement in the selection, development, and transitions of leaders. Their efforts suggest that continuity of leadership was important for sustaining relationships with God, and among humans so that “men, women, and children, as well as the aliens residing in your towns, . . . may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God and to observe diligently all the words of this law, and so that their children, who have not known it, may hear and learn to fear the LORD your God” (Deuteronomy 31:12-13a).

All members of the Trinity were involved in the selection, development, and transition of leaders. Table 1 illustrates the evolution of these processes in each of the biblical narratives analyzed above. Patterns emerge but “there was no single system of Church Order laid down by the Apostles . . . the Church was an organism alive and

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<sup>74</sup> Due to the complex and frequently intertwined nature of these stories, the findings are intended to be informative, not necessarily normative or prescriptive.

growing – changing its organization to meet changing needs . . . uniformity was a later development.”<sup>75</sup>

**Table 1. Leadership Processes in the Biblical Narrative**

Pentateuch and Joshua	Gospels	Acts of the Apostles
<b>Selection</b>		
Called by God <i>Moses</i> <i>Aaron and the Priesthood</i>	Sent by God <i>John the Baptist</i> <i>Jesus</i>	Called by Community <i>Urim Stones</i> <i>Discernment with Holy Spirit</i>
Called by Community <i>Urim Stones</i>	Called by Jesus <i>Apostles</i>	Called by Jesus <i>Paul</i>
<b>Development</b>		
Relationship with God	Relationship with God	Relationship with Jesus
Relationship with fathers	Relationship with John	Relationship with apostles
Relationship with mentors	Relationship with Jesus	Relationship with Barnabus and Paul
Relationship with community	Relationship with community	Relationship with community
Experience	Experience	Experience
<b>Transition</b>		
Father to son <i>Aaron to Eleazar</i>	Father to son <i>God to Jesus</i>	Apostles to community <i>Peter to James</i>
Mentor to successor <i>Moses to Joshua</i>	Mentor to successor <i>John to Jesus</i>	Mentor to protégé <i>Barnabus to Paul</i>
Leader to community <i>Joshua to tribal leaders</i>	Leader to community <i>Jesus to apostles</i>	Leader to community <i>Paul to community</i>

In the Pentateuch and Joshua, God’s involvement with leadership selection, development, and transition changes as the community’s involvement increases. The importance of community shifts as the transition from God the Father to Jesus, the Son of God, occurred in the Gospels. After the ascension, the responsibility for leader selection, development, and transition shifted from Jesus to the apostles and the Holy Spirit.

Two patterns of selection were discovered in the Pentateuch – called by God and called by community. In the Gospels, two similar patterns were found – sent by God and called by Jesus. When Jesus began his ministry, the responsibility for the selection of

<sup>75</sup> Burnett Hillman Streeter, *The Primitive Church Studied with Special Reference to the Origins of the Christian Ministry* (London: Macmillan, 1930), 261.

leaders shifted from God to Jesus. After the ascension, the selection process was based on communal discernment through the power of the Holy Spirit.

As in the Pentateuch, leaders were developed in the Gospels through relationships, experiences, and events which were often intertwined. John the Baptist and Jesus were the primary mentors in the Gospels. Both prepared their followers to succeed them which expanded the leadership base within the community from one to many. Jesus willingly shared his authority and power with the apostles so that they could learn from their own experience.

In the new communities of believers, the primary methods for developing leaders were through mentors and experience, as exemplified by Barnabas and Paul. Relationships within the larger community replaced, yet imitated, intimate family relationships. Paul demonstrated how to sustain these relationships, particularly from afar, through letters and emissaries.

The transition from Moses to Joshua provides a helpful account of transition in all of these texts. From the moment when God told Moses that he would not reach the promised land, Moses demonstrated that he was more concerned about the community than himself.

- Moses asked God to select another leader.
- Moses followed God's instructions for the transition.
- Moses gathered the community and assured them that God would remain faithful to them.
- Moses endorsed Joshua in the presence of the gathered community.
- Moses publicly shared his wisdom with Joshua and assured him that God would remain faithful to him.
- Moses provided written instructions to the community and assigned the Levites to instruct future generations about their relationship with God and how to observe the law.

- Joshua stood before the people as they, and the chief priest, discerned God's will.
- Moses publicly transferred his authority by laying his hands on Joshua.
- Moses and Joshua presented themselves before God who commissioned Joshua.
- The gathered community worshiped God as Moses sang His praises. Then Moses blessed each tribe before he died.

Though he may have been very disappointed by God's decision, Moses did everything possible to provide for continuity of leadership. In particular, he assured the community and Joshua that God would remain faithful to them. He also made provisions for future generations to remain faithful to their relationship with God.

It is interesting to note Moses' concern over the potential loss of faithfulness through the disruption of sacred relationships. This same concern is shared by Miroslav Volf who argues that transmission of faith is a matter of survival because relationships between believers and the Triune God, and among believers themselves, are established through faith. Volf dares to claim that faith is not transmitted primarily by priests and pastors and academics, but rather by the loyal and inspired people of God. His relational approach stresses the importance of the participation of the congregation, laity and officeholders, in the transmission of faith through their ministry and decision making. Further, it is their responsibility to discern the will of the Spirit together in order to protect the sacredness of relationships within the community, and with the Triune God, so that none will be lost.

As Scripture and Volf suggest, this may be accomplished through divine and human involvement in the selection, development, and transition of leadership. This suggestion will be tested in subsequent chapters beginning with a analysis of these relationships and processes from a historical perspective.

## CHAPTER 3

### ANCESTORS, PREDECESSORS, AND CONTEMPORARIES

*The question as to what a larger parish really is cannot be answered without first taking a brief glance at the history of the movement.<sup>1</sup>*

The analysis of the biblical narrative in Chapter 2 revealed divine and human involvement in the selection, development, and transitions of leaders. The importance of the relationships between God, leaders, and communities was grounded biblically and theologically. These processes and relationships are analyzed again in order to discover if, and how, historical perspectives inform pastoral change and transition in congregations.

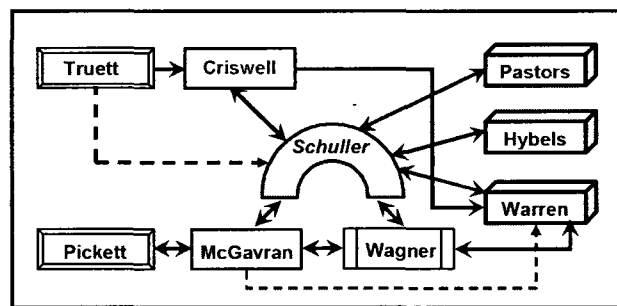
The leaders discussed in this chapter may be familiar. However, the relationships among and between them, and their collective influence have yet to be acknowledged. The characteristics and contributions of these ancestors and the organizations they served provide a framework for assessing the leaders and congregations in subsequent chapters of this study. Further, their experiences with transferring power and authority from one leader to the next adds another dimension to the theory discussed in later chapters.

The story begins on the Texas frontier and continues around the world through the efforts of faithful people and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. George W. Truett and J. Waskom Pickett have long been recognized individually but are rarely associated with

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<sup>1</sup> Edmund de Schweinitz Brunner, *The Larger Parish: A Movement or an Enthusiasm?* (New York, NY: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1934), 1.

each other. During Truett's tenure, the First Baptist Church of Dallas became the largest congregation in the Southern Baptist Convention with 7,804 members in 1944. Pickett pioneered the use of social science research methods to study evangelization in India in the 1930s. Their lives and contributions to God's kingdom converged in and among subsequent generations through the power of the Holy Spirit.



**Figure 1. Historical Relationships**

Figure 1 illustrates the persons and relationships discussed in this chapter. Truett and Pickett unwittingly established a foundation from which the megachurch phenomenon emerged through the efforts of Robert H. Schuller. His efforts paved the way for the next generation of leaders who established their own identities and made their own contributions.

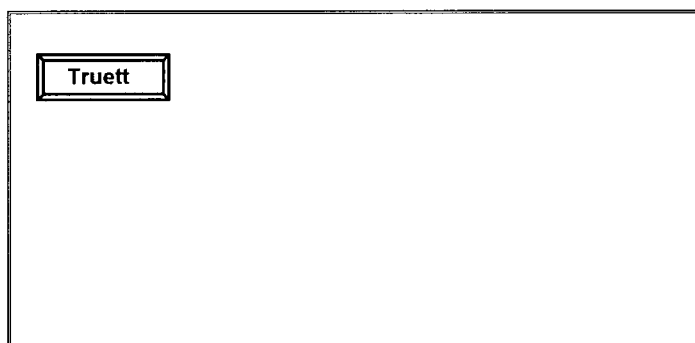
Schuller gathered pastors and missionaries, scholars and practitioners, lay and ordained together to discuss theory and application, to employ research techniques, and to cope with reality through possibility thinking. He recognized the potential of large congregations and their pastors, and essentially launched the emergence of the megachurch in the United States. The pastors in this study are beneficiaries of the faith, commitment, and leadership of their ancestors, predecessors, and contemporaries.

Several generations of leaders are examined in this chapter, beginning with Truett and Pickett. Derivations of figure 1 above are presented at the beginning of each section to indicate which generation is being discussed.

### Origins

*It is my conviction that the Holy Spirit has blown and continues to blow throughout church history, raising up movements that he is able to work through for the purpose of human redemption. After all, that is what God desires.<sup>2</sup>*

George W. Truett



**Figure 2. Historical Relationships - Truett**

George Washington Truett was born on May 6, 1867 in Hayesville, North Carolina. He was the seventh of eight children born to Charles and Mary Truett. George had six brothers and one sister. Charles Truett was a third-generation Scotch-Irish farmer. Though his oldest brother James became a Methodist preacher, Charles did not become a Christian until middle age. Mary Rebecca Truett was the devout daughter of a renowned Baptist preacher – James Kimsey – who’s younger brother Elijah was also a famous preacher. Young George Truett was greatly influenced by his mother’s faith and the preaching styles of his grandfather and great uncle.

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<sup>2</sup> James J. Stamoollis, “Scripture and Hermeneutics: Reflections over Thirty Years” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 28, no. 4 (2004): 342.

Despite his religious upbringing, Truett did not make a public confession of faith until he was nineteen. George responded to the altar call during a revival in 1886. A few days later, Truett's pastor invited him to make a public confession of faith in front of his home congregation – Hayesville Baptist Church. Truett thought that he had made a complete fool of himself but his mother later comforted him saying “I doubt if ever in all your after life you will give a more effective testimony for Christ than you gave tonight.”<sup>3</sup>

After completing high school, Truett taught one term in a one-room school nearby. He longed to share what he had learned from his mentor – Professor John O. Hicks – at Hicksville Academy. Truett founded Hiawasse Academy when he was just nineteen years old in January 1887 and served as its principal for two years.<sup>4</sup> When the Truett family moved to Texas in early 1889 to find better farmland, George and his brother Luther had stayed behind to teach at the Academy. They joined the rest of the family in Whitewright, Texas during the summer of 1889. Truett hated being a farmer in Texas and longed for the hills of North Carolina. He wanted to become a lawyer so he enrolled at Grayson Junior College in Whitewright.

Truett soon became the Sunday School superintendent at the Whitewright Baptist Church. The members of the congregation quickly recognized Truett's gift for preaching and often asked him to fill in for the pastor. They called a special congregational meeting

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<sup>3</sup> Powhatan Wright James, *George W. Truett, a Biography*, 1940 (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1939), 26; R. Daniel Reeves and Ron Jenson, *Always Advancing: Modern Strategies for Church Growth* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1984), 155-60.

<sup>4</sup> When Truett left in June 1889, enrollment had grown to three hundred students including twenty-three young preachers and fifty-one school teachers who came for further training. James, *George W. Truett, a Biography*, 32.



one Saturday night without Truett's knowledge. He was shocked when the oldest deacon rose to speak to the members who filled the sanctuary.

There is such a thing as church duty when the whole church must act. There is such a thing as an individual duty, when the individual, detached from every other individual, must face duty for himself; but it is my deep conviction, as it is yours – for we have talked much one with another – that this church has a church duty to perform, and that we have waited late and long to get about it. I move, therefore, that this church call a presbytery to ordain Brother George W. Truett to the full work of the gospel ministry.<sup>5</sup>

Truett begged them to wait six months. The congregation reaffirmed their conviction that he ought to be preaching saying:

We won't wait six hours. We are called to do this thing now and we are going ahead with it. We are moved by a great conviction that it is the will of God. We dare not wait. We must follow our convictions.<sup>6</sup>

Truett's mother encouraged him to consider to the congregation's call. After a sleepless night, Truett was examined and ordained the next day.

I told them of my ambitions, but that I was now willing to yield without debate or further delay to the will of God; that I was entirely submissive to His Plan in life for me, even though it would be the humblest little spot in all the world.<sup>7</sup>

In the fall of 1890, the members of the Texas Baptist Convention acknowledged the financial threat facing their beloved Baylor University. They agreed to commission a new financial agent to lead a campaign to raise \$92,000. Truett was referred to the trustees by his own pastor. George resisted the initial inquiries because he was reluctant to delay his plan to attend college and seminary. The trustees were not initially impressed

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 51.

with the twenty-three year old Truett who was unknown in Texas. But he discerned that God was calling him so he convinced the Trustees to hire him.

I assure you that this business is not of my seeking. It was no desire of mine. In fact, I definitely declined it at first. But Dr. Carroll has convinced me that I ought to undertake it. I do not know how it can be done but I am persuaded that our heavenly Father will show us the way if we trust Him and lean utterly upon Him. Will you pray for me now?<sup>8</sup>

Truett was promptly hired as the financial agent for Baylor University. He traveled extensively across Texas for twenty-three months and raised \$92,000 to save the school. Every Baptist in Texas now knew George W. Truett. He promptly enrolled at Baylor in 1893 and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree (A.B.) in 1897. He served as the student pastor at East Waco Baptist Church while he was in college. George married Josephine Jenkins in June 1894.

During the summer of 1897, Truett received several letters from the pulpit committee at the First Baptist Church of Dallas (FBCD). Truett repeatedly indicated to them that he planned to attend seminary at Baylor and continue to serve at the East Waco Baptist Church.

### **First Baptist Church of Dallas**

The First Baptist Church of Dallas was organized in 1868 by eleven brave pioneers. This tiny congregation was the first Baptist church to survive in Dallas amidst many obstacles, particularly money and leadership. Financial issues have plagued FBCD throughout its history and have negatively impacted the tenure of the pastors.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 57.

Table 2 presents the pastoral history of FBCD before Truett. Eight pastors served FBCD between 1868 and 1897 with an average tenure of 3.3 years. FBCD's first pastor, W. W. Harris, simply left town without saying goodbye.

**Table 2. FBC Dallas Pastoral History (1868 – 1897)**

Pastor Name			Call Begin Year	Call End Year	Tenure	Age When Call Began
W.		Harris	1868	1871	3	
C.		Stanton	1871	1872	1	
Abram		Weaver	1873	1875	2	48
G.	W.	Rogers	1876	1877	1	65
James	Hudson	Curry	1878	1882	4	29
Robert	Taylor	Hanks	1882	1889	7	
Albert	Meredith	Simms	1889	1892	3	42
Charles	Louis	Seasholes	1892	1897	5	

The next seven pastors resigned for a variety of reasons including salary disputes, internal conflict, denominational rivalry, poor health, and indiscreet behavior (falsely accused). The underlying cause for all of the resignations appears to be financial which may be why the congregation continually had pastors decline calls extended to them.

Rev. Charles L. Seasholes served FBCD from 1892 until early 1897. His tenure was significantly impacted by the depression that was affecting the entire country. The congregation was often unable to pay his salary. The lights were disconnected in June 1896 because the bill wasn't paid. The sheriff threatened to sell the church. When a weary Seasholes accepted a call in Lansing, Michigan, FBCD was \$12,000 in debt.

A pulpit committee was formed and promptly sought the counsel of Dr. J. B. Cranfill who recommended George W. Truett without hesitation.<sup>9</sup> The pulpit committee was familiar with Truett and determined to call him. Truett declined all of their inquiries. The pulpit committee and members of FBCD were not deterred by his negative responses. They discerned that God intended George Truett to be their next pastor so they voted to call him in August 1897.

Truett reluctantly agreed to meet with the pulpit committee in Dallas to decline the call in person. Truett's experience as the financial agent for Baylor led him to inquire about the church's finances during his meeting with the pulpit committee. He negotiated several major changes to the church's financial policies before he accepted the call. The \$12,000 debt was retired soon after Truett's arrival in Dallas.

Preaching the gospel was his passion and altar calls always followed his sermons. His oratory skills were legendary earning him the nickname "the Prince of the Pulpit."<sup>10</sup> Truett's commitment to evangelism led to several innovative ministries including radio broadcasts of Sunday services and a ministry for the deaf.<sup>11</sup> Truett served the First Baptist

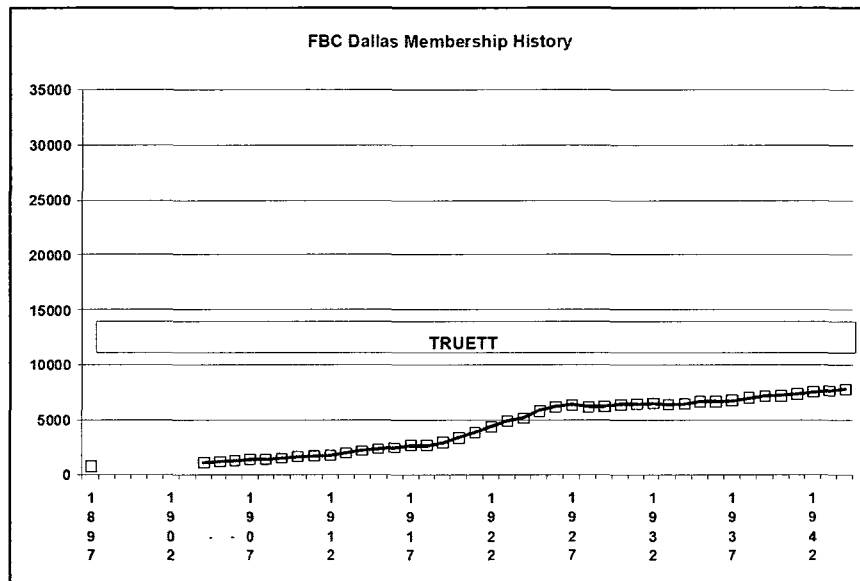
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<sup>9</sup> Dr. J. B. Cranfill was Truett's predecessor as the Financial Secretary at Baylor University. Cranfill had resigned the post when he was elected as the Corresponding Secretary for the Texas Baptist Convention in November 1889. Cranfill became a member of FBCD months after Truett became the pastor.

<sup>10</sup> Multiple volumes of Truett's sermons have been published including George W. Truett, *Follow Thou Me* (New York, NY: R. Long & R. R. Smith, 1932); George W. Truett and J. B. Cranfill, *A Quest for Souls, Comprising All the Sermons Preached and Prayers Offered in a Series of Gospel Meetings Held in Fort Worth, Texas, June 11-24, 1917* (Dallas, TX: Texas Baptist Book House, 1917); George W. Truett and J. B. Cranfill, *We Would See Jesus, and Other Sermons* (New York, NY: Fleming H. Revell, 1915).

<sup>11</sup> Beginning in 1902, he spent a week each summer preaching at camp meetings held for the cowboys on the range in West Texas. Truett was selected by President Wilson in 1918 to preach to the soldiers serving in World War I. Radio broadcasts of Sunday services were initiated in 1921. A ministry for the deaf was launched in 1922 including a Sunday school class and signing during worship. (Truett's brother Charles was deaf from scarlet fever as a child. Charles lived with George in Dallas.)

Church in Dallas from 1897 until 1944.<sup>12</sup> Membership increased during his tenure from 715 to 7,804 making FBCD the largest congregation in the Southern Baptist Conference (see figure 3).<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 3. FBC Membership History during Truett's Tenure**

Truett had many opportunities to serve elsewhere including as president at Baylor. He remained committed to FBCD saying "I have sought and found the shepherd heart of a pastor. I must remain at Dallas."<sup>14</sup> Truett became ill in 1938 at the age of seventy-two. The details of his illness were not revealed publicly until after his death. Neither Truett nor the congregation prepared for the inevitable transition despite his continual decline

<sup>12</sup> For more information on Truett, refer to the biography written by Truett's son-in-law, James, *George W. Truett, a Biography*.

<sup>13</sup> Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, "Biographies: George Washington Truett," Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives) [http://sbhla.org/bio\\_gtruett.htm](http://sbhla.org/bio_gtruett.htm) (accessed October 15, 2004). Leon McBeth, *The First Baptist Church of Dallas: Centennial History (1868-1968)* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1968).

<sup>14</sup> James, *George W. Truett, a Biography*, 95-96. These words later inspired a young seminarian named Robert H. Schuller.

over the next six years. Truett finally tendered his resignation from his death bed in June 1944. The deacons and congregation “lovingly declined it.”<sup>15</sup> Truett died a month later from bone cancer.

Chaos erupted at FBCD after Truett’s lavish funeral. There wasn’t an associate pastor. The deacons struggled with pulpit supply. They had no experience with calling a pastor. One of the deacons suggested that a committee of nine persons be elected to “prayerfully and carefully analyze the problems and potentialities of our First Baptist Church, and suggest, and recommend policies and projects for increasing the service of the church.”<sup>16</sup> Ultimately, the pulpit committee decided that such a study should be performed after the new pastor was installed and proceeded to find him.

They earnestly sought the man who would be God’s choice, whether he happened to be a mature veteran or a smooth-cheeked youth just out of school. The committee wanted a man who was more than adequate, they wanted a great man. They felt that the Dallas pulpit demanded a great man.<sup>17</sup>

The pulpit committee sought the counsel of several trusted lay leaders including Dr. John L. Hill who recommended Rev. Dr. W. A. Criswell, Jr. without hesitation. The committee members had never heard of Criswell so they ignored the recommendation.

W. A. Criswell, Jr.

Wallie Amos Criswell, Jr. was born on December 19, 1909 in Eldorado, Oklahoma. His father was a rancher whose first wife died leaving him to raise three young children. His mother was abandoned by her first husband and left to raise two

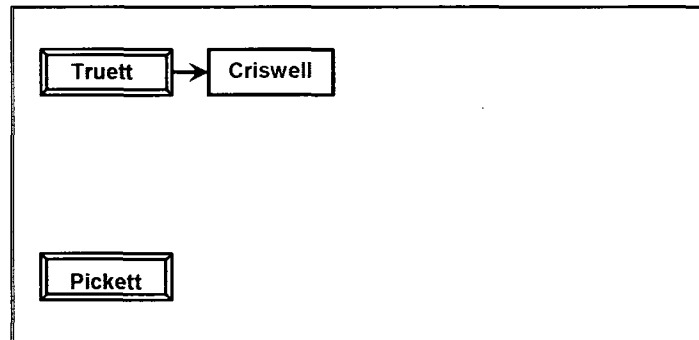
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<sup>15</sup> McBeth, *The First Baptist Church of Dallas: Centennial History (1868-1968)*, 213.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

young daughters. Criswell's parents met in Eldorado and married in 1904. W.A. was their first child together and the sixth of seven children in this blended family.



**Figure 4. Historical Relationships – Criswell**

Criswell's father struggled to make a living as a rancher in Eldorado so he opened a barber shop in town. The fear of contracting tuberculosis from infected cowboys convinced his father to try ranching again. The family moved to Texline, Texas when Criswell was five years old. They worked hard on the homestead all week and worshipped twice on Sundays at the Baptist church in town. Criswell's parents strictly adhered to Southern Baptist traditions and practices.

When a revival was held at the Baptist church in Texline in 1919, the visiting preacher stayed with the Criswell family. Young Criswell told Pastor John N. Hicks that he intended to become a preacher, not a doctor as his parents intended.<sup>18</sup>

I just know that even before I was saved, the Lord planted it deep in my heart that I would be a pastor – not an evangelist, not a missionary, but a pastor. My father did not want me to be a preacher. My mother did not want me to be a preacher. But somehow I knew that in spite of everything and everybody, a preacher I would be.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Ironically, both Truett and Criswell were influenced early on by two men named John Hicks. Truett's professor was John O. Hicks (1825-1908). The revival preacher was John R. Hicks (1871-1940). He was a school teacher before he became a minister. It is not clear if they are related.

<sup>19</sup> W. A. Criswell, *Standing on the Promises: The Autobiography of W.A. Criswell* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1990), 26.

Criswell accepted Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior during the revival and was baptized the following Sunday much to the delight of his parents.

Criswell's commitment to become a preacher increased as he grew older. He listened to famous preachers on the radio and in churches across Texas. His favorite was George W. Truett. Criswell heard Truett preach at the First Baptist Church in Amarillo in 1922. After the service, Truett shook his hand and said "God bless you, son."<sup>20</sup>

Criswell's father faced financial ruin again as the winds on the Texas panhandle blew his hopes and homestead away. He reluctantly opened a barber shop in Texline in 1923. Despite the family's financial struggles, Criswell's mother moved to Amarillo in 1925 so he and his younger brother Currie could get a better education. Criswell's father eventually moved to Amarillo in 1927 where he opened his third barber shop. Young Criswell's dreams of becoming a student preacher at Baylor just like Truett were in direct conflict with his mother's plans for him to become a doctor. After he graduated from Amarillo High School in 1927, the First Baptist Church of Amarillo licensed him to preach, much to his parents' dismay.

We believe him to have been called of God to the work of the gospel ministry, and do hereby give him our entire and cordial approbation in the improvement of his gifts by preaching the gospel, as provident may afford him opportunity.<sup>21</sup>

Criswell's mother reluctantly agreed to his enrollment at Baylor University though she did not relent on her aspirations. She left her husband in Amarillo and moved to Waco that fall with W. A. and young Currie. Criswell sought opportunities to preach,

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 60-61.



and ministered to the poor in Waco. They returned to Amarillo where Criswell found a job in a factory for the summer. In August, the First Baptist Church of Amarillo acknowledged that Criswell had an “unmistakable call to the ministry” and ordained him. Criswell’s mother finally accepted God’s will for her son and sent him back to Baylor alone.

Criswell graduated from Baylor in 1931 and then moved to Louisville to attend Southern Baptist Theological Seminary where he earned a Master of Theology degree (M.Th.) in 1934. He served several small congregations nearby. Criswell married Betty Harris, the young organist from one of his congregations, in 1935. He earned his Doctor of Philosophy degree (Ph.D.) from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1937.<sup>22</sup> They moved to Oklahoma to serve two SBC congregations in Chickasha (1937-1941) and Muskogee (1941-1944).

Criswell’s oratory skills blossomed while serving in Muskogee. He began his trademark style of preaching through the entire Bible verse by verse starting with the book of Genesis. Criswell became a popular preacher at revivals across the country. Criswell later wrote “The sermons I liked best were evangelistic. I wanted to win people to Christ.”<sup>23</sup>

Criswell was preaching at a revival in North Carolina when he learned of Truett’s death in July 1944. He was unaware that the pulpit committee had narrowed their list to three candidates after weeks of searching. The committee sought Dr. John L. Hill’s

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<sup>22</sup> The title of his thesis was *The John the Baptist Movement in Relationship to the Christian Movement*.

<sup>23</sup> Criswell, *Standing on the Promises: The Autobiography of W.A. Criswell*, 153.

counsel again.<sup>24</sup> Hill reaffirmed that Criswell was the person they sought, not the three on their list. Criswell was in Florida leading another revival when the pulpit committee sent Criswell an invitation “to supply one Sunday in August” without any reference to the pastor position.<sup>25</sup> Betty Criswell called him after opening the letter and urged him to accept. He understood their motives and adamantly told his wife that he would not preach under those conditions. Betty sent a telegram accepting the invitation.<sup>26</sup>

The pulpit committee was very impressed by this thirty-four year old man. After additional evaluation of his credentials, they discerned that God was calling Criswell to FBCD. The congregation concurred and officially called Criswell to serve as pastor of FBCD on September 27, 1944. He accepted the call on October 8, 1944 and moved with his family to Dallas in November. The transition period was successful due to the efforts of Bob Coleman, Truett’s close friend and superintendent of FBCD’s Sunday school since 1910. Criswell was mentored by Coleman until his death in 1946.

FBCD was an aging congregation and perceived itself as a downtown church when Criswell arrived. Criswell’s youth and enthusiasm were in sharp contrast to the beloved Truett who had been ill for six years. Criswell intentionally differentiated himself from Truett immediately. His first sermon acknowledged the past and cast a new

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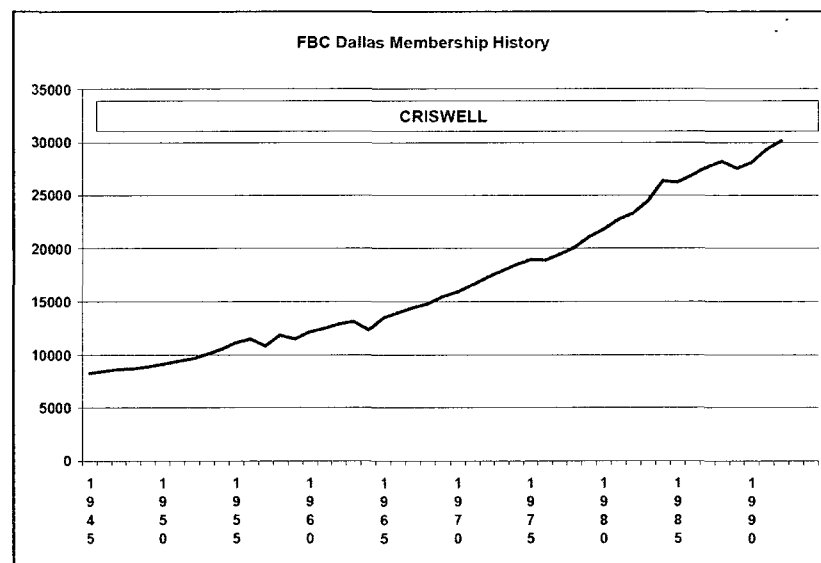
<sup>24</sup> Hill had heard Criswell speak ten years earlier at a meeting in Nashville. Hill was impressed by Criswell’s ability to preach on short notice when the scheduled speaker was unable to attend.

<sup>25</sup> McBeth, *The First Baptist Church of Dallas: Centennial History (1868-1968)*, 223.

<sup>26</sup> Criswell claims that he was preaching at a revival in North Carolina when he learned of Truett’s death. He then drove to St. Petersburg, Florida to lead another revival. On his first night in St. Petersburg, Criswell dreamt that he was attending a funeral at the First Baptist Church of Dallas. The sanctuary was filled with people weeping. Criswell asked the man sitting next to him who had died. The man replied that Dr. Truett had died. Criswell then felt a hand on his knee and heard a voice say “You must go down and preach for my people.” Criswell looked at the man and realized that it was Truett speaking. When Criswell resisted, Truett looked him in the eye and repeated “You must go down and preach for my people.” Then Criswell woke up. He did not tell anyone about the dream for many years. *Ibid.*, 227-28.

vision for the future which focused on programs for young families with children. “You cannot build a great church on just one day a week. . . We must prepare to minister every day.”<sup>27</sup> Criswell eventually convinced the deacons to support his vision and endorse a major building expansion in 1947. The first two buildings were completed in 1953 after years of conflict over design and money.

Financial constraints continued to plague the congregation as Criswell acquired additional property near the church and for Criswell College. Deficit spending became the norm as the business office struggled to manage the cash flow. The congregation was \$9,000,000 in debt by 1991 with no plan for reduction.<sup>28</sup>



**Figure 5. First Baptist Church of Dallas Membership History during Criswell's Tenure**

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>28</sup> Joel C. Gregory, *Too Great a Temptation: The Seductive Power of America's Super Church* (Fort Worth, TX: Summit Group, 1994), 174.

Criswell's career often paralleled that of his beloved predecessor. During Criswell's fifty-year tenure at FBCD, membership increased to from 7,804 to 28,000 (figure 5). FBCD remained the largest SBC congregation in the United States.<sup>29</sup>

Criswell gained national attention in the late 1960s as president of the SBC. After serving two terms, Criswell re-evaluated his future at FBCD and considered retiring within five years at age sixty-five. He announced his intentions and began searching for a successor.<sup>30</sup> At least two associate pastors were called with the expectation of succeeding Criswell. They soon discovered that they were to carry the load for the aging pastor without threatening his power and ego. Both situations ended badly. Few realized that Criswell secretly planned to retire after he exceeded Truett's tenure of forty-seven years – which would be at least until 1991.

Criswell restarted his search for a successor in the mid-1980s. Many young pastors were invited to preach on Sunday nights, including Rev. Dr. Joel Gregory, a thirty-five year old professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. Gregory was invited by Criswell to preach a series of sermons over a four month period. Criswell implied that Gregory would become Criswell's successor.

Several of the lay leaders were incensed by Criswell's actions. They met privately with Gregory to explain that they would not allow Criswell to circumvent SBC polity. They affirmed that the congregation would discern God's will and extend a call, not Criswell. They discouraged Gregory from preaching the series. He ignored their advice.

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<sup>29</sup> LaTonya Taylor, "SBC Leader W. A. Criswell Dies at 92," *Christianity Today* 46, no. 2 (2002). Worship attendance was 2,000 in 1969.

<sup>30</sup> The role of the congregation in this process is not evident.

Criswell continued to lead Gregory on during the four month series. Tensions mounted until the lay leaders told Criswell that they would not allow him to bypass the congregation. Criswell informed Gregory after the final sermon. Gregory went back to Fort Worth disillusioned and disappointed. He later accepted a call as pastor at Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth.

Three years later, Criswell tried again. He announced that the congregation needed to call a co-pastor soon in order to avoid a leadership crisis. He had already selected and contacted a particular person from the group of Sunday night preachers. Criswell explained that a committee would be formed to search for a person “with whom he could work.”<sup>31</sup> He also dictated how the committee would proceed. They were to bring a recommendation directly to the congregation. No one would be allowed to preach or meet the congregation before a vote. His entire plan clearly violated Baptist polity.

Though Criswell influenced the selection of committee members, he was unable to control the committee. They had no intention of calling Criswell’s pick – O. S. Hawkins. They spent the next twenty-seven months searching for a co-pastor, much to Criswell’s chagrin. Meanwhile, Criswell had changed the terms – no more co-pastor language. Criswell would remain the senior pastor and the new person would be the pastor. The final two candidates were Hawkins and Gregory. After months of gridlock, the committee voted to call Gregory. The Criswells were furious. The congregation affirmed the committee’s recommendation and extended the call to Gregory in November, 1991.

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<sup>31</sup> Gregory, *Too Great a Temptation: The Seductive Power of America's Super Church*, 77.

Unfortunately, Criswell never indicated when he would actually retire. Gregory inherited countless problems, including the \$9,000,000 debt. He determined that the membership roles and worship attendance statistics were greatly inflated. He endured endless power struggles with Criswell, particularly over the preaching schedule. The congregation was caught in the middle.

Gregory and the deacons were shocked to discover in August 1992 that Criswell intended to stay until his fiftieth anniversary – October 1994! Gregory met with key leaders to develop a strategy. He also met with Criswell who would not commit to a specific retirement date. Gregory could no longer tolerate the situation. He resigned on September 23, 1992.

Table 3 presents the complete pastoral history of FBCD. Eight pastors served FBCD between 1868 and 1897, with an average tenure of 3.3 years. Truett served forty-seven years. Criswell served fifty years. Gregory served twenty-one months.

**Table 3. First Baptist Church of Dallas Pastoral History (1868 – 2007)**

Pastor Name				Call Begin Year	Call End Year	Tenure	Age When Call Began
	W.		Harris	1868	1871	3	
	C.		Stanton	1871	1872	1	
	Abram		Weaver	1873	1875	2	48
	G.	W.	Rogers	1876	1877	1	65
	James	Hudson	Curry	1878	1882	4	29
	Robert	Taylor	Hanks	1882	1889	7	
	Albert	Meredith	Simms	1889	1892	3	42
	Charles	Louis	Seasholes	1892	1897	5	
Dr.	George	Washington	Truett	1897	1944	47	30
Dr.	Wallie	Amos	Criswell	1944	1994	50	35
Dr.	Joel	Cliff	Gregory	1991	1992	1	43
Dr.	Otis	Swafford	Hawkins Jr.	1993	1997	4	46
Dr.	Donald	McCall	Brunson	1999	2006	7	42
Dr.	Robert	James	Jeffress Jr.	2007			52

Criswell survived the chaos that followed Gregory's resignation. O. S. Hawkins was installed as pastor in October, 1993. Criswell remained as senior pastor until he retired in 1994, and pastor emeritus until his death in 2002. But, Criswell's legacy was tarnished by his inability to share or relinquish the pulpit at FBCD. The congregation has struggled to retain pastors and reduce its debt.

After Mac Brunson was called in 1999, the membership role was adjusted from 28,000 to 9,615. The actual WATD (3,176) described by Gregory in 1992 was finally reported publicly. The financial problems were addressed and the debt was retired. Brunson was able to increase WATD to 3,500 before he left for the vibrant First Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida in 2006.

First Baptist Church of Dallas elected Rev. Dr. Robert Jeffress as their new senior pastor on August 12, 2007.<sup>32</sup> Jeffress' call affirms the continued influence of W. A. Criswell in the congregation. After the vote, Jeffress told the assembled congregation about an experience he said he'd never shared with anyone, including his wife, Amy. Criswell undoubtedly smiled in heaven as Jeffress revealed his secret just as Criswell had done years before. Jeffress told the congregation that one night as a Baylor University student, he was walking down the street and had a direct communication from God. "God

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<sup>32</sup> Jeffress was born in Dallas and attended FBCD where his mother taught Sunday school. He has degrees from Baylor University, Dallas Theological Seminary, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He was ordained, preached his first sermon, and served as a youth pastor at FBCD. Jeffress also served as pastor of First Baptist Church in Eastland, Texas from 1985 to 1992 and First Baptist Church of Wichita Falls, Texas since 1992. W.A. Criswell was Jeffress' mentor. Jeffress spoke at W.A.'s funeral in 2002 and officiated Betty's funeral in 2006.

said to me, 'One day you will be the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas.' . . .  
Whatever happens, I know I am in the center of God's will."<sup>33</sup>

The story of the First Baptist Church of Dallas provides a historical perspective on the importance of relationships, and the complexities of pastoral change and transition. Despite their significant contributions to the congregation and community, neither Truett or Criswell appropriately managed their own inevitable transition. Truett, and the complicit congregation, failed to prepare despite his advanced age and long-term illness. Though Truett's death created chaos in the unprepared congregation, the transition went smoothly after Criswell accepted their call. Truett's close friend and advisor, Bob Coleman, mentored Criswell for two years. Criswell was determined to select his own successor without the congregation's involvement. After a successor was eventually called by the congregation, Criswell revealed his intention to continue as senior pastor for two more years. His inability to relinquish his power and authority to his successor tarnished his legacy and created long-term problems for the congregation.

Meanwhile, a young missionary was learning how to share the gospel with the untouchables in India. His evangelization efforts, and subsequent research on the process itself, established the foundation for understanding how churches grow and how peoples become Christian.

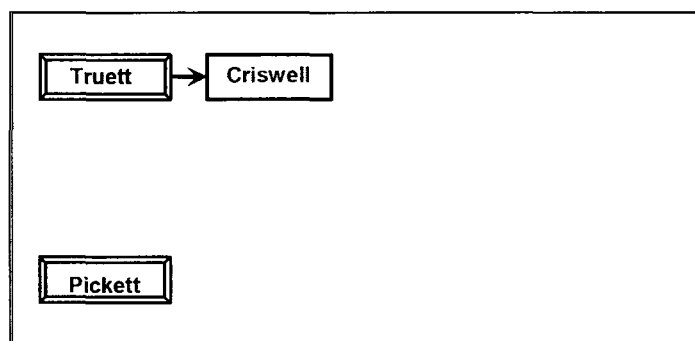
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<sup>33</sup> Sam Hodges, "New Senior Pastor Elected at First Baptist," *Dallas Morning News*, August 12, 2007, <http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/localnews/stories/081207dnmetjeffress.29472158.html> (accessed December 7, 2007).



## J. Waskom Pickett

*It is not reasonable to suppose that a church in which the Holy Spirit is at work in Pentecostal power would experience the rapid growth that took place in Jerusalem after Pentecost?<sup>34</sup>*



**Figure 6. Historical Relationships – Pickett**

Jarrell Waskom Pickett was born in Marshall, Texas on February 21, 1890.<sup>35</sup> His father, L.L. Pickett, was an itinerant minister and hymn writer whose first wife died leaving him with two sons to raise. L.L. married Ludie Day in 1888, a school teacher and organist who had planned to become a missionary. J. Waskom was the first of the seven sons born to L.L. and Ludie. His family moved to Columbia, South Carolina when he was three weeks old to Wilmore, Kentucky when he was four.

Pickett was a brilliant child. He read the newspaper at age four. Pickett mastered languages quickly, beginning with Greek at age seven. He entered Asbury College in 1903 when he was just thirteen. E. Stanley Jones was his classmate at the college and

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<sup>34</sup> J. Waskom Pickett, *The Dynamics of Church Growth* (New York, NY: Abingdon Press, 1963), 11.

<sup>35</sup> The nearest town to Marshall is Waskom, Texas.

boarded at the Pickett home.<sup>36</sup> Pickett and Jones joined the Student Volunteer Movement and pledged to become missionaries after college.<sup>37</sup>

Pickett's faith and commitment to missionary work were challenged by several personal crises during his final semester at Asbury. These challenges motivated him to answer the altar call during a revival at Asbury in February 1907.

But in a way that never ceased, my mind and heart were filled with wonder and with love for God, and within a week after that experience, I knew definitely that God wanted me to be a missionary.<sup>38</sup>

After graduation in 1907, Jones went to Lucknow, India as a missionary for the Methodist Episcopal Church. Pickett remained in Wilmore to teach Latin and Greek while completing his master's degree. Pickett's father discouraged him from attending seminary so Waskom taught at Arkansas Holiness College (1908-09) and Taylor University (1909-10). When Jones returned to the United States in 1910 due to physical exhaustion, Pickett took his place in Lucknow in December. Pickett was ordained during the North India Annual Conference held at the Lal Bagh Church in Lucknow in January 1911.

Pickett met Ruth Robinson, the fifteen year-old daughter of John Wesley Robinson, the District Superintendent in Lucknow, shortly after his arrival. They fell in

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<sup>36</sup> Pickett and Jones were greatly influenced by John Mott, chairman of the Student Volunteer Movement (1888-1920). Jones became a famous missionary, author, and preacher. He wrote many books beginning with E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road* (New York, NY: Abingdon Press, 1925).

<sup>37</sup> Mott later became chairman of the International Missionary Council (1921-1941), and Institute of Social and Religious Research (1921-1934). Charles Howard Hopkins, *John R. Mott, 1865-1955: A Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1979).

<sup>38</sup> Arthur G. McPhee, *The Road to Delhi: J. Waskom Pickett Remembered* (Bangalore: SAIACS Press, 2005), 26.

love, became engaged in 1912, and were married in 1916.<sup>39</sup> Robinson served as Bishop of Bombay (1916-1924) and Bishop of Delhi (1924-1936). Pickett later served in the same positions – Bishop of Bombay (1936-1944) and Bishop of Delhi (1945-1956).<sup>40</sup>

Pickett's early ministry led him out of the missionary compounds into the villages where he discovered the significant challenges facing the untouchables or low-caste peoples. He committed his life and career to addressing their spiritual, intellectual, and physical needs.<sup>41</sup> He changed his evangelization strategy after observing that they responded as groups, not individuals, to indigenous leaders who had converted to Christianity. Pickett supported several local evangelists financially and started schools to prepare future leaders.

Interest in these so-called mass movements peaked around the world after the International Missionary Council (IMC) meeting in Jerusalem in 1928. John Mott, the chairman of the IMC, believed that Christian mass movements were a significant phenomenon in the non-Christian world which deserved further attention by missionaries, mission societies, writers, professors, and ministers. Mott personally met with Pickett in India after the conference to solicit his opinion on mass movements.<sup>42</sup> Mott indicated to Pickett that he wanted to conduct a scientific survey of mass movements in India in order

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<sup>39</sup> They were married in July 1916. They had three daughters and one son.

<sup>40</sup> Pickett gained considerable influence in social and political circles in India over the years. John T. Seamands, "The Legacy of J. Waskom Pickett," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 13, no. 3 (1989).

<sup>41</sup> Pickett did more than "any single individual of his time to advance the cause of medical missions in South Asia." McPhee, *The Road to Delhi: J. Waskom Pickett Remembered*, 82. Twenty-six churches were built during his tenure in Bombay (1936-1944).

<sup>42</sup> Pickett preferred the term "group movement" to mass movement but continued to use the latter because it was familiar. Pickett defined a mass movement as "a group decision favorable to Christianity and the consequent preservation of the converts' social integration." *Ibid.*, 219.

to determine if they really worked. Mott had already arranged for support from the Institute of Social and Religious Research (ISRR), which he also chaired.<sup>43</sup> Mott successfully orchestrated his proposal through the National Christian Council of India, Burma, and Ceylon.<sup>44</sup> Pickett was quickly selected to lead the study, much to his surprise. Pickett was promptly dispatched to New York City where he received training at the ISRR. Dr. Warren H. Wilson was hired by Mott to be the technical advisor. Despite significant differences in objectives and methodology, Pickett and Wilson completed the study in October 1931.<sup>45</sup> The results were compiled by Pickett in 1932 and published in 1933 as *Christian Mass Movements in India*.<sup>46</sup> The research revealed that mass movements were effective in the Indian context because individual converts were typically rejected by family and caste. Mott wrote in the Foreword:

It will be surprising if anthropologists and sociologists do not seize upon the data here presented for light upon the modification of ancient folk-ways under the impacts of a powerful new force.<sup>47</sup>

Mott's prophetic words and Pickett's research significantly influenced another missionary in India who was anxious to understand how churches grow and how peoples become Christian.

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<sup>43</sup> The Institute of Social and Religious Research (1921-1934) was funded by John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

<sup>44</sup> J. Waskom Pickett, *Christian Mass Movements in India: A Study with Recommendations* (New York, NY: Abingdon Press, 1933), 11.

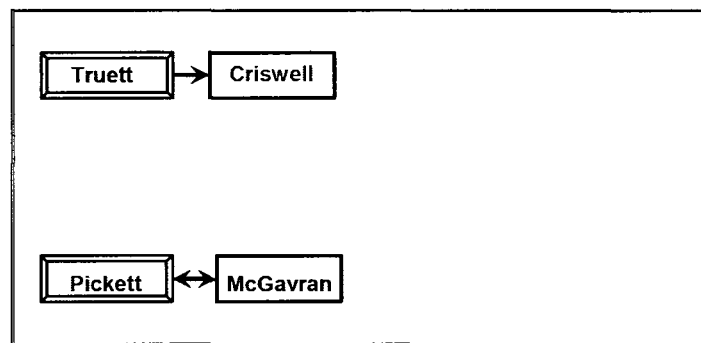
<sup>45</sup> McPhee, *The Road to Delhi: J. Waskom Pickett Remembered*, 198-209.

<sup>46</sup> Pickett, *Christian Mass Movements in India: A Study with Recommendations*. John R. Mott wrote the Foreword. Dr. Warren H. Wilson requested that his name not be included in the book. His request was honored in the first edition but Pickett acknowledged him in subsequent editions. The book was widely heralded throughout India. The study itself was groundbreaking in size and scope. Four thousand interviews were conducted. It also affirmed the use of scientific methods in religious research.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

### Donald A. McGavran

Donald Anderson McGavran was born on December 15, 1897 in Damoh, India. He was the second of four children. His parents were missionaries for the Disciples of Christ serving in India. Donald and his siblings were initially home schooled, later attending the Woodstock School in Mussoorie, India.<sup>48</sup> McGavran began his illustrious career at the now famous Edinburgh Missionary Conference in June 1910 which he attended as a guest with his parents and sister. The family moved from India to the United States later that year.



**Figure 7. Historical Relationships – McGavran**

McGavran enrolled at Butler College (now Butler University) in 1915. He interrupted his studies in 1917 to serve in the army during WWI. Shortly after returning from France, McGavran contemplated his future while attending a Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) conference in the summer of 1919.

As a senior at Butler College and chairman of the YMCA Committee, I went to Lake Geneva [Wisconsin] as a dedicated Christian. But I also went there saying to

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<sup>48</sup> At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Woodstock School was primarily a school for children with missionary parents operated by the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church, U.S.A. Woodstock was essentially a finishing school for girls, though boys up to the age of twelve were allowed. Due to its location in the foothills of the Himalayas, many missionary wives lived with their children on the vast compound surrounding the school. The husbands typically spent a few weeks there during the hottest months of the year. Woodstock became interdenominational and coeducational in the 1920s. Pickett was secretary-treasurer of the Methodist Woodstock Association in 1926.

myself, my father and grandfather were missionaries. My family has done enough for God. I am going to be a good Christian and make a lot of money. At Lake Geneva it became increasingly clear to me that a Christian could not thus limit the degree of his dedication. While there one night in prayer I said, Lord, I'll do whatever you want. I will go wherever you send. I will carry out, not my will but yours. That purpose dominated my life.<sup>49</sup>

God answered McGavran's prayer later that year while he was attending a Student Volunteer convention in Des Moines, Iowa.

There it became clear to me that God was calling me to be a missionary, that he was commanding me to carry out the Great Commission. Doing just that has ever since been the ruling purpose of my life. True, I have from time to time swerved from that purpose but not for long. That decision lies at the heart of the church growth movement.<sup>50</sup>

After he completed his undergraduate studies in 1920, McGavran attended Yale Divinity School from which he earned a Bachelor of Divinity degree (B.D.) in 1922. He met Mary Elizabeth Howard at Butler and married her in 1922. He was ordained by the Disciples of Christ in 1923. The McGavrans were commissioned as missionaries to Harda, India by the United Christian Missionary Society. Donald served as a principal of a mission high school where he taught Bible classes to high-caste boys. Mary was the superintendent of a school for girls. McGavran became a member of the Mid-India Provincial Christian Council in 1928.

Donald resumed the McGavran family tradition of spending summers in Mussoorie near the Woodstock School. The McGavrans met and became friends with the

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<sup>49</sup> Donald A. McGavran, "My Pilgrimage in Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 10, no. 2 (1986): 53.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

Picketts there during the late 1920s. The Pickett and McGavran children attended the Woodstock School while their fathers served in India.<sup>51</sup>

McGavran was awarded a research fellowship at Union Theological Seminary in New York City during his first furlough from 1930 until 1932.<sup>52</sup> Upon his return to India in 1932, McGavran served as field secretary for the India Mission in Jubbulpore. He observed that all missions were doing “good works” but only a few were successful in the actual “discipling” of the local peoples.<sup>53</sup> McGavran grew increasingly concerned about the amount of resources that were being used with very limited results.

In the 1930's as I read Waskom Pickett's *Christian Mass Movements in India*, my eyes were opened. I suddenly saw that where people become Christian one by one and are seen as outcasts by their own people, as traitors who have joined another community, the church grows very, very slowly.<sup>54</sup>

McGavran decided that a similar study was needed in mid-India where he was serving. He persuaded the Mid-India Provincial Christian Council to hire Pickett to conduct a survey in 1936. McGavran and Reverend G.H. Singh served as Pickett's assistants. The results were published in 1937.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> The McGavrans had six children, one of whom died in India.

<sup>52</sup> McGavran received his Ph.D. in Education from Columbia University in 1937. McGavran's dissertation was a statistical analysis of the influence of Christian schools on the religious beliefs of students from Hindu families. Donald A. McGavran, “Education and Beliefs of Popular Hinduism: A Study of the Beliefs of Secondary School Boys in Central Provinces, India, in Regard to Nineteen Major Beliefs of Popular Hinduism.” (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1937).

<sup>53</sup> Donald A. McGavran, *Effective Evangelism: A Theological Mandate* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1988), 64.

<sup>54</sup> McGavran, “My Pilgrimage in Mission.”

<sup>55</sup> J. Waskom Pickett, Donald Anderson McGavran, and G. H. Singh, *Mass Movement Survey Report for Mid-India: A Study of Nine Areas in Mid-India from the Standpoint of How Mass Movements Begin, Are Arrested, Revive and Go Forward to the Upbuilding of Great Churches* (Jubbulpore, India: Mission Press, 1937). The book included the details of six case studies that illustrate several types of group conversions. The book was so successful that a second edition was published in 1938. J. Waskom Pickett, Donald Anderson McGavran, and Ganda Singh, *Christian Missions in Mid-India: A Study of Nine Areas*

The National Council of Churches (NCC) Mass Movement Conference was held in December 1936. The conference participants were speculating who would replace Pickett as secretary since he had been elected to Bishop of Bombay in January. McGavran, the obvious choice, began a series of mistakes that cost him the job and almost his entire career. First, during his presentation of the mid-India study, McGavran openly requested that Mott (who was present) obtain resources for three secretaries, not one. Second, reports were received that people were often offended by his blunt language and inconsiderate behavior in the field. Third, McGavran published three articles in the *World Dominion* that openly criticized the caste system in India. He also revealed intimate details of a secret meeting between Gandhi, Pickett, and others. Gandhi was livid. McGavran was forced to apologize in writing twice after the first letter of apology was deemed inadequate. Though Pickett defended McGavran, the damage was significant. There was serious concern that the incident would derail the upcoming International Missionary Council (IMC) conference in Madras.

McGavran was subsequently assigned to a mission in Takhatpur where he managed a leprosarium. McGavran's own account of the move from Jubbulpore doesn't mention the controversy he created.

Since you are talking so much about evangelism and church growth, we are going to locate you in a district where you can practice what you preach. Since this meant turning from the work to which I felt that God had called me – namely, Christianization through Christian education – I resisted the location. But, finally, believing that it was God's direction, I accepted it, and for the next eighteen years, I devoted myself to the evangelization of one caste, the Satnamis.<sup>56</sup>

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with *Special Reference to Mass Movements* (Jubbulpore, India: Mission Press, 1938). The third edition was published in May 1955 under the title *Church Growth and Group Conversion*. J. Waskom Pickett, *Church Growth and Group Conversion*, 3d ed. (Lucknow, India: Lucknow Publishing House, 1956). It is important to note that in the third edition the term "mass movement" was changed to "people movement."

<sup>56</sup> McGavran, "My Pilgrimage in Mission," 56.



McGavran had little success with the Satnamis. He began to realize that the mass movement principle had the potential to become universal in its use and continued to study these movements in India. He documented his findings in a manuscript titled *How People Become Christian*. The book, which critiqued the results of the mission station approach and promoted the *people* movement approach, was rejected by several publishers in 1953. He sent a copy of his manuscript to Pickett who provided substantive comments.

The McGavran family returned to the United States on furlough in the summer of 1954. They remained in New York because the United Christian Missionary Society of Indianapolis hired McGavran to research people movements around the world. Between 1954 and 1961, he conducted studies in Puerto Rico, Formosa, Jamaica, the Philippines, Thailand, and the Belgian Congo.<sup>57</sup>

McGavran's manuscript *How People Become Christian* was published in 1955 with a new title *The Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions*.<sup>58</sup> The book critiqued the results of the mission station approach and promoted the *people* movement

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<sup>57</sup> For example, see Donald Anderson McGavran, *Church Growth in Jamaica: A Preview of Things to Come in Many Lands* (Lucknow, India: Lucknow Publishing House, 1962); Donald Anderson McGavran, *Church Growth in Mexico* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1963); Donald Anderson McGavran, *Church Growth in West Utkal* (Indianapolis, IN: Division of World Mission the United Christian Missionary Society, 1956); Donald Anderson McGavran, *Multiplying Churches in the Philippines* (Manila: United Church of Christ in the Philippines, 1958); Donald Anderson McGavran, *A Study of the Life and Growth of the Church of the Disciples of Christ in Puerto Rico in View of the Strategy of World Mission Adopted by the United Christian Missionary Society* (Indianapolis, IN: Foreign Division of the United Christian Missionary Society, 1955).

<sup>58</sup> Donald Anderson McGavran, *The Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions* (London: World Dominion Press, 1955). McGavran broke new ground with his categories – theological, ethical, missiological, and procedural. Roland Allen was the publisher at World Dominion Press in London. They also published his controversial articles in 1936.

approach. It was heralded as “the most-read missionary book in 1956.”<sup>59</sup> The publication of *The Bridges of God* has been said to mark the beginning of the Church Growth Movement.<sup>60</sup> McGavran believed that the Church Growth Movement was the convergence of the missionary convictions of many who march under the Great Commission. It takes many forms in many different regions of the world.<sup>61</sup>

McGavran grew restless with the survey work and temporary teaching positions. He dreamed of starting an institution that would be dedicated to teach “how mission could carry out God’s command to disciple *panta ta ethne*.”<sup>62</sup> He firmly believed that the world was very responsive to the gospel at that moment in time and was concerned that the moment would be lost because very little was known about how churches grow.

The church doesn’t grow by carrying on good youth meetings, a good Sunday School, good preaching or a good choir unless these are inspired by a desire to see persons become disciples of Jesus Christ and responsible members of His church. If this is their dominant passion, then the organizations and programs will, of course, help the church to grow.<sup>63</sup>

McGavran eventually accepted an offer from the Northwest Christian College in Eugene, Oregon to teach a course on missions to undergraduates in return for three

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<sup>59</sup> McGavran, “My Pilgrimage in Mission,” 56.

<sup>60</sup> C. Peter Wagner, “Recent Developments in Church Growth Understandings,” *Review & Expositor* 77 (1980): 507. According to McGavran, the Church Growth Movement actually began “in the fourth decade of the twentieth century” when he began to question why some churches were growing and others were not. McGavran, *Effective Evangelism: A Theological Mandate*, 64.

<sup>61</sup> McGavran, “My Pilgrimage in Mission,” 58. This understanding is reflected at length in McGavran’s famous book Donald A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1970). This book was written in the wake of the debate over mission in Uppsala in 1968. McGavran and his colleagues at Fuller were concerned that the World Council of Churches was turning away from mission as Christianization and turning toward mission as humanization. Their battle cry was “Will Uppsala Betray the Two Billion?”

<sup>62</sup> McGavran, “My Pilgrimage in Mission,” 56. *Panta ta ethne* means *all the nations*.

<sup>63</sup> Donald A. McGavran and Win Arn, *How to Grow a Church* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books, 1973), 170.

\$1,000 scholarships for career missionaries to attend the newly founded Institute of Church Growth. The Institute opened in the fall of 1961 with one student. Bishop J. Waskom Pickett gave the opening address.<sup>64</sup> The number of missionaries studying at the Institute grew rapidly. They applied their new skills to the study of church growth around the world, dramatically increasing the information available to mission societies and denominations.

#### Fuller Theological Seminary – School of World Mission

Dr. David Allan Hubbard, President of Fuller Theological Seminary invited Donald McGavran to become the founding Dean of the School of World Mission in 1965. Hubbard's vision was to create a school dedicated to world evangelism. McGavran accepted the invitation and moved the Institute of Church Growth to Pasadena, California. McGavran's mantra "winning men and women to Christ and multiplying churches as the one true purpose of mission" became the purpose of the School of World Mission (SWM) as well.<sup>65</sup>

McGavran assembled a dream team of professors including Alan Tippett, J. Edwin Orr, Ralph Winter, Charles Kraft, and Arthur Glasser over the next six years. These men collectively shaped the SWM into an institution that rapidly gained unprecedented global focus and influence.<sup>66</sup> Missionaries, national leaders, and mission

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<sup>64</sup> Pickett gave the first series of Church Growth Lectures which were later published. See Pickett, *The Dynamics of Church Growth*. In 1963, the lecture series was presented by a panel that included Eugene Nida, Melvin Hodges, and Calvin Guy. These lectures were also published. See Donald A. McGavran, ed., *Church Growth and Christian Mission* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1965).

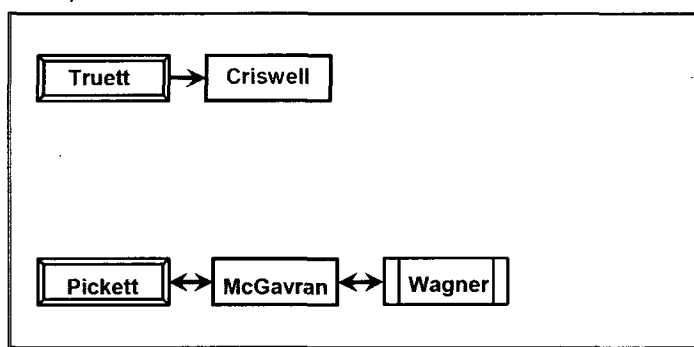
<sup>65</sup> McGavran, *Effective Evangelism: A Theological Mandate*.

<sup>66</sup> McGavran, "My Pilgrimage in Mission." McGavran attributes all of this success to "the sovereign God" and his colleagues, not himself.

executives from around the world gathered in Pasadena to study sociology, anthropology, theology, and learn the methods of scientific research.<sup>67</sup> McGavran invited C. Peter Wagner, a missionary from Bolivia, to join the faculty at Fuller in 1971. McGavran's decision to hire Wagner significantly changed the future of the Church Growth Movement.

### C. Peter Wagner

Charles Peter Wagner was born on August 15, 1930 in New York City. He grew up on the family farm in upstate New York. Wagner's family was not religious. He described himself as "a committed heathen, dedicated to fulfilling the desires of my flesh in as respectable way as possible."<sup>68</sup>



**Figure 8. Historical Relationships – Wagner**

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. According to McGavran, the SWM began with fifteen graduate students in 1965. By 1983, the enrollment exceeded 400 students. Over the years, students have made significant contributions to the global church through their dissertations. See Nancy Thomas and Steven Pettis, "Thirty Years of Missiological Abstracts: The School of World Mission, Fuller Theological Seminary, 1966-1996." (Pasadena, CA: School of World Mission Fuller Theological Seminary) <http://www.fuller.edu/swm/abstracts/Welcome.html> (accessed September 8, 2004).

<sup>68</sup> C. Peter Wagner, "My Pilgrimage in Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 23, no. 4 (1999): 164.

His life changed dramatically when he met his future wife, Doris Mueller. When Doris became a Christian (one week before meeting Wagner), she promised God that she would marry a Christian and that she would become a missionary to Africa. Wagner learned of her commitments when he proposed in 1950. That very night he committed his life to Christ and a career as a missionary. He later wrote that “Contributing to the fulfillment of Jesus’ Great Commission has been the driving passion of my life since day 1 of my new life in Christ.”<sup>69</sup>

Wagner married Doris on October 15, 1950. Wagner earned his Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degree at Rutgers in 1952 and a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) degree from Fuller Theological Seminary in 1955. After Wagner’s ordination in the New Brunswick Bible Church, the Wagners were called as agricultural missionaries to Bolivia for the South American Indian Mission in 1956. Wagner soon began teaching in a Bible school for local pastors and later in a seminary. Wagner grew increasingly frustrated with the lack of results.

Wagner first became familiar with the work of Donald McGavran when he read *The Bridges of God* while serving in Bolivia.

I read a review of *The Bridges of God* in *Practical Anthropology* magazine, where the book was recommended. So I ordered the book and read it. The more I read the book, the crazier I thought the author was. I thought that he was a quack – really off the wall. None of what he was saying in that book was what I had learned at Fuller Seminary in my mission classes. Everything was just the opposite. So I finished the book and put it on the shelf for cockroach food. I went on to some other books and forgot about it.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Thom S. Rainer, *The Book of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1993), 53.

Wagner was quite surprised to learn that McGavran had founded the School of World Mission at Fuller in 1965. Wagner decided to enroll in the new SWM during his 1967 furlough to hear what McGavran had to say. They quickly developed a mutual respect. Wagner learned from McGavran that the “most productive church growth research methodology was to study growing churches.”<sup>71</sup>

McGavran invited Wagner to join the faculty after he completed his Master of Arts (M.A.) in Missiology in 1968, but Wagner felt compelled to return to Bolivia to incorporate what he had learned into his work. Wagner occasionally served as adjunct faculty at the SWM until he finally accepted McGavran’s invitation in 1971.

Just as McGavran’s mentor, J. Waskom Pickett did not see the application of his methods outside of India, McGavran did not see the application of his methods and principles in North America. Wagner recognized the potential for using McGavran’s methods in North America and set out to study growing churches in the United States.

Wagner quickly capitalized on the opportunities in North America, beginning with a church growth course he taught with McGavran in 1972.<sup>72</sup> One of their students, Win Arn, resigned from his position as Director of Religious Education for the Evangelical Covenant Church in order to promote church growth principles in the United States. To this end, Arn founded the Institute for American Church Growth in Pasadena in 1974.<sup>73</sup> Arn and McGavran, not Wagner, published the first book focused on American

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<sup>71</sup> Wagner, “My Pilgrimage in Mission,” 166.

<sup>72</sup> Though the course was officially offered through Fuller Theological Seminary, it was taught at the Lake Avenue Congregational Church which is located one half mile northeast of the Fuller campus. Wagner was a member of the church.

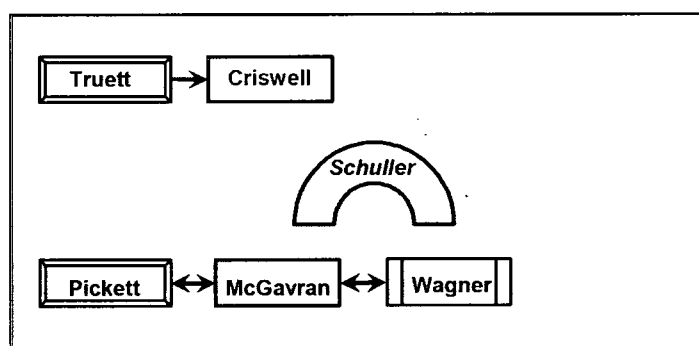
<sup>73</sup> Donald McGavran served as the chairman of the board of directors for the Institute for American Church Growth from 1974 until 1995.

church growth in 1973.<sup>74</sup> Wagner's interest in growing churches in the United States may have led him to the Garden Grove Community Church (GGCC) in Garden Grove, California. Wagner's relationship with Robert H. Schuller, pastor of GGCC, was pivotal to the future of the American Church Growth movement.

### Convergence

The contributions of Truett and Pickett converged through the efforts of Robert H. Schuller. His efforts paved the way for the next generation of leaders who established their own identities and made their own contributions.

Robert Harold Schuller



**Figure 9. Historical Relationships – Schuller**

Robert Harold Schuller was born on September 16, 1926 in Alton, Iowa. He was the youngest of five children born to Jennie and Anthony Schuller. His father secretly dreamed of becoming a preacher before his parents died when he was a young boy. Anthony became a farmer out of necessity after completing the fifth grade. Years later, the ever faithful Anthony Schuller prayed that he and his wife would bear a son who would serve the Lord.

<sup>74</sup> McGavran and Arn, *How to Grow a Church*.

O Lord, I know that my Jennie is past her child-bearing years, but please plant one more seed – in my Jennie. And let it grow and bear a son – a son who will be a minister – who will in turn plant seeds, your seeds of love, in many hearts.<sup>75</sup>

Harold, as his mother called him, was raised in the Dutch Reformed tradition. His maternal grandfather, John Henry Beltman, was a lay preacher who often substituted for the local pastor. Harold's maternal uncle, Henry Beltman, served as a missionary in China. Harold was five years old when he first met his Uncle Henry while on furlough. Schuller's destiny was predicted when the tall, handsome man hugged the young boy and said "So . . . you're Robert Harold. . . You will be a preacher when you grow up!"<sup>76</sup> Harold was delighted by the prospect and announced his intentions to the entire family the next morning during breakfast. He intuitively knew that his father supported his dream.

Harold enrolled at the Reformed Church of America's Hope College in Holland, Michigan after completing high school in 1943. During registration, he decided to reclaim his baptismal name, much to his mother's dismay. After graduation in 1947, Robert attended Western Theological Seminary, located across the street from Hope College.

Schuller wrote a paper about George W. Truett for a class in 1948. Schuller was already dreaming about his first call, one he hoped would be in the biggest church in the RCA. He realized that some of his classmates had the same dream and that they were beginning to compete with each other in ways that Schuller sensed were laden with

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<sup>75</sup> Sheila Schuller Coleman, *Robert Schuller, My Father & My Friend* (Milwaukee, WI: Ideals Pub. Corp., 1980), 19-20.

<sup>76</sup> Robert Harold Schuller, *My Journey: From an Iowa Farm to a Cathedral of Dreams* (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 45.



“potentially dangerous ambition.”<sup>77</sup> After learning that Truett had made the commitment to spend his entire career in one church, Schuller decided to seek a call in a small church in a big city, and to spend his life there. Schuller sought to “channel my ambition over the next forty years, leaving behind at my retirement a church as big and great as God willed it!”<sup>78</sup> Schuller never personally met Truett.

After he graduated from seminary in 1950, Schuller returned to Iowa to marry Arvella DeHaan, a beautiful organist whom he met while supply preaching one summer. Schuller’s first call was to the Ivanhoe Reformed Church in Dolton, Illinois, where he was ordained as a minister of Word and Sacrament in the Reformed Church of America. Membership increased from thirty-five to over 400 in less than five years.

When the Reformed Church of America decided to start a new church in Orange County, California, they voted unanimously to call Schuller as the pastor in late 1954. Schuller reluctantly traveled by train to California to assess the situation. Schuller wrestled with the decision on the return trip to Chicago. He realized that “the greatest churches in the world have yet to be organized!”<sup>79</sup> Schuller, Arvella, and their two children, Sheila and Robert Anthony, soon moved to Garden Grove, California. Schuller’s intention was to reach unchurched people, which was not a priority at that time for any denomination. Schuller later wrote “Unquestionably, I saw the large church as the most effective church in the mission of evangelizing the non-churched people.”<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>80</sup> Schuller, *Your Church Has Real Possibilities*, 10.

## Garden Grove Community Church

Unable to find any available space for Sunday worship services, Schuller rented a drive-in movie theater and preached the first of many sermons from the top of the snack bar on March 27, 1955. The Garden Grove Community Church (GGCC) was officially incorporated in September 1955 with 154 charter members.<sup>81</sup> Just eighteen months later, Schuller preached at two worship services each Sunday – the first in the newly dedicated chapel and the second at the drive-in. As the congregation quickly outgrew the chapel, the church purchased ten acres of land nearby to accommodate several buildings needed for the growing ministries.<sup>82</sup> The GGCC continued to acquire adjoining property, creating a campus Schuller described as “a twenty acre shopping center for Jesus Christ”<sup>83</sup>

Schuller served as vice-chairman of the committee sponsoring the Billy Graham crusade at Angel Stadium in 1969. Billy Graham recognized Schuller’s passion for the gospel and his ability to reach the unchurched. Graham suggested that Schuller broadcast the Sunday worship service from the Garden Grove Community Church on Gene Autry’s television station KTLA. The first Hour of Power was broadcast on February 8, 1970.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Schuller, *My Journey: From an Iowa Farm to a Cathedral of Dreams*, 216. Only six of the charter members belonged to the Reformed Church of America. According to Schuller, most of the charter members had no church affiliation at all.

<sup>82</sup> The Tower of Hope was completed in 1968. The Tower housed the administrative offices for the church, a counseling center, and a telephone bank responding to calls to the 24x7x365 crisis hotline.

<sup>83</sup> The concept of worship in the open air influenced the architecture of all of the subsequent worship centers, especially the Crystal Cathedral which was dedicated in 1980. Schuller, *Your Church Has Real Possibilities*, 29.

<sup>84</sup> Dennis Voskuil, *Mountains into Goldmines: Robert Schuller and the Gospel of Success* (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 1983), 49-69. Arvella became the producer of the show which is now televised around the world and downloadable on the Internet

### **Institute for Successful Church Leadership**

Leading the Garden Grove Community Church through the years of exponential growth was both challenging and rewarding for Schuller. He began to realize that he had learned to be a successful leader through personal experience. He wanted to share his experience with other pastors, though he did not have a platform for doing so until he established The Robert H. Schuller Institute for Successful Church Leadership.<sup>85</sup> The Institute provided an innovative venue for pastors and lay leaders to receive training, encouragement, and current resources.<sup>86</sup> The Institute began with seventy-eight participants in 1970. Schuller captured the essence of his lectures at the Institute in the book *Your Church Has Real Possibilities* which was published in 1974.<sup>87</sup> The book included Schuller's Seven Principles of Success: accessibility, surplus parking, inventory, service, visibility, possibility thinking, and good cash flow.

### **Institute for Church Growth**

In honor of the fifth anniversary of the Institute for Successful Church Leadership, Robert H. Schuller hosted the first American Convocation for Church Growth at the Garden Grove Community Church in 1974. It is not clear where the idea originated, but this was the ultimate family reunion. Both sides of the family – Truett's and Pickett's – were represented. This was the first and perhaps the only gathering of

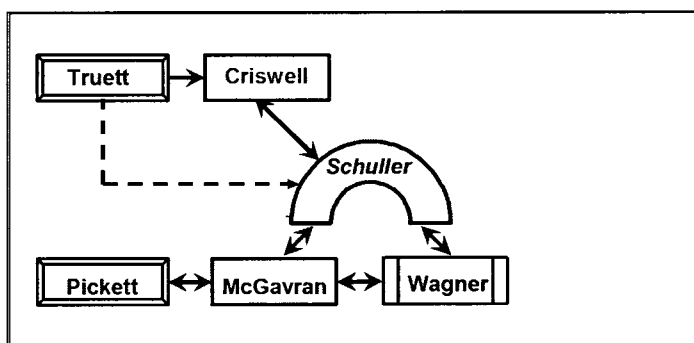
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<sup>85</sup> Schuller placed an ad in the Los Angeles Times in November 1969 for the first Institute scheduled for January 1970. Schuller, *My Journey: From an Iowa Farm to a Cathedral of Dreams*, 291.

<sup>86</sup> In the early years, the Institute was conducted three or four times per year.

<sup>87</sup> Schuller, *Your Church Has Real Possibilities*. This book was later revised and published as Robert Harold Schuller, *Your Church Has a Fantastic Future! A Possibility Thinker's Guide to a Successful Church* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1986).

multiple generations at the same time. Unfortunately, little evidence of this historic event exists except for a set of audio cassettes at Andrews University library in Berrien Springs, Michigan. None of the key participants – Criswell, McGavran, Schuller, or Wagner – mention it in their primary publications.



**Figure 10. Convergence through Robert H. Schuller**

The Convocation was attended by more than four hundred pastors, spouses, and lay leaders from across the country.<sup>88</sup> Table 4 includes a list of the speakers, their positions in 1974, and their denominational affiliations. A list of the session titles and speakers is included in appendix W.

The agenda was dominated by friends and colleagues of Schuller including Ray Beckering, Don Fontana, Harold Leestma, and Arvella Schuller. Speakers at the convocation included pastors, professors, and denominational executives. As with all of Schuller's Institutes, the speakers were remarkably diverse by gender, race, and denomination. Many were authors of current books on church growth or related subjects. W. A. Criswell, pastor of FBCD, presented *Big Ideas from a Big Church*. The Church Growth contingent included Arn, McGavran, Glasser, and Wagner. Several popular

<sup>88</sup> Wilfred Bockelman, "Pros and Cons of Robert Schuller," *Christian Century* 92, no. 27 (1975).

pastors also spoke including D. James Kennedy, Lloyd Ogilvie, Edward Hill, and John Williams.

**Table 4. Speakers at the 1974 American Convocation for Church Growth**

Speaker	Denomination	Position	Organization	Location
Schuller, Robert Harold	RCA	Pastor	Garden Grove Community Church	Garden Grove, CA
Am, Win	Covenant	Ex. Director	Institute for American Church Growth	Pasadena, CA
Bailey, David				
Beckering, Raymond	RCA	Pastor	Garden Grove Community Church	Garden Grove, CA
Belew, M. Wendell	SBC		Home Mission Board Southern Baptist Convention	
Brown, Lowell E.	SBC	Minister of Education	First Baptist Church	Van Nuys, CA
Criswell, Wallie A.	SBC	Pastor	First Baptist Church	Dallas, TX
Fontana, Donald		Minister of Music	Garden Grove Community Church	Garden Grove, CA
Glasser, Arthur Frederick		Professor	Fuller SWM	Pasadena, CA
Hill, Edward	SBC	Pastor	Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church	Pomona, CA
Kennedy, D. James	PCA	Pastor	Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church	Fort Lauderdale, FL
Leestma, Harold F.	RCA	Pastor	Eldorado Park Comm Church	Long Beach, CA
McGavran, Donald A.	DOC	Professor	Fuller SWM	Pasadena, CA
MacNair, Donald	RPC	General Director	National Presbyterian Mission Committee	St. Louis, MO
Ogilvie, Lloyd John	UPCUSA	Pastor	First Presbyterian Church	Hollywood, CA
Schuller, Arvella	RCA	Producer	Hour of Power	Garden Grove, CA
Staack, Hagen A. K.	LCA	Professor	Muhlenburg College	Allentown, PA
Wagner, C. Peter		Professor	Fuller SWM	Pasadena, CA
Werning, Waldo	LCMS	Director	Stewardship Growth Center	Fort Wayne, IN
Williams, John W.		Pastor	St. Stephen's Baptist Church	Kansas City, MO
Wirt, Sherwood Eliot	UPCUSA	Founding Editor	Decision Magazine	Minneapolis, MN

The viability and visibility of the Church Growth Movement in the United States significantly increased after this event. A list of key Church Growth books published between 1970 and 2004 is included in appendix B. Schuller and Wagner continued to collaborate on many projects. Wagner became a regular speaker at Schuller's Institutes. Wagner acknowledged Schuller's efforts as follows:

This North American interest in church growth is in no small measure due to the efforts of Dr. Robert Schuller, who through national television, books, lectures and institutes has been calling ministers to "think church growth."<sup>89</sup>

<sup>89</sup> C. Peter Wagner, Foreword in Schuller, *Your Church Has Real Possibilities*, no pagination.

Wagner's personal contributions to the Church Growth Movement were primarily made between 1976 and 1986. Wagner wrote eight books on Church Growth beginning with the publication of *Your Church Can Grow* and ending with *Church Growth: State of the Art*.<sup>90</sup> He was appointed to the Donald A. McGavran Chair of Church Growth at Fuller and became the founding president of the North American Society for Church Growth in 1984.

As the popularity of the Church Growth Movement increased, scores of pastors enrolled in the Doctor of Ministry (D.Min.) program at Fuller.<sup>91</sup> Wagner mentored many of the second generation of leaders of the Church Growth Movement including Elmer Towns, Win Arn, John Vaughan, and Gary McIntosh. Their publications, organizations, and seminars have influenced generations of religious leaders.<sup>92</sup> Wagner also mentored young pastors serving congregations that became megachurches or who now serve in a megachurch.

Despite these achievements, Wagner's focus shifted from the Church Growth Movement to signs, wonders, and spiritual warfare in the mid-1980s. He was instrumental in the formation of the International Spiritual Warfare Network in 1990. Wagner officially retired from Fuller in 1999 and moved to Colorado. Wagner's

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<sup>90</sup> C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow* (Glendale, CA: Regal Books, 1976); C. Peter Wagner, Win Arn, and Elmer L. Towns, eds., *Church Growth: State of the Art* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1986).

<sup>91</sup> Four of the pastors in this study earned a D.Min. degree from Fuller. Their dissertations are cited in Appendix M.

<sup>92</sup> Win Arn, *The Pastor's Church Growth Handbook* (Pasadena, CA: Church Growth Press, 1979); Carl F. George and Robert E. Logan, *Leading & Managing Your Church* (Old Tappan, NJ: F. H. Revell, 1987); Elmer L. Towns, *The Ten Largest Sunday Schools and What Makes Them Grow* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1969); Elmer L. Towns, John N. Vaughan, and David J. Seifert, *The Complete Book of Church Growth*, 2d ed. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1981).

emotional and intellectual departure left the Church Growth Movement without a designated leader. But the movement itself had lost its relevance as the next generation emerged.

Schuller influenced the thousands of pastors and lay leaders who attended the Institute during its thirty-five year existence. Many became pastors of megachurches and frequent speakers at the Institute including Charles Blake, Kirbyjon Caldwell, John Maxwell, and Walt Kallestad. Several of the pastors in this study specifically cited Schuller as a pivotal influence on them personally as well as their ministry. The movement continues to grow through them, and many others, including Bill Hybels and Rick Warren.

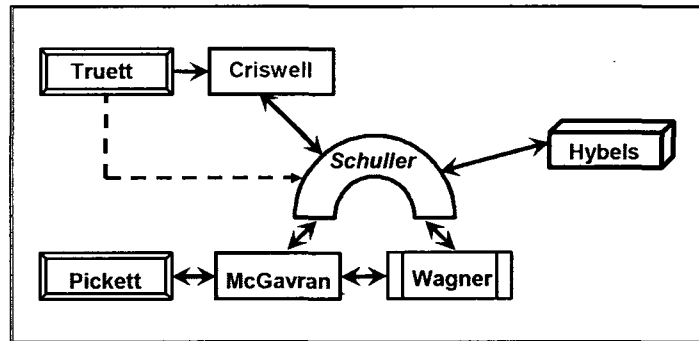
### **Emergence**

Robert H. Schuller began his ministry in a small church in a southern suburb of Chicago in 1950. He was soon called to be a missionary to the unchurched amidst the palm trees in northwest Orange County, California. The Garden Grove Community Church was organized in 1955.

Bill Hybels and Rick Warren were also called to be missionaries to the unchurched. They each followed in Schuller's footsteps twenty-five years later. Hybels organized the Willow Creek Community Church in a northern suburb of Chicago in 1975. Warren organized the Saddleback Valley Community Church on the southeast side of Orange County in 1980. These two men and the congregations they serve epitomize the emergence of the megachurch phenomenon in the United States.

## Bill Hybels

*It takes a leader to develop a leader. You can take that one to the bank.  
Let me say it again: Leaders learn best from other leaders.<sup>93</sup>*



**Figure 11. Emergence – Bill Hybels**

At the end of the book *Your Church Has Possibilities*, Robert H. Schuller described his five-point vision for the church in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The following words, found in the fifth point, proved to be prophetic.

Some reader of this book will build the greatest church ever built in America – a walk-in, drive-in church in blizzard country! With seven-days a week activity! It will be a sensation for Christ!<sup>94</sup>

A young man in Chicago read *Your Church Has Real Possibilities* in April 1975. Inspired by what he had read, Bill Hybels decided to start a new church that focused on reaching the unchurched.

Then came the calling of the Holy Spirit to start a new church. No matter how I tried, I couldn't shake it. And I did try to shake it. The idea was totally illogical. . . I would have to trade the known for the unknown. I was twenty-three; most of us didn't know anyone over thirty. We had no money, experience, people, facility, elders, location, or demographic studies . . .<sup>95</sup>

<sup>93</sup> Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 132.

<sup>94</sup> Schuller, *Your Church Has Real Possibilities*, 179.

<sup>95</sup> Bill Hybels and Rob Wilkins, *Descending into Greatness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1993), 208.



William J. Hybels was born on December 12, 1951 in Kalamazoo, Michigan to Harold and Gertrude Hybels. Harold owned and operated a successful produce supply company which Bill was destined to inherit. His father prepared him through hard work in the fields and extravagant experiences. He sailed a forty-five foot sailboat on Lake Michigan, flew a plane, and traveled through Africa and Europe alone before he was sixteen.

His family were devoted members of the Christian Reformed Church. Hybels became a Christian at a summer camp in 1967. After graduating from high school in 1969, he attended Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa. After two years, he decided to focus on the family business instead of school. He became increasingly aware of a call to ministry. In the summer of 1972, he left the family business in Kalamazoo and moved to Chicago to work for the Awana Youth Association. Hybels began by leading a Bible study for high school students at South Park Church. The Son City program quickly grew as the focus shifted to reaching unchurched teens.

Hybels met Lynne Barry in 1969. They planned to be married in 1972 but instead they broke up. After she graduated from Wheaton in 1973, they reunited. Lynne joined Bill in the ministry at Son City. They married in 1974. They have a son and a daughter.

Hybels returned to college in 1973 and completed his degree at Trinity International University in 1975. Hybels met Professor Gilbert Bilezikian who inspired him to create a church that was led by the Holy Spirit.

The Willow Creek Community Church held its first worship service in a rented movie theater with 125 persons in attendance on October 12, 1975. One year later Hybels, along with the staff and lay leaders from Willow Creek, attended Schuller's

Institute. During the conference, they met with Dr. Schuller. This was the beginning of a personal relationship between Hybels and Schuller. Hybels later served as a consultant to the GGCC and became a frequent speaker at the Institute. Schuller helped Hybels raise money for new facilities in 1977.<sup>96</sup> The rapid growth at Willow Creek is legendary. The weekend worship attendance at Willow Creek in 2006 was approximately 21,500.

### **Willow Creek Association**

The Willow Creek Association (WCA) is a not-for profit ministry founded by Bill Hybels and the Willow Creek Community Church in 1992. The WCA is a network of 12,000 member churches from ninety denominations and forty-five countries which represent a wide variety of sizes, denominations, and backgrounds, yet share a common statement of faith. These churches are encouraged to discern God's vision for ministry in their own community, not to duplicate Willow Creek Community Church. The mission of the WCA is to envision, equip, and encourage pioneering Christian leaders to build prevailing churches. The WCA links like-minded, outreach-oriented churches with each other, and with strategic vision, training, and resources.<sup>97</sup>

The WCA began its own Leadership Summit in 1995. This multi-site, multi-national event is held annually in August at the Willow Creek Church in South

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<sup>96</sup> Lynne Hybels and Bill Hybels, *Rediscovering Church: The Story and Vision of Willow Creek Community Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 68-71. The details of this story are recounted differently by both Pritchard and Sargeant. G. A. Pritchard, *Willow Creek Seeker Services: Evaluating a New Way of Doing Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996); Kimon Howland Sargeant, *Seeker Churches: Promoting Traditional Religion in a Nontraditional Way* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000).

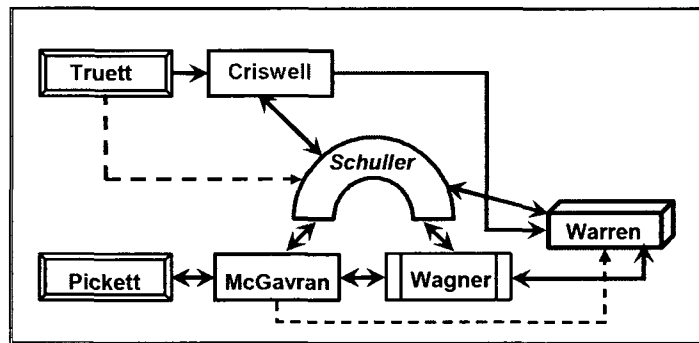
<sup>97</sup> For more information about the Willow Creek Association, go to <http://www.willowcreek.com> (accessed March 11, 2007).

Barrington, Illinois. More than 80,000 people gathered in 176 sites around the world for the 2006 Leadership Summit.<sup>98</sup>

Bill Hybels is just one of the emerging generation of pastors who were significantly influenced by Schuller. Hybels' call to reach the unchurched in Chicago unexpectedly resulted in Willow Creek becoming one of the largest congregations in the U.S. Meanwhile, Rick Warren and the Saddleback Valley Community Church were experiencing similar challenges in Orange County, California.

#### Rick Warren

*It is a well-known truth that if we are ignorant of the lessons of the past, we usually end up making the same mistakes as the people did before us.*<sup>99</sup>



**Figure 12. Emergence – Richard D. Warren**

Unlike the other pastors influenced by Schuller, Warren is the heir of Truett and Pickett through his own unique relationships with Criswell, McGavran, and Wagner. Through Warren, the movement expanded in the U.S. and to the ends of the earth.

<sup>98</sup> For more information about the Leadership Summit, go to <http://www.willowcreek.com> (accessed March 11, 2007).

<sup>99</sup> Richard Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message & Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 18.

Richard Duane Warren was born on January 28, 1954 in Santa Clara County California. Much like Schuller, Warren's faith and ministry were initially influenced by his family of origin. His father, James (Jimmy) Russell Warren, Sr., was a Southern Baptist Conference (SBC) pastor who moved to California in the early 1950s to evangelize and plant churches for the SBC.

His mother, Dorothy Nell Armstrong, was a librarian, as well as Jimmy's partner in ministry. Her grandfather, Ebenezer McCoy Armstrong, was a Baptist preacher on the frontier in Illinois and Kansas during the late 1800s. Warren's older brother Jimmy and younger sister Chaundel also participated in Jimmy Sr.'s ministry.<sup>100</sup> Warren met his future wife, Elizabeth Kay Lewis, at a Baptist training meeting for evangelism when they were just sixteen. Her father, Bert Lewis, was also a Baptist pastor serving SBC congregations in California. Warren proposed on their second date and she accepted.

Warren felt called to the ministry while he was still in high school. Though he frequently preached at revival meetings, he was unsure if he was called to be a pastor. As a young college student at California Baptist University in Riverside, California, Warren drove 350 miles to hear W. A. Criswell speak in San Francisco in 1973. While Criswell was preaching, Warren felt God's call to become a pastor and promised to spend his life at one congregation if God so willed. Warren stood in line to meet Criswell for the first time that day. Remarkably, Criswell laid hands on Warren and prayed,

Father, I ask that you give this young preacher a double portion of your Spirit. May the church he pastors grow to twice the size of the Dallas church. Bless him greatly, O Lord.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Warren's brother Jim worked at Saddleback until his death in 2007. His sister Chaundel Warren Holladay and husband Tom, also work at Saddleback.

<sup>101</sup> Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message & Mission*, 26. Criswell wrote the foreword to Warren's best-selling book, *The Purpose Driven Church*.

The period of discernment was over. Warren had been anointed by W. A. Criswell.

Warren encountered Donald McGavran in 1974 while he was serving as a short-term missionary in Japan.<sup>102</sup> Warren discovered McGavran's research on what makes churches grow.

The day I read the McGavran article, I felt God directing me to invest the rest of my life discovering the principles – biblical, cultural, and leadership principles – that produce healthy, growing churches. It was the beginning of a lifelong study.<sup>103</sup>

After graduating from college and getting married, Rick and Kay moved to Fort Worth, Texas. Warren honed his research skills as he studied large churches while attending Southwestern Baptist Seminary. During his last year of seminary, Rick and Kay drove from Texas to California to attend Robert Schuller's Institute for Successful Church Leadership. Kay was very skeptical before the conference. She later said, "He (Schuller) had a profound influence on Rick. We were captivated by his positive appeal to nonbelievers. I never looked back."<sup>104</sup>

After completing his M.Div. degree in May 1979, Warren declined a call to a 5,000 member congregation in Texas. He discerned that he was called to be a missionary to the unchurched in Orange County, California. They arrived in California with no money, no place to live, and a newborn baby, Amy.

Armed with his previous research on the community, Warren imitated Schuller's strategy of knocking on doors in the community with the help of volunteers from other

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>104</sup> Tim Stafford, "A Regular Purpose-Driven Guy: Rick Warren's Genius Is in Helping Pastors See the Obvious," *Christianity Today* 46 (2002).

SBC congregations and seminary students. He received financial support from five local congregations. Two hundred and five persons attended the first worship service of the Saddleback Valley Community Church at Laguna Hills High School on Easter Sunday – April 6, 1980. Warren articulated the vision for the future to the astonished congregation. He projected that the congregation would exceed 20,000 members, build facilities on fifty acres of land, send missionaries around the world, and plant new churches.

Saddleback's rapid growth attracted lots of attention. C. Peter Wagner widely promoted Warren and encouraged all of his D.Min. students at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena to attend worship at Saddleback as part of their course work. Warren soon became a popular speaker at Schuller's Institute for Successful Church Leadership and at Fuller Institute seminars in the early 1980's. Warren eventually enrolled in the D.Min. program at Fuller, earning his degree in 1993.<sup>105</sup> C. Peter Wagner was his dissertation advisor.

During the first fifteen years, the congregation worshipped in seventy-nine different locations in Orange County. After several unsuccessful attempts, the congregation purchased 120 acres in Mission Viejo, California in 1992. They pitched large tents on the property for worship and Sunday school. Worship attendance exceeded 10,000 persons before a permanent building was constructed in 1995.

Warren has shared his experience through a variety of mediums. His first book *The Purpose Driven Church* quickly became a classic and *The Purpose Driven Life*

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<sup>105</sup> Richard Duane Warren, "New Churches for a New Generation: Church Planting to Reach Baby Boomers. A Case Study: The Saddleback Valley Community Church (California)" (D.Min. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, Doctor of Ministry Program, 1993).

became a phenomenon.<sup>106</sup> In addition, Warren communicates with pastors and congregations around the world through pastors.com to provide “a place to promote collaborative community among pastors worldwide.”<sup>107</sup>

Twenty-five years after Saddleback’s humble beginning, the congregation celebrated Easter Sunday on March 28, 2005. More than 45,000 persons attended twelve worship services. An estimated 4,100 persons were converted and were planning to be baptized. The vision had become reality.

### Transitions

Despite Schuller’s perpetual optimism and ability to mentor scores of young pastors, he struggled with his own succession and transition on multiple occasions. In 1990, Rev. Dr. Bruce Larson resigned as pastor at the University Presbyterian Church in Seattle to become co-pastor with Schuller at the Crystal Cathedral. The co-pastorate was unique in that Schuller focused on the Hour of Power ministry, and Larson, who was an old friend of Schuller's, managed the local church operations. Schuller continued to preach at two Sunday services which were combined and edited for broadcast a week later on the Hour of Power. Larson was called to increase membership, address the significant financial problems, teach at the Schuller Institute, and prepare Robert A. Schuller to become senior pastor when his father retired in ten years.<sup>108</sup> After Larson

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<sup>106</sup> Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church: Growth without Compromising Your Message & Mission*; Richard Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002).

<sup>107</sup> For more information, go to <http://www.pastors.com> (accessed April 4, 2008).

<sup>108</sup> Tracy Weber, “Schuller Brings in Co-Pastor, Minister Takes over Day-to-Day Work,” *Orange County Register*, March 8, 1990.

developed health issues in 1996, he moved back to the Seattle and retired. When Robert A. Schuller assumed Larson's responsibilities in 1996, he was officially announced as his father's successor by the Crystal Cathedral board.<sup>109</sup>

Changes continued throughout the Crystal Cathedral organization. The Institute for Successful Church Leadership celebrated its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary and final gathering in January 2005.<sup>110</sup> The Crystal Cathedral celebrated its 50th anniversary on April 3, 2005 during a lavish worship service followed by refreshments on the Plaza. The service celebrated the accomplishments of Robert H. Schuller. No vision was cast for the future.

Ironically, Saddleback Church acknowledged its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary that same day with a powerful sermon by Rick Warren that included stories, music, and video clips. Warren announced that all of the items in the original vision had been accomplished and that a new vision had been communally discerned. Two weeks later, Saddleback Church officially celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary at Angel Stadium in Anaheim on April 17, 2005. More than 30,000 members attended. Warren unveiled the new global vision – the P.E.A.C.E. Plan.<sup>111</sup> He told the congregation:

I dream of a global expansion of God's Kingdom. For the past twenty-five years God has been setting us up . . . to bless the entire world. . . We don't grow for our benefit. We grow because everybody needs to know God.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> "News Briefs," *Christianity Today*, May 20, 1996.

<sup>110</sup> The Institute was replaced by the Robert H. Schuller Forum for Possibility Thinking Leadership. The topic for the first gathering in 2007 was *Faith Forward*. The forum specifically targeted a much younger audience and broadcast via satellite for the first time. Discounts were offered to the "20-30 something generation."

<sup>111</sup> P.E.A.C.E. stands for promoting reconciliation, equipping service leaders, assisting the poor, caring for the sick, and educating the next generation.

<sup>112</sup> Gwendolyn Driscoll, "A Purpose in Africa," *Orange County Register*, April 18, 2005.



As promised, Robert H. Schuller officially retired on January 22, 2006 during another extraordinary worship service. His only son, Robert Anthony Schuller, was installed as senior pastor. Bill Hybels was invited to preach at the installation service. During the sermon, Hybels prayed that God would bless the new pastor with bold new ideas, initiatives, visions, and dreams. Hybels urged him to serve the poor, reach across the racial divide, and to welcome the next generation. Hybels believed that God was “aching” to do a new thing at the Crystal Cathedral.

The transition from father to son did not proceed as anticipated. Just as Rick Warren was extending his global influence by hosting presidential candidates Senators John McCain and Barack Obama at the Saddleback Civil Forum in August 2008, Schuller’s own transition was imploding. The elder Schuller announced on October 26, 2008 that his son would no longer be the primary preacher on the Hour of Power but would remain as senior pastor of the Crystal Cathedral. The official press release revealed that the Schullers had different ideas about the direction and vision which were jeopardizing the entire ministry, so each was going to pursue their “own unique God-ordained visions.”

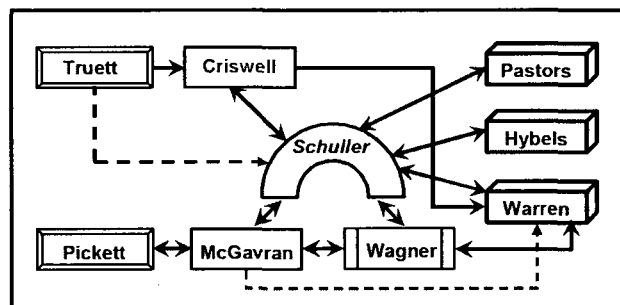
Since the Hour of Power is simply a rebroadcast of the previous week’s sermon at the Crystal Cathedral, Robert Anthony was suddenly a senior pastor without a pulpit. Speculation abounded as few details emerged, except for the significant financial difficulties facing the congregation and individual ministries such as the Hour of Power. The rift within the Schuller family was exacerbated by the lack of support for Robert Anthony from his mother, his four sisters (all of whom are directly involved in various ministries at the Crystal Cathedral), and two of his brothers-in-law (who serve as CEO

and president of the church's board). Robert Anthony quietly resigned as senior pastor in late November 2008. Rev. Dr. Juan Carlos Ortiz, who founded the Crystal Cathedral Hispanic Ministries in 1990, agreed to serve as interim pastor.

On May 27, 2009, Rev. Robert A. Schuller announced that he had purchased an existing cable TV channel which he and his partners planned to convert to a "family values" channel. On June 7, 2009, the Rev. Robert H. Schuller announced that his eldest daughter, Dr. Sheila Schuller Coleman, would take over leadership of the entire ministry at the Crystal Cathedral and help implement his vision.

### Summary

*I strongly believe God is on the move raising up His leaders for the future, solidifying the thinking of contemporary pastors and calling forth seasoned pastors to pour their hearts in the younger church.<sup>113</sup>*



**Figure 13. Historical Relationships (2)**

Numerous events, theories, philosophies, theologies, movements, publications, organizations, and processes have impacted the emergence of megachurches in the United States and the pastors who serve them.<sup>114</sup> In addition, previous generations of

<sup>113</sup> Robert H. Schuller, "Invitation to the Forum for Possibility Thinking Leadership," <http://www.crystalcathedral.org/faithforward/welcome.cfm> (accessed January 10, 2007).

<sup>114</sup> Lists of principles, patterns, and factors have been published by multiple authors. Dan Reeves summarizes the factors presented by sixteen different authors in the 1970s in his book Reeves and Jenson, *Always Advancing: Modern Strategies for Church Growth*, 155-60. Other perspectives include Scott Lee

religious leaders, including the persons and relationships (figure 13) discussed in this chapter have been influential.

These leaders made significant contributions in congregations, communities, and the world. Their stories are similar, yet unique. From humble beginnings, they became visionaries, entrepreneurs, and risk takers. They founded multiple organizations and specialized ministries, including congregations, schools, and social service agencies. They became teachers, preachers, researchers, and prolific writers. They built strategic relationships and developed intricate networks. They became well-known through their preaching, teaching, speaking engagements, and publications. Above all, they shared the commitment to sharing the gospel with those who did not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, some of their legacies were tarnished by their inability to recognize their own limitations, trust their congregations, and transfer their authority to the next leader in a timely manner. Their stories provide a practical dimension to the theory of pastoral change and transition discussed in the next chapter.

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Guffin, "An Examination of Key Foundational Influences on the Megachurch Movement in America, 1960-1978" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1999); Lyle E. Schaller, "Megachurch!," *Christianity Today* 34 (1990); Towns, *The Ten Largest Sunday Schools and What Makes Them Grow*, 113-31; John N. Vaughan, "Satellite Groups: Valid Church Growth Strategy." (D.Min. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, School of Theology, 1984), 261-81.

CHAPTER 4  
PASTORAL CHANGE AND TRANSITION

*To be responsible inventors and discoverers,  
we need the courage to let go of the old world,  
to relinquish most of what we have cherished,  
to abandon our interpretations about what does and does not work.  
We must learn to see the world anew.<sup>1</sup>*

The relationship between a pastor and congregation will ultimately be dissolved for personal and professional reasons, voluntarily or involuntarily. Many congregations react to, rather than plan for, these inevitable situations; thereby forcing disruptions in the relationship between the pastor and congregation.

Pastors and congregations are often constrained by policies which discourage, even preclude, any proactive planning or preparation. Since the 1970s, congregations in transition have become increasingly dependent upon interim pastors during the vacancy period due to the efforts of Loren Mead and the Alban Institute. Mead's tactical approach is based on responding to, rather than planning for, pastoral vacancies. He assumes that congregations in transition are grieving, conflicted, secretive, and suffering from low self-esteem. Therefore, they need an interim pastor specialist to lead them through the vacancy period.

Until recently, Mead's assumptions, methodology, and grief-based approach have not been publicly challenged. In the first section of this chapter, Mead's reactive

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret J. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World*, 2d ed. (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1999), 7.

approach to pastoral vacancies and the history of interim ministry in the United States are examined. Then, a proactive approach based upon anticipating change and managing transition is discussed. William Bridges' model provides a helpful frame for understanding pastoral change and transition as a process, and the importance of strategic planning and succession planning.

### **Responding to Pastoral Vacancies**

Change and transition in congregations precipitated by a pastoral vacancy has garnered the attention of Loren Mead since 1969. Mead developed a tactical approach to congregations in transition based on his involvement with Project Test Pattern (PTP) and the Vacancy Consultation Project (VCP).<sup>2</sup> He describes his approach as “a journey to get a new pastor,” not a process.<sup>3</sup> The steps along the journey are defined as follows and illustrated in figure 14:

1. Termination (one pastor leaves)
2. Direction Finding (the congregation choose its path)
3. Self-Study (finding out who and where the congregation is)
4. Search (looking for the “right” pastor)
5. Decision and Negotiation (making a decision and reaching agreement)
6. Installation (getting the new pastor on the job)
7. Start Up (beginning to build a new ministry in the congregation and community).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on these two programs, refer to the Intentional Interim Ministry section below.

<sup>3</sup> Loren B. Mead, *A Change of Pastors ... And How It Affects Change in the Congregation*, Rev. ed. (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2005), 11-43. Mead's earlier work on this subject include Loren B. Mead, *Changing Pastoral Leadership: Resources for a Difficult Time* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1976); Loren B. Mead, *Critical Moment of Ministry: A Change of Pastors* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1986); Loren B. Mead, *The Interim Pastor: A Neglected Role in Parish Development* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1976); Loren B. Mead, *New Hope for Congregations: A Project Test Pattern Book in Parish Development* (New York, NY: Seabury Press, 1972).

<sup>4</sup> Mead, *A Change of Pastors ... And How It Affects Change in the Congregation*, 17-18.

Termination of Pastor	Direction Finding	Self- Study	Search	Decision and Negotiation	Installation	Start Up
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**Figure 14. Mead’s Steps Along the Journey**

In addition to the seven steps above, Mead defined five “developmental tasks” that must be addressed while on the journey.<sup>5</sup> The responsibility for accomplishing these tasks was assigned to the interim pastor specialist.

#### **Mead’s Five Developmental Tasks**

1. Coming to terms with the congregation’s history
2. Discovering a new identity, a new sense of mission
3. Helping the congregation’s internal leadership to grow and change
4. Rediscovering linkages to the denomination
5. Establishing a new commitment between people and the new pastor to engage in their mission together

Mead’s steps and developmental tasks have been absorbed into congregational and denominational policies, and perpetuated in popular literature. His approach depends on the assumption that no one has planned for this inevitability and that panic will ensue. Examination of Mead’s publications and related literature revealed fundamental weaknesses in Mead’s Steps Along the Journey.

#### **Termination of Pastor**

As illustrated in figure 14, Mead’s journey begins with the “termination” of the pastor. Though the word “termination” may be technically correct, it seems inappropriate for circumstances such as acceptance of another call or retirement.<sup>6</sup> This word is laden with negativity and sets the tone for the rest of the journey.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>6</sup> Presbyterians use “dissolution of call.”

### Direction Finding

Mead does not provide much clarity or assistance on this step. He simply suggests that the congregation's board and/or personnel committee contact their denominations and follow appropriate procedures. Vonhof renamed this step "managing the congregation" which more accurately reflects the activities that occur, and he provides a few more details than Mead.<sup>7</sup> The two critical tasks in this step are organizing a committee to manage the pastoral search process and managing the pulpit (which may involve contracting with an interim pastor.)<sup>8</sup> Since Mead's approach depends heavily on contracting with an interim pastor during the vacancy period, it is necessary to first examine the history of interim ministry in the United States.

### Intentional Interim Ministry

During the late 1960s, pastors and congregations were experiencing significant change. In response, the presiding bishop of the Episcopalian Church authorized a study called Project Test Pattern (PTP) in 1969 to discover how congregations function and how to improve their effectiveness. Loren Mead, an Episcopal parish priest in North Carolina was selected to lead the project.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> John Vonhof, *The Alban Guide to Managing the Pastoral Search Process* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1999), 14-20.

<sup>8</sup> The names, selection procedures, and roles of this committee vary. Commonly used names include call committee, search committee, pulpit committee, and pastor nominating committee. The roles and authority of this committee are different in each of the denominations in this study and are explained below in the Search step.

<sup>9</sup> Mead's qualifications for this assignment are not evident.

The primary publication from PTP was *New Hope for Congregations* in 1972.<sup>10</sup> The book does not summarize the findings from Project Test Pattern as would be expected, rather it contains findings from the PTP network.<sup>11</sup> Mead suggests that the best way to present the information (note, not *data*) that they discovered was through stories. Therefore, the book presents four “narratives from the research files PTP has gathered to study the technical processes of change in congregations.”<sup>12</sup> Interestingly, one of the four congregations profiled in the book, First United Presbyterian Church in Aberdeen, South Dakota, was not part of PTP though it was the only congregation in the book to employ an interim pastor. Based upon these four congregations, Mead concluded that third-party consultants can increase the rate and effectiveness of change in a congregation and that the “clergyman” is a key to change in a congregation.<sup>13</sup>

Based on these findings, the Episcopalians launched the Vacancy Consultation Project (VCP) in 1972 to further study the impact of behavioral science consultants during the period between pastors.<sup>14</sup> Grief, power, and identity were identified as

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<sup>10</sup> Mead, *New Hope for Congregations: A Project Test Pattern Book in Parish Development*.

<sup>11</sup> Mead indicates that the PTP network included 30 project advisors and seventy parish development consultants across the U.S. He does not indicate if they are all Episcopalian.

<sup>12</sup> There is no QUAN data in the book or any description of the methodology. Mead, *New Hope for Congregations: A Project Test Pattern Book in Parish Development*, 27.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 100-05.

<sup>14</sup> Sixteen consultants worked with twenty-three congregations in nine Episcopalian dioceses during a six month period in 1972. These sixteen consultants were not pastors and did not have a standard methodology or approach. They submitted reports at the end of each consultation. In addition, independent interviewers were sent into the twenty-three congregations after the consultant had left and the new pastor was installed. They interviewed the new pastor, congregational leaders, and members selected at random about the effectiveness of the consultation. The reports and interviews were analyzed and summarized by Mead and nine other readers. Yon's report is based upon the summaries. William A. Yon, *Prime Time for Renewal* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1977), 4. This study focused on the vacancy consultants, not interim pastors.



dynamics that required attention. A series of steps for the vacancy period evolved from this study. William Yon concluded that there is no panacea for generating renewal in congregations. Behavioral science consultants proved to be a valuable resource which should be available to congregations, but not required by denominational agencies.<sup>15</sup>

Other organizations and denominations launched similar studies to the VCP during the early 1970s. Mead founded the Alban Institute in 1974 in order to continue to research congregations, particularly during the vacancy period, from an ecumenical (meaning denominational) perspective.<sup>16</sup>

Mead was convinced that the use of outside resources – vacancy consultant and interim pastor specialist – could significantly improve the effectiveness of congregations. The vacancy consultant was to be a trained outsider, though regional judicatory personnel could be trained as well.<sup>17</sup> The specific role of the “vacancy consultant” was to assist the congregation with the pastoral search process.<sup>18</sup>

The primary task of the interim pastor was to “see to the maintenance of the pastoral functions within the vacant congregation.”<sup>19</sup> In addition, the interim pastor was

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> In November 1975, Mead hosted a meeting for persons involved in interim ministry. Thirty-three people from ten denominations met in St. Louis to discuss the current status interim ministry and its potential. Mead published the results of this working meeting as an eighteen page white paper in January 1976. Mead, *The Interim Pastor: A Neglected Role in Parish Development*.

<sup>17</sup> The vacancy consultant was to become “competent as a technician of vacancy procedures and oriented to the deeper issues of parish life – the issues of grief, of separation, of hopes, dreams, and frustrations. The vacancy consultant helps the search committee learn to work together and acts as a colleague, coaching and training the search committee as it leads the congregation into the country of its heart.” Mead, *Changing Pastoral Leadership: Resources for a Difficult Time*, 6. This is a seven-page white paper.

<sup>18</sup> Yon, *Prime Time for Renewal*, 3.

<sup>19</sup> Mead, *The Interim Pastor: A Neglected Role in Parish Development*, 4. Mead indicated that the interim pastor “needs to be unusually sensitive to the dynamics of termination, death, and grief.”

not to participate in the search process and could not be considered for the vacancy. Mead recommended specific training for interim pastors so that they would become specialists in serving congregations during vacancies, not simply fill the pulpit.<sup>20</sup>

By 1978, Mead had refined his recommendations into the aforementioned seven steps (figure 14) and the five developmental tasks.<sup>21</sup> The Alban Institute became the primary purveyor of resources on interim ministry.<sup>22</sup> Mead's framework was absorbed into the literature and into denominational policies. Networks of interim pastors were created to provide specialized training and continuing support.

Remarkably, Mead's assumptions, methodology, and grief-based approach have not been publicly challenged. Few, if any, have noticed or questioned one of the fundamental weaknesses of Mead's methodology – the sample. For example, the original research in 1972 was conducted in a small number of Episcopalian congregations whose geographic distribution was not documented. The findings were published as if they applied to any congregation, not just Episcopalians. Additional research conducted in

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<sup>20</sup> Mead, *Changing Pastoral Leadership: Resources for a Difficult Time*.

<sup>21</sup> Mead published a series of white papers between 1974 and 1977 which document his continued interest in interim ministry and the evolution of the steps and tasks. In 1975, Mead hosted a meeting for persons involved in interim ministry. Thirty-three people from ten denominations met in St. Louis in November 1975 to discuss the current status interim ministry and its potential. Mead published the results of this working meeting as an eighteen page white paper in January 1976: The developmental tasks are foreshadowed in this document, Mead, *The Interim Pastor: A Neglected Role in Parish Development*. The seven steps are published later in 1976 in Mead, *Changing Pastoral Leadership: Resources for a Difficult Time*. The developmental tasks were first published in Loren B. Mead, *The Developmental Tasks of the Congregation in Search of a Pastor* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1977). All of Alban's previous publications on the subject were consolidated and published in 1978 as Ralph Macy, *The Interim Pastor* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1978).

<sup>22</sup> Additional resources on interim ministry from the Alban Institute include: Ralph Macy, *The Interim Pastor* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1986); Mead, *A Change of Pastors ... And How It Affects Change in the Congregation*; Mead, *Critical Moment of Ministry: A Change of Pastors*; Roger S. Nicholson, *Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook for Interim Ministry* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1998); Philip G. Porcher, *What You Can Expect from an Interim Pastor and an Interim Consultant* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1980).

1999 by the Alban Institute was conducted in an unreported number of congregations in six Episcopalian dioceses and four ELCA synods located in Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Washington, D.C. Again, the findings were published as a handbook intended for a mass audience.<sup>23</sup>

Nicholson's book *Temporary Shepherds* reinforces Mead's portrayal of congregations in transition as grieving, conflicted, secretive, and suffering from low self-esteem.<sup>24</sup> Weese and Crabtree argue that an "illness-based" approach is self-defeating.

It is sad to admit that many consultants, interim pastors, and denominational agencies have a vested interest in the illness-based model of leader transition. Reinforcing the weaknesses of a congregation and focusing on wounds makes the congregation more dependent on the "healer."<sup>25</sup>

The pastoral transition policies and procedures utilized by the three denominations in this study reflect Mead's framework. Though Mead has softened his approach to interim ministry in recent years, there is little evidence that denominations and local judicatories have changed their policies and practices.

I do not think that all congregations necessarily need a fully trained interim pastor – that is a judgment call for the bishop or executive and the leadership of the parish board. In some cases all that is needed is someone to come in to cover worship.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Roy M. Oswald, James M. Heath, and Ann W. Heath, *Beginning Ministry Together: The Alban Handbook for Clergy Transitions* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 2003), xi. The project was called Beginning Ministry Together. The authors of this book acknowledged some of the deficiencies in the original (1972) research including: the impact of congregation size was not considered, new pastors were discouraged from making any substantive changes during the first year of their tenure, and lay leaders were not adequately prepared for their responsibilities during the transition. However, they do not address sample size. Over time the publications from Alban have focused more attention on the entire transition process and the roles of the vacancy (now called transition) consultant and the interim pastors have become less distinct. See Vonhof, *The Alban Guide to Managing the Pastoral Search Process*.

<sup>24</sup> Nicholson, *Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook for Interim Ministry*.

<sup>25</sup> Carolyn Weese and J. Russell Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken About Pastoral Transitions* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 20.

<sup>26</sup> Mead, *A Change of Pastors ... And How It Affects Change in the Congregation*, 69.

Mead suggests in his 2005 edition that interims are helpful in particular situations including large, multi-staff congregations.<sup>27</sup> Though his experience with such congregations is undocumented, Mead argues that these congregations require interims with specialized skills and experience in large churches. He also suggests that the boards of large congregations cannot handle the management of the church and may become overwhelmed. With this historical perspective, it is time to return to the journey.

### Self-Study

Mead purposely separated this step from the actual search because he believed that the self-study should guide the search. The underlying assumption is that the congregation doesn't know who they are or who God is calling them to be. Oswald argues that the identity of the congregation is influenced by its relationship to the former pastor so the self-study should not begin until after the former pastor has departed.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, while the congregation is under duress, they are surveyed about the past, present, and future. They are expected to prepare mission, vision, and values statements. Information is gathered about the local community and the congregation's ministries. Then the call committee, not the congregation, staff, or church board, prepares a congregational profile and position description for the new pastor. The entire process may take months, perhaps a year to complete. Ultimately, the new pastor is expected to concur with these documents and implement a vision in which he/she did not have input.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 71.

<sup>28</sup> Oswald, Heath, and Heath, *Beginning Ministry Together: The Alban Handbook for Clergy Transitions*, 27.

## Search

The call committee reaches this step after months of preparation and perhaps with the assistance of a vacancy consultant. Tradition, policies, and polity dictate how they proceed. Virkler describes four approaches to selecting a new pastor:

- Appointment by the judicatory, connectional oversight by the judicatory. [As in the United Methodist Church]
- Pre-selection of a group of candidates by the judicatory, choice of one of the candidates by the congregation, connectional oversight by the judicatory. [As in the ELCA]
- Selection of a candidate by the congregation, approval by the judicatory, connectional oversight by the judicatory. [As in the PC(USA)]
- Congregational selection, congregational autonomy (no congregational oversight by the judicatory).<sup>29</sup> [As in the BGC]

These descriptions briefly highlight the differences between the three denominations in this study. The level of involvement and authority exerted by regional and local judicatories varies within each denomination. These differences determine whether the new pastor is actually called, elected, chosen, placed, assigned, designated, or appointed.

The role of the interim pastor also varies, perhaps even by congregation. Mead originally advocated that the interim pastor should not be involved in the search process but later relented, particularly due to the cost and availability of vacancy consultants.

## Decision and Negotiation

Mead and other authors separate this step from the search. They provide ample advice for identifying selection criteria, evaluating the candidate, and making a recommendation to the congregation, and perhaps the local judicatories.

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<sup>29</sup> Henry A. Virkler, *Choosing a New Pastor: The Complete Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Oliver Nelson, 1992), 5.

The terms decision and negotiation seem to imply that the committee is hiring a new pastor, not calling one. Very little attention is given to prayer, communal discernment, or the role of the Holy Spirit in this step, or the entire journey. Mead briefly acknowledges that the committee must tune into their “sense of what God is calling the congregation to be and do in this generation.”<sup>30</sup> Once the decision is final and negotiations are complete, the committee presents the candidate to the congregation and perhaps the local judicatory.

After approval, the power shifts back to the church board and/or personnel committee from the call committee. Preparations are then made for welcoming the new pastor. Only Nicholson specifically addresses the departure of the interim pastor.<sup>31</sup> He argues that the departure of the interim pastor must be acknowledged in order to signal the end of the vacancy period. Unfortunately, his suggestions for providing closure are task driven. He does not acknowledge the emotional and spiritual needs of the congregation or the interim pastor (and family.) They may be grieving the departure of two pastors as they move toward a new beginning.

### Installation

Mead briefly addresses the installation of the new pastor as an event which should occur during a worship service with appropriate tradition and ritual. In keeping with his assumption that the congregation didn't know who they were or who God was calling them to be until they completed the self-study, Mead suggests that the installation

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<sup>30</sup> Mead, *A Change of Pastors ... And How It Affects Change in the Congregation*, 39.

<sup>31</sup> Nicholson, *Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook for Interim Ministry*, 110-17. Nicholson provides a litanies of Welcome and Farewell for the Interim Pastor (pp. 182-184.)

provides the opportunity for “celebrating the new image this congregation wants to live into.”<sup>32</sup>

### Start Up

Mead merely acknowledges the importance of this step and the risks of not attending to it. His purpose is simply to remind congregations that “there is work to do when the pastor arrives.”<sup>33</sup>

### Summary

Loren Mead’s reactive approach has been widely adopted across the United States. From the beginning, his approach had numerous weaknesses.

- Mead assumes that no one has thought about pastoral vacancies or planned to manage their impact.
- Mead’s approach is linear and sequential, and tactical, not strategic. He assumes that congregations don’t know who they are or who God is calling them to be. This may have been accurate in the 1970s but fails to recognize the intentional strategic planning processes in many congregations, particularly large ones, which articulate their identity, vision, mission, and values.
- Mead’s illness-based approach portrays congregations in transition as wounded, depressed, and grieving.
- The impact of congregation size was not considered in Mead’s research, thereby assuming that one-size-fits-all. Despite his own acknowledgement of this deficiency in 2005, Mead has not demonstrated that he has any experience working with large congregations.
- He has not presented any objective evidence of the effectiveness of vacancy consultants or interim pastors.
- Little attention has been given to theological considerations including prayer, communal discernment, and worship.

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<sup>32</sup> Mead, *A Change of Pastors ... And How It Affects Change in the Congregation*, 41.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-43.

Mead's reactive approach has changed very little since the 1970s. It still depends on the disruption of the relationship between the pastor and congregation. Congregations have become increasingly dependent upon interim pastors and local judicatories during the vacancy period.

### Anticipating Pastoral Changes

*It isn't the changes that do you in, it's the transitions.  
They aren't the same thing.*

*Change is situational: the move to a new site, the retirement of the founder, the reorganization of the roles on the team, the revisions to the pension plan.*

*Transition, on the other hand, is psychological; it is a three-phase process that people go through as they internalize and come to terms with the details of the new situation that the change brings about.<sup>34</sup>*

William Bridges argues that the single biggest reason organizational changes fail is that no one has thought about endings or planned to manage their impact on people.<sup>35</sup> His delineation between change and transition in organizations provides a helpful frame for anticipating pastoral changes and managing pastoral transitions in congregations, particularly megachurches.<sup>36</sup>

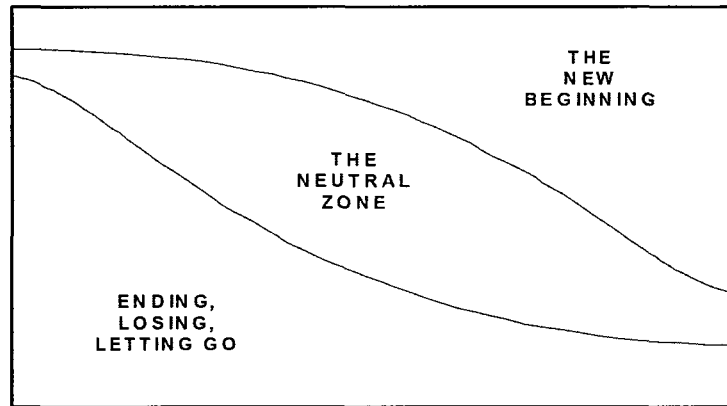
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<sup>34</sup> William Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, 2d ed. (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Pub., 2003), 3.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 23. Bridges has studied organizational change for more than forty years and describes himself as an organizational consultant specializing in helping people through change. His first book on organizational change was published in 1980. William Bridges, *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Changes* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1980). Other books include William Bridges, *The Character of Organizations: Using Jungian Type in Organizational Development* (Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1992); William Bridges, *The Character of Organizations: Using Personality Type in Organization Development*, Updated ed. (Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black Pub., 2000); William Bridges, *Creating You & Co.: Learn to Think Like the CEO of Your Own Career* (Reading, MA: Perseus Books, 1997); William Bridges, *Jobshift: How to Prosper in a Workplace without Jobs* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1994); William Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1991); William Bridges, *Surviving Corporate Transition: Rational Management in a World of Mergers, Layoffs, Start-Ups, Takeovers, Divestitures, Deregulation, and New Technologies* (New





**Figure 15. Bridges' Transition Processes**

Change and transition affect all aspects of life including physical and psychological health, relationships, and faith. Bridges argues that change causes transition and transition starts with an ending. Situational changes can occur suddenly or gradually. Transitions can be brief or seemingly endless because of the psychological impact on the people involved. Change can not be avoided but it can be managed through the three processes described below.<sup>37</sup>

1. **Ending, Losing, Letting Go** – The transition process starts with an ending. It is critical that people deal with their losses.
2. **The Neutral Zone** – This is the time between the old and new reality.
3. **The New Beginning** – This is when people develop the new identity, experience new energy, and discover the new sense of purpose that make the change begin to work.<sup>38</sup>

Human beings experience countless changes and periods of transition during their lives. Figure 15 illustrates Bridges' contention that these three processes are flexible and fluid, not linear and sequential. A transition is not finished until all three are completed.

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York, NY: Doubleday, 1988); William Bridges, *The Way of Transition: Embracing Life's Most Difficult Moments* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Pub., 2001); William P. Bridges and Wayne J. Villemez, *The Employment Relationship: Causes and Consequences of Modern Personnel Administration*. Plenum Studies in Work and Industry (New York, NY: Plenum Press, 1994).

<sup>37</sup> Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, 141.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

According to Bridges, managing change and transition requires two different planning methods – a change management plan and a transition management plan. A change management plan “starts with the outcome and then works backwards, step by step, to create the necessary preconditions for that outcome.” In contrast, a transition management plan “starts with where people are and works forward, step by step, through the process of leaving the past behind, through the wilderness and profiting from it, and emerging with new attitudes, behaviors, and identity.”<sup>39</sup> Managing pastoral change and transition includes attending to the situational circumstances and psychological needs of the organization.

Strategic planning is a process used by an organization to define its strategy or direction, and make decisions on allocating resources such as capital and people in pursuit of this strategy. The plan determines where an organization is going over the next year or more (typically five years), how it is going to get there, and methods for evaluating its effectiveness. The purpose of a strategic plan is to assure that all members of the organization share and work toward the same vision, mission, and goals. Creation and implementation of a strategic planning process requires that organizations continually anticipate and prepare for change rather than react to it.

There are numerous resources available to facilitate the development of a strategic plan for public and non-profit organizations including consultants, websites, software,

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 67.

and print publications.<sup>40</sup> Aubrey Malphurs and a few others provide practical advice for creating a strategic plan specifically for congregations.<sup>41</sup> Malphurs' process includes:

- Ministry Analysis
- Values Discovery
- Mission Development
- Environmental Scan
- Vision Development
- Strategy Development
- Strategy Implementation
- Ministry Contingencies
- Ministry Evaluation

Malphurs recommends that congregations plan for contingencies which have the potential to undermine the ministry of the congregation such as a change in pastoral leadership. Unfortunately, he and most of the other authors do not specifically address the need for including succession planning in the strategic plan.

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<sup>40</sup> Michael Allison and Jude Kaye, *Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations: A Practical Guide and Workbook*, 2d ed. (Hoboken, NJ: J. Wiley, 2005); John M. Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement*, 3d ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004); John M. Bryson and Farnum K. Alston, *Creating and Implementing Your Strategic Plan: A Workbook for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*, 2d ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2005); Kevin P. Kearns, *Private Sector Strategies for Social Sector Success: The Guide to Strategy and Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass 2000).

<sup>41</sup> Kennon L. Callahan, *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church: Strategic Planning for Mission* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1983); Henry Klopp, *The Ministry Playbook: Strategic Planning for Effective Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002); Aubrey Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999); Aubrey Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry in the 21st Century*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999); Roy M. Oswald and Robert E. Friedrich, *Discerning Your Congregation's Future: A Strategic and Spiritual Approach* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1996).

## Succession Planning

*Healthy succession of leadership is essential if the Church and its ministries are to enjoy consistently good leadership past the effective career of the individual Christian leader.<sup>42</sup>*

Many corporations and other large institutions focus on continuity of leadership through intentional succession planning as a critical component of the strategic planning process. Succession planning is an intentional, disciplined, and proactive process for identifying and preparing leaders at every level of an organization to implement the organization's strategic plan.<sup>43</sup> A viable succession plan anticipates potential personnel crises, by providing for systematic succession of current personnel, as well as career planning, and preparation for future positions.

It is critical that the succession plan is integrated into a congregation's strategic plan since calling a new pastor is one of the most significant strategic decisions that a congregation will ever make. Therefore, congregations must identify and continually assess the leadership skills and capabilities that will be needed in the future, not simply replace the current pastor.

A change in pastoral leadership may be predictable such as retirement, or sudden such as a fatal heart attack. Though it is difficult to anticipate all possible scenarios that result in a pastoral change, preparation is prudent and necessary in order to provide for continuity of leadership, particularly in megachurches.

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<sup>42</sup> Perry Leon Stepp, *Leadership Succession in the World of the Pauline Circle* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005), 204.

<sup>43</sup> Fulmer and Conger, *Growing Your Company's Leaders: How Great Organizations Use Succession Management to Sustain Competitive Advantage*, 8.

Optimally, succession planning in this context should honor the sacred trust between the pastor and congregation. The congregation should not be surprised by the pastor's decision to accept another call, retire, or change careers. Pastors should not feel compelled to discern God's preferred future for their lives in secret.<sup>44</sup>

Through their research of pastors who left local church ministry altogether, Hoge and Wenger found that it was difficult to distinguish between voluntary and involuntary decisions, and the "push" versus the "pull" factors which influence a pastor's decision.<sup>45</sup> They identified seven motivations for leaving local church ministry which may also motivate pastors to seek a call to another congregation or even retire.

- Preference for other ministry
- Need to care for family or children
- Conflict in congregation (with staff or laity)
- Conflict with denominational officials or disillusionment with denomination
- Burnout, frustration, feeling of constraint, sense of inadequacy
- Allegations of sexual misconduct
- Problems in family, divorce

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<sup>44</sup> There are numerous secular and religious resources available to guide pastors through the period of discernment and the search process. Bolles, Cionca, and Hightower provide questionnaires and worksheets for assessing the current ministry, identifying personal and professional strengths, and advice for starting the search process. Richard Nelson Bolles and Celia A. Hahn, *Your Next Pastorate: Starting the Search* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1990); John R. Cionca, *Before You Move: A Guide to Making Transitions in Ministry*, Rev. and expanded ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2004); James E. Hightower and W. Craig Gilliam, *A Time for Change? Revisioning Your Call* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 2000). Kise has written several helpful books about gifts assessment from a religious perspective. Jane A. G. Kise, *Finding and Following God's Will* (Minneapolis, MN: BethanyHouse, 2005); Jane A. G. Kise and Kevin Johnson, *Find Your Fit: Dare to Act on God's Design for You* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1998); Jane A. G. Kise, David Stark, and Sandra Krebs Hirsh, *Lifekeys: Discovering Who You Are, Why You're Here, What You Do Best* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 1996).

<sup>45</sup> Dean R. Hoge and Jacqueline E. Wenger, *Pastors in-Transition: Why Clergy Leave Local Church Ministry*. Pulpit & Pew Research on Pastoral Leadership (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans, 2005).

## Retirement

*“God called me to be a minister,  
and He did not cancel His call on my life when I retired.”<sup>46</sup>*

One of the most difficult career decisions for pastors is when to retire.<sup>47</sup> Estimates of the number of clergy retirements during the next decade are difficult to find. The LCMS projects that approximately 200 pastors will retire annually between 2006 and 2016. Another 100 pastors will leave the ministry for other reasons annually during the

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<sup>46</sup> Gene Williams, *Out of the Pulpit, into the Pew: A Pastor's Guide to Meaningful Service after Retirement* (Kansas City, MO: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 2007), 44.

<sup>47</sup> The three denominations in this study do not mandate a specific age and their pension policies differ. Most religious publications on clergy retirement are limited and dated. Edward Bratcher et al., “The Golden Years of Ministry: A Leadership Forum,” *Leadership* 11, no. 3 (1990); Robert G. Kemper, *Planning for Ministerial Retirement* (New York, NY: Pilgrim Press, 1988); Richard J. Kirk, *Pastor and Congregation Face Retirement* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1979); Norman M. Lobsenz, *The Minister's Complete Guide to Successful Retirement* (Great Neck, NY: Channel Press, 1955); James M. Wall, “Preplan Your Retirement,” *Christian Ministry* 5, no. 1 (1974). Two more current books that may be helpful are Gwen Wagstrom Halaas, *Clergy, Retirement, and Wholeness: Looking Forward to the Third Age* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2005); Williams, *Out of the Pulpit, into the Pew: A Pastor's Guide to Meaningful Service after Retirement*. Research on clergy retirement has focused primarily on priests. Joseph Henry Fichter, “The Dilemma of Priest Retirement,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 24 (1985); J. Conrad Glass, “Retirement Planning for Clergy: Need and Content,” *Journal of Religious Gerontology* 9, no. 2 (1995). Secular resources include Richard Nelson Bolles and John E. Nelson, *What Color Is Your Parachute? For Retirement: Planning Now for the Life You Want* (Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press, 2007); David Bordon and Tom Winters, *101 Things You Should Do before You Retire*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Warner Faith, 2006); Paula Dorion-Gray, *Ready, Set, Retire: How to Do the Things You Want to Do in Retirement with Peace of Mind* (Prairie Grove, IL: Reality Books, 2006); Lita Epstein, *Working after Retirement for Dummies* (Indianapolis, IN: Wiley Pub., Inc, 2007); Muriel R. Gillick, *The Denial of Aging: Perpetual Youth, Eternal Life, and Other Dangerous Fantasies* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Connie Goldman and Richard Mahler, *Secrets of Becoming a Late Bloomer: Staying Creative, Aware, and Involved in Midlife and Beyond* (Minneapolis, MN: Fairview Press, 2007); David A. Littell, *Planning for Retirement Needs*, 8th ed. (Bryn Mawr, PA: American College Press, 2006); Brigitte C. Madrian, Olivia S. Mitchell, and Beth J. Soldo, *Redefining Retirement: How Will Boomers Fare?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); William G. Nelson, *Fit to Retire: Your Guide to Successful Aging and a New Model for Retirement* (Edina, MN: Beavers Pond Press, Inc., 2007); J. Walker Smith and Ann Clurman, *Generation Ageless: How Baby Boomers Are Changing the Way We Live Today--and They're Just Getting Started*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Collins, 2007).

same time period.<sup>48</sup> Larry Witham expressed his concern about the impact of impending retirements:

A final institutional crisis hinges on the aging clergy corps. Some call it the “actuarial crisis.” A major segment of American clergy will retire soon, and live longer than any previous generation. The cost to denominational pension systems will be staggering. Some retirement packages are better than a working minister’s salary. Many retired pastors are helping beyond the call of duty. Yet time marches on. The passing of a generation is most visible as great ministers of the age—like John Paul II, Billy Graham, or Robert Schuller—move into their twilight.<sup>49</sup>

Most retirees in the United States face changes in housing conditions, economic status, social status, and personal identity.<sup>50</sup> Clergy encounter additional challenges with housing since many pastors do not own their own homes and may not have accrued enough equity to acquire a residence. Pastors are encouraged or required (as in the ELCA) to leave the congregation they currently serve, thereby leaving their personal network and familiar place of worship when they really need support.

Clergy may also have financial concerns. Clergy compensation and benefits are consistently less than other occupations with comparable education, which results in less potential savings, and potentially inadequate pension plans, Social Security and Medicare, and health benefits.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Roland Lovstad, “Worker Health, Retirees, Recruitment Could Offset Pastor Shortages,” *The Reporter*, November 20, 2007, <http://www.lcms.org/pages/rpage.asp?NavID=12775> (accessed March 14, 2008).

<sup>49</sup> Larry Witham, *Who Shall Lead Them? The Future of Ministry in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>50</sup> Kevin L. Ladd, Thomas V. Merluzzi, and Daniel Cooper, “Retirement Issues for Roman Catholic Priests: A Theoretical and Qualitative Investigation,” *Review of Religious Research* 48, no. 1 (2006): 85.

<sup>51</sup> Becky R. McMillan and Matthew Price. *How Much Should We Pay the Pastor? A Fresh Look at Clergy Salaries in the 21st Century*. Pulpit & Pew Research Reports. (Durham, NC: Pulpit & Pew Research on Pastoral Leadership, 2003).

Most importantly, clergy must address the ultimate identity issue – the call to ordained ministry. Williams speaks for many pastors, “I loved my calling to the ministry. In fact, I think that I was addicted to it. . . . Frankly, I was not mentally or emotionally ready for the change that was taking place in my life.”<sup>52</sup> Cionca urges pastors to develop a biblical understanding of work as being productive and making a contribution to God’s creation, not simply a means for financial gain. He suggests that, “We are not retiring *from* something but *to* something. We are not retreating; we are repositioning.”<sup>53</sup> His positive approach may indicate a shift in perspective on the issue.<sup>54</sup>

### **Selection Process**

Each congregation should have a written process describing how they will select the next pastor and who will be involved. This process should include appropriate policies and procedures required by law and polity. The process should specify the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the departing pastor, church council, personnel committee, local judicatory representatives, transition consultant, search committee, congregation, and potential candidates. Most importantly, the process should allow ample room for the unpredictability of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>52</sup> Williams, *Out of the Pulpit, into the Pew: A Pastor's Guide to Meaningful Service after Retirement*, 22-23.

<sup>53</sup> Cionca, *Before You Move: A Guide to Making Transitions in Ministry*, 230.

<sup>54</sup> Much of the literature conveys a negative perspective on retirement. Craig V. Anderson, “Retired Ministers Who Won't Leave Their Parish,” *Christian Ministry* 27, no. 3 (1996); William M. Clark, “Retired Ministers and Their Spouses: Who Cares?,” *Church & Society* 93, no. 5 (2003); Lee C. Moorehead, “Recycling the Retired Minister,” *Christian Ministry* 18, no. 1 (1987); Anthony B. Robinson, “Step Aside: The ‘Former Pastor’ Problem,” *Christian Century* 122, no. 15 (2005).



## Leadership Development Process

Another key component of a succession plan is to identify and prepare leaders at every level of an organization to implement the organization's strategic plan. For most organizations, this involves developing a pool of internal candidates and utilizing resources such as an executive search consultant for identifying external candidates when necessary.

As noted earlier, there are congregational and denominational policies, procedures, and traditions which discourage, even preclude, any proactive succession planning by pastors or congregations. These constraints dictate who is eligible to become the next pastor and the process for calling that person. Again, many of the current policies can be traced to Mead and do not meet the needs of large congregations.

Unlike other professions, pastors have limited mobility and professional opportunities. Their education, training, and employment is controlled largely by the denomination which ordained them. Though they are the chief carriers of the practices, beliefs, and traditions of their specific denomination, they are uniquely vulnerable to the structural opportunities and limitations that the denomination imposes on their professional lives.<sup>55</sup>

An effective succession planning process in public or non-profit organizations depends on the support of the most senior leaders. In contrast to Mead, Rothwell argues that it is critical that the CEO is directly involved in the process in order to hold the

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<sup>55</sup> Patricia M. Y. Chang, *Factors Shaping Clergy Careers: A Wake up Call for Protestant Denominations and Pastors*. Pulpit & Pew Research Reports. (Durham, NC: Pulpit & Pew Research on Pastoral Leadership, 2005), 12.

senior leaders accountable for personnel development at all levels of the organization, otherwise “it will fail.”<sup>56</sup>

Denominations have not traditionally engaged in intentional leadership development for pastors. Consequently, there are a limited number of pastors prepared to serve large congregations. Alternatives such as mentoring, talent pools, job sharing, and job rotation should be considered in order to ensure continuity of leadership, particularly in megachurches.<sup>57</sup>

### Transition Planning

A transition management plan is needed in order to assure the appropriate transfer of knowledge and responsibilities from one leader to another within an organization.<sup>58</sup> As noted earlier, current polity and tradition promote a separation between installed pastors with no opportunity for interaction. This may be appropriate in misconduct cases but not in a peaceful transition such as retirement.

The establishment of boundaries in advance of the transition is critical. Therefore, congregations need to determine the options for the timing of the transition – overlapped,

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<sup>56</sup> William J. Rothwell, *Effective Succession Planning: Ensuring Leadership Continuity and Building Talent from Within*, 3d ed. (New York, NY: American Management Association, 2005).

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-39.

<sup>58</sup> There are several resources available which provide pastors with guidance for managing their professional and personal responsibilities in order to facilitate closure with the congregation including: Cionca, *Before You Move: A Guide to Making Transitions in Ministry*, 197-208; David L. McKenna, *The Leader's Legacy: Preparing for Greater Things* (Newberg, OR: Barclay Press, 2006); Roy M. Oswald, *Running through the Thistles: Terminating a Ministerial Relationship with a Parish* (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1978); Lyle E. Schaller, “Leaving a Legacy: How Pastors Can Help Their Successors,” *Christian Ministry* 13, no. 3 (1982).

sequential, and delayed, and define the intended relationship between the two pastors – firewall, downloading, and mentoring.<sup>59</sup>

### **Installation**

Bridges cautions that such an event is just a start, not a new beginning. Though helpful, the event is just part of the process of moving forward. Therefore, it is important to honor the departing pastor's service and contributions. In addition, there should be a formal transfer of the blessing like Moses to Joshua during a worship service with the congregation.

### **Start Up**

Start up is an important part of the entire process that is neglected in practice and in religious publications. Given the amount of energy that has been expended in addressing endings and transition, it is surprising that there are so few resources focused on the new beginning. Little attention has been given to the challenges facing the new pastor, personally and professionally.<sup>60</sup> Even less attention has been given to the needs and responsibilities of the new pastor and congregation as they enter this new phase.

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<sup>59</sup> Weese and Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken About Pastoral Transitions*, 140-42.

<sup>60</sup> Oswald, Ramey, and Virkler offer some tactical advice for pastors of medium to small congregations. Roy M. Oswald, *New Beginnings: A Pastorate Start up Workbook*, Rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 1989); Robert H. Ramey and Herb Miller, *The Pastor's Start-up Manual: Beginning a New Pastorate*. Leadership Insight Series (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995); Virkler, *Choosing a New Pastor: The Complete Handbook*. Ciampa and Watkins' research specifically addresses strategies for successful leadership transitions in corporations. Dan Ciampa and Michael Watkins, *Right from the Start: Taking Charge in a New Leadership Role* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1999); Michael Watkins, *The First 90 Days: Critical Success Strategies for New Leaders at All Levels* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2003).

This is particularly challenging for pastors of large congregations since the relationships with the local community and judicatory may be strained. They may not feel welcome and will seek relationships with like-minded pastors and congregations that may not be in the same denomination.

### Summary

*Succession in Christian ministry, if approached in a deliberate, prayerful, and intentional way, can benefit the Church. It has this potential because it demonstrates an understanding of the realities of church life and leadership.<sup>61</sup>*

Loren Mead's illness-based response to pastoral vacancies has been absorbed into (or in some cases supercedes) congregational and denominational policies, and perpetuated in popular literature. He assumes that no one has planned for this inevitability and that panic will ensue. Many of the current processes, policies, and politics discourage, even preclude, any proactive planning or preparation by pastors and congregations for these inevitable situations, thereby forcing disruptions in relationships between the pastor and congregation. Consequently, congregations in transition have become increasingly dependent upon interim pastors and local judicatories.

William Bridges argues that the single biggest reason organizational changes fail is that no one has thought about endings or planned to manage their impact on people. According to Bridges, managing change and transition requires two different planning methods – a change management plan and a transition management plan. Pastors, congregations, and denominations would benefit by developing strategic plans which provide for managing pastoral change and transition. These strategic plans would address

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<sup>61</sup> Stepp, *Leadership Succession in the World of the Pauline Circle*, 203.

succession planning, including selection and leadership development processes, and transition planning, including installation and start up processes. A proactive approach to managing inevitable changes in pastoral leadership would strength the relationship between pastor and congregation.

The impact of intentional interim ministry on the congregations in this study is discussed further in Chapter 6. First, the strategies and methodologies which guided this research are explained in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5  
RESEARCH STRATEGIES AND METHODOLOGIES

*If we are to advance in the business of our Master,  
in carrying out the Great Commission,  
and planting self-propagating churches,  
we must define our objectives, and measure our achievements.  
There is now sufficient missionary experience to make that possible.  
Standard of achievement can be drawn up so that the sending churches  
may judge of the success of the ventures.  
Yet all this will require carefully directed investigation.  
We need to know a great deal more than we do.<sup>1</sup>*

The strategies and methodologies used to explore the little-known phenomena of pastoral change and transition in megachurches are described in this chapter. First, the related research literature which informed this study is reviewed. Next, the research methodology is described, including the research purposes and questions, research process, population and sampling procedures, data collection strategies, and data analysis strategies. Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of inference quality and transferability, and ethical considerations.

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<sup>1</sup> McGavran, *The Bridges of God: A Study in the Strategy of Missions*, 150.

## Research Literature Review

*The greatest thing in the world, or in the universe, is a great personality.  
Supreme interest attaches to men, and not to things.  
The most significant part of history is biography.  
Great achievements betoken great leadership.  
At every step of progress, and in all the processes of the kingdom,  
you will find a man, or a super-man, a woman.<sup>2</sup>*

Generations of “clergy watchers” and congregational observers have conducted considerable research on clergy and congregations over the years, most of which has focused on what pastors and congregations do, and how they do it.<sup>3</sup> Though significant contributions have been made by focusing on clergy as a profession and congregations as organizations, this study is interested in a more personal approach – who they are, where they came from, how they changed, etc.

A survey of literature available in the ATLA database since 1900 produced hundreds of articles about clergy and for clergy.<sup>4</sup> These articles contain several reoccurring themes – recruiting, training, qualifications, and pensions – that continue to resonate today.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Truman O. Douglass, *The Pilgrims of Iowa* (Boston, MA: Pilgrim Press, 1911), 13.

<sup>3</sup> I borrowed the term “clergy watchers” from the Rev. Dr. Jackson Carroll. Jackson W. Carroll, “Reflections of a Clergy Watcher,” (Durham, NC: Duke Divinity School, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> See the American Theological Library Association, <http://www.atla.com/atlahome.html> (accessed March 20, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> Lewis Bookwalter, “Higher Educational Qualifications for the Ministry,” *United Brethren Review* 11, no. 4 (1900); James W. Hott, “The Preacher for the Twentieth Century,” *United Brethren Review* 11, no. 2 (1900); Josiah Pennabecker Landis, “The Training Needed for Ministry Today,” *United Brethren Review* 15, no. 2 (1904); George Clarke Peck, “Recruiting for the Ministry,” *Methodist Review* 89 (1907); Albert Edson Sleeper, “Provide Pensions for Preachers,” *Christian Century* 34, no. 43 (1917); Willis Duke Weatherford, “The Decrease in the Supply of Ministers: Causes and Remedies,” *Methodist Review Quarterly* 56, no. 3 (1907).

## Clergy

One notable book about clergy is *The Pilgrims of Iowa* published in 1911.<sup>6</sup> This book is perhaps one of the earliest examples of a mixed methods study of clergy and congregations. The biographical information presented in this book was very similar to what I envisioned for this study.

Rev. Truman O. Douglass documented the expansion of the Congregational church in Iowa from 1838 until 1906 through the efforts of many “pilgrims” serving the Congregational Home Missionary Society. Douglass drew on his personal experience as one of the pilgrims himself and as the secretary for the Congregational Home Missionary Society from 1882 until 1907. He incorporated interviews, historical documents, and extensive data to create a fascinating history and personal profiles of the men and women who spread the gospel across the Iowa frontier.<sup>7</sup> The characteristics and contributions of the clergy in this book are very consistent with the persons described in Chapter 3 and the data presented in Chapter 6.

Truman O. Douglass’ passion for the gospel, research skills, and flair with the written word were inherited by his son, Harlan Paul Douglass.<sup>8</sup> Young Douglass honed his research and writing skills during his tenure (1906-1918) at the American Missionary

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<sup>6</sup> Douglass, *The Pilgrims of Iowa*. This entire book is available for download from Google Books at <http://books.google.com/books?id=RfcXx-mWrb0C&pg=PA1&dq=pilgrims+of+iowa> (accessed January 17, 2008). Rev. Douglass includes a brief autobiography on page 188.

<sup>7</sup> The appendices contain detailed personal and employment data for hundreds of clergy and detailed records of the congregations in Iowa.

<sup>8</sup> For more information about Rev. Dr. H. Paul Douglass, see Edmund de Schweinitz Brunner, “Harlan Paul Douglass: Pioneer Researcher in the Sociology of Religion,” *Review of Religious Research* 1, no. 2 (1960); Edmund de Schweinitz Brunner, “Harlan Paul Douglass: Pioneer Researcher in the Sociology of Religion,” *Review of Religious Research* 1, no. 1 (1959); Jeffrey K. Hadden, “H. Paul Douglass: His Perspective and His Work,” *Review of Religious Research* 22, no. 1 (1980).



Association.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, the influence of the social and behavioral sciences emerged with the scientific management movement led by Frederick Taylor.<sup>10</sup>

The Institute for Social and Religious Research (ISRR) was founded in 1921 to promote the use of scientific research methods and techniques to study religious organizations.<sup>11</sup> After joining the ISRR in 1921, H. Paul Douglass established a specific methodology for studying congregations which was first employed in a series of studies on city churches.<sup>12</sup> Douglass became known for his “hallmark research style” which combined field research and survey data.<sup>13</sup>

Douglass and his colleagues at ISRR carefully documented several critical factors that directly affected when and where churches were established across the United States including the Church Federation Movement, cömity agreements, suburbanization, and

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<sup>9</sup> Hadden, “H. Paul Douglass: His Perspective and His Work,” 70. H. Paul Douglass served four Congregational churches in Iowa and Missouri before joining the AMA. For more information about the American Missionary Association, see <http://northbysouth.kenyon.edu/1998/edu/charleston/ama.htm>. The AMA was closely aligned with the Congregational Church.

<sup>10</sup> Frederick Winslow Taylor, *The Principles of Scientific Management* (New York, London.: Harper & Brothers, 1911).

<sup>11</sup> For more information about the Institute of Social and Religious Research (1921-1934), see John Raleigh Mott and Galen Merriam Fisher, *The Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1921-1934* (New York, NY: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1934). The ISRR was founded and funded by John D. Rockefeller, Jr.

<sup>12</sup> H. Paul Douglass, *How to Study the City Church* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1928); H. Paul Douglass, *The Metropolitan Pittsburgh Church Study 1948* (Pittsburgh, PA: The Executive committee of the Metropolitan Pittsburgh church study, 1948); H. Paul Douglass, *The Springfield Church Survey: A Study of Organized Religion with Its Social Background* (New York, NY: George H. Doran Company, 1926); H. Paul Douglass, *The St. Louis Church Survey: A Religious Investigation with a Social Background* (New York, NY: George H. Doran Company, 1924); Harlan Paul Douglass, *1000 City Churches: Phases of Adaptation to Urban Environment* (New York, NY: George H. Doran Company, 1926).

<sup>13</sup> Hadden, “H. Paul Douglass: His Perspective and His Work,” 72. Hadden also noted that “As far as I can determine, Douglass never conducted a survey without spending at least some time on-site to gain firsthand knowledge.”

church planning.<sup>14</sup> They were also involved with research of mass movements in India (see Chapter 5) and the Laymen's Commission for Appraisal.<sup>15</sup>

Douglass' research methods directly influenced, if not created, the discipline of congregational studies.<sup>16</sup> His study of churches in Minneapolis, Minnesota was particularly interesting since several of the megachurches in this study are located near Minneapolis.<sup>17</sup> His detailed documentation and hand-drawn maps provided valuable insight into the history of the community and the perspective of the Minneapolis Church Federation in 1944.

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<sup>14</sup> Brunner, *The Larger Parish: A Movement or an Enthusiasm*; Edmund de Schweinitz Brunner, *Tested Methods in Town and Country Churches* (New York, NY: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1930); H. Paul Douglass, *Church Comity: A Study of Cooperative Church Extension in American Cities* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1929); H. Paul Douglass, *Church Unity Movements in the United States* (New York, NY: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1934); H. Paul Douglass, *A Decade of Objective Progress in Church Unity, 1927-1936: Report No. 4* (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers, 1937); H. Paul Douglass, *Protestant Cooperation in American Cities* (New York, NY: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1930); H. Paul Douglass, *The Suburban Trend* (New York, NY: The Century Co., 1925); Wilbur C. Hallenbeck, *Minneapolis Churches and Their Comity Problems* (New York, NY: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1929); Ross W. Sanderson, *The Strategy of City Church Planning* (New York, NY: Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1932). Their work also reflects the biases of the era that arguably may have had a lasting impact. For example, many of their clients were mainline Protestant denominations such as Episcopalian, Congregational, and Presbyterian which are referred to as the "major" denominations. Douglass calls the others "minor denominations" and some groups "irregular sects." See Douglass, *Church Comity: A Study of Cooperative Church Extension in American Cities*, 11. Also, H. Paul Douglass, *Minneapolis Churches: A Brief Study of Their Institutional Aspects* (Minneapolis, MN: Burgess Publishing Company, 1944), 22, 34.

<sup>15</sup> Pickett, *Christian Mass Movements in India: A Study with Recommendations*.

<sup>16</sup> These are just a few of the researchers who have demonstrated the value of disciplined congregational research: Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Congregation and Community* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997); Nancy Tatom Ammerman et al., eds., *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998); Carl S. Dudley, Jackson W. Carroll, and James P. Wind, eds., *Carriers of Faith: Lessons from Congregational Studies* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991); C. Kirk Hadaway and David A. Roozen, *Rerouting the Protestant Mainstream: Sources of Growth & Opportunities for Change* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995); Dean R. Hoge and David A. Roozen, eds., *Understanding Church Growth and Decline, 1950-1978* (New York, NY: Pilgrim Press, 1979); David A. Roozen and C. Kirk Hadaway, *Church and Denominational Growth* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993); Cynthia Woolever and Deborah Bruce, *A Field Guide to U.S. Congregations: Who's Going Where and Why* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

<sup>17</sup> Douglass, *Minneapolis Churches: A Brief Study of Their Institutional Aspects*.

However, this work reflects a negative bias toward “new denominations especially those of the emotional type.”<sup>18</sup> Apparently the new denominations coming into Minneapolis after World War I (WWI) were affecting the established religious patterns in the city. Douglass suggested that the older churches should have “sympathetic but discriminating regard for these newer bodies in their attempt to find a useful place in the religious life of the community.”<sup>19</sup>

After World War II (WWII), the new discipline of pastoral care brought attention to the psychological and physical health of seminarians and clergy.<sup>20</sup> Renewed interest in clergy on a personal level led to landmark studies of their professional personae as well.

Blizzard’s pioneering research in the 1950s on clergy roles established a foundation for examining what clergy *do* and how they perceive themselves.<sup>21</sup> His work

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> The *Journal of Pastoral Care* was first published in 1947 and *Pastoral Psychology* in 1950. Examples of the articles scrutinizing clergy include: Daniel Blain, “Fostering the Mental Health of Ministers,” *Pastoral Psychology* 9, no. 87 (1958); Anton Theophilus Boisen, “Psychiatric Screening of Theological Students,” *Journal of Pastoral Care* 9, no. 3 (1955); Logan V. Cockrum, “Predicting Success in Training for the Ministry,” *Religious Education* 47, no. 3 (1952); Richard F. Larson, “Social and Cultural Characteristics of a Selected Sample of New England Clergymen,” *Review of Religious Research* 6, no. 3 (1965); Leonard Morgan, “Mental Illness among the Clergy: A Survey of State Mental Hospitals in America,” *Pastoral Psychology* 9, no. 87 (1958); Roy M. Pearson, “Ministers of the Ministering Community,” *Pastoral Psychology* 7, no. 64 (1956); Roy M. Pearson, “Why Ministers Break Down,” *Christianity and Crisis* 16, no. 18 (1956); Kenneth H. Rogers, “Preparation for an Effective Pastoral Ministry,” *Journal of Pastoral Care* 10, no. 3 (1956); Samuel Southard, “Mental Health of Ministers,” *Pastoral Psychology* 9, no. 87 (1958); John C. Whitcomb, “The Relationship of Personality Characteristics to the Problems of Ministers,” *Religious Education* 52, no. 5 (1957); Robert W. Woodroffe, “Selection of Candidates for the Ministry,” *Journal of Pastoral Care* 5, no. 4 (1951).

<sup>21</sup> Blizzard used behavioral science techniques to study clergy in published the results of this study in various forms and in multiple publications over the years. Summaries were published in journals such as Samuel W. Blizzard, “The Minister’s Dilemma,” *Christian Century* 73 (1956); Samuel W. Blizzard, “The Parish Minister’s Self-Image of His Master Role,” *Pastoral Psychology* 9, no. 89 (1958); Samuel W. Blizzard, “The Protestant Parish Minister’s Integrating Roles,” *Religious Education* 53, no. 4 (1958); Samuel W. Blizzard, “The Roles of the Rural Parish Minister, the Protestant Seminaries, and the Sciences of Social Behavior,” *Religious Education* 50, no. 6 (1955); Samuel W. Blizzard, “Social Science in the

documents the shift from the “traditional and theological” roles of preacher, priest, and teacher to the more “contemporary” roles of pastor-counselor, organizer, and administrator.<sup>22</sup> His data revealed a dilemma – the pastors considered preaching to be of primary importance though administrative responsibilities consumed most of their time. They felt ill-prepared for the increasing demands of these contemporary roles. Blizzard challenged denominations and seminaries to address this dilemma and to prepare seminarians to be more effective in congregational ministry. Remarkably, Blizzard’s framework still applies after fifty years, particularly in large congregations.

Blizzard’s data, results, and methodology were published posthumously as a monograph in 1985 by the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR), not a commercial publisher.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, the book contains vast amounts of data and detailed analysis. I had searched for previous research to emulate but unfortunately I did not discover Blizzard’s book until after most of the data for this study were gathered. Blizzard’s methodology would have been very helpful in the development of the data collection process, particularly the interview questions. The organization of Blizzard’s findings did guide the presentation of results in this document.

Unlike Blizzard’s book, the groundbreaking work produced by subsequent generations of clergy watchers is often constrained by publishers who relegate most of

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Training of the Parish Minister,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review, Special Issue* (1954); Samuel W. Blizzard, “The Training of the Parish Minister,” *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 11, no. 2 (1956).

<sup>22</sup> Blizzard, “The Training of the Parish Minister,” 48.

<sup>23</sup> Other documents related to his study are archived in Princeton Theological Seminary library. Samuel W. Blizzard and Harriet B. Blizzard, *The Protestant Parish Minister: A Behavioral Science Interpretation* (Storrs, CT: Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1985). For more information on Samuel Blizzard, see Gary D. Bouma, “Samuel W. Blizzard (1914-1976) Sociologist, Theological Educator, and Border Broker: An Appreciative Evaluation,” *Review of Religious Research* 23, no. 2 (1981).

the data and methodology to the appendices. These books are informative and marketable, but most focus on clergy from a professional perspective, not a personal perspective.<sup>24</sup>

### Megachurches

Few have systematically studied the characteristics and contributions of the pastors currently serving megachurches, or any of their predecessors. Elmer Towns and John Vaughan were pioneers in that they identified and documented the emergence of large churches and a new type of pastoral leader.

Towns was the first to identify the largest and fast-growing Sunday schools in the United States in annual lists published in *Christian Life* magazine.<sup>25</sup> These lists led to a series of three groundbreaking books. *The Ten Largest Sunday Schools and What Makes Them Grow* established Towns as an expert on Sunday schools in the United States as well as provided insight into his methodology for studying these congregations.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *God's Potters* is an excellent exception. In order to describe the current state of pastoral leadership in the United States, Carroll first asks, "Who are America's clergy?" Then he asks, "What do they do?" His methodology and survey questions were helpful for operationalizing the variables used in this study. Carroll's study was useful for identifying personal and professional characteristics but provided little insight into pastors serving large congregations. Jackson W. Carroll and Becky R. McMillan, *God's Potters: Pastoral Leadership and the Shaping of Congregations*. Pulpit & Pew Research on Pastoral Leadership (Grand Rapids, MI: W. B. Eerdmans 2006). Dr. Carroll also donated the data file and codebook to American Religious Data Archive (ARDA). Analysis of this database revealed that 23 of the 883 pastors surveyed served congregations with average worship attendance greater than 2,000 per week.

<sup>25</sup> Elmer L. Towns, "Ten Largest Sunday Schools in the United States Today," *Christian Life*, September 1968, 52-53. Towns' published a list of the "100 Largest Sunday Schools" annually in the *Christian Life* magazine from 1967 until 1976. He also published an annual list of the "Fastest Growing Sunday Schools" in the *Christian Life* magazine and *Moody Monthly* from 1973 until 1982.

<sup>26</sup> Towns, *The Ten Largest Sunday Schools and What Makes Them Grow*. Towns personally visited each of the congregations to gather data through both quantitative and qualitative methods. Towns concluded that there were eighteen major factors that affect the growth of these programs and continue to describe large congregations today. See appendix S.

*America's Fastest Growing Churches* presented Towns' research on the ten fastest-growing Independent Baptist congregations in the United States.<sup>27</sup>

Towns' insight into the leaders of these congregations led to *Great Soul Winning Churches*. He argued that the key to building a great church is "obedience to the New Testament" and "great soul winners build great churches."<sup>28</sup> Towns continued to study congregations and publish his findings annually until 1982.<sup>29</sup> Towns began to collaborate with John Vaughan in the early 1980s.<sup>30</sup> *The Complete Book of Church Growth* included profiles of twelve growing congregations, summaries of key church growth methods, and lists of 100 Largest Sunday schools and the 100 Largest churches.<sup>31</sup> This book marks the tipping point of the Church Growth Movement and signifies the beginning of the emergence of the megachurch.

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<sup>27</sup> Towns, *America's Fastest Growing Churches: Why 10 Sunday Schools Are Growing Fast*. His chapter on charismatic leadership provided a groundbreaking analysis of charismatic leaders in large, fast-growing congregations. He concluded that a pastor should not "be able to inspire people because he has charisma but his ability to inspire people is evidence of his charisma." See pp 148-149. In addition, Towns' made significant contributions with his discussion of the sociological cycle of church growth.

<sup>28</sup> Elmer L. Towns, *Great Soul-Winning Churches* (Murfreesboro, TN: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1973). He identified eighteen principles that described the pastors which still apply today. See appendix S.

<sup>29</sup> After the publication of *The Complete Book of Church Growth*, John Vaughan assumed responsibility for publishing the annual lists until 2007.

<sup>30</sup> It is not clear how they met, but like Towns, John N. Vaughan had a long standing interest in large congregations. When Vaughan was serving as the associate pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, he surveyed the "schools for church leaders" in five large congregations - Garden Grove, FBC Hammond, Coral Ridge, FBC Dallas, and Thomas Road. John N. Vaughan, "Schools of Experience," *Christian Ministry* 19, no. 6 (1974). John Vaughan's dissertation focused on small groups in large churches. Vaughan, "Satellite Groups: Valid Church Growth Strategy." C. Peter Wagner was his dissertation advisor. Vaughan later wrote two other books on large churches: Vaughan, *The Large Church: A Twentieth-Century Expression of the First-Century Church*; John N. Vaughan, *The World's Twenty Largest Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1984). Vaughan founded Church Growth Today, Inc. in 1985, now known as the Megachurch Research Center. A detailed biography of Vaughan is found in Wagner, Arn, and Towns, eds., *Church Growth: State of the Art*, 270-71.

<sup>31</sup> Towns, Vaughan, and Seifert, *The Complete Book of Church Growth*.

Most of the research specifically focused on megachurches has been conducted by doctoral students, including John Vaughan. G. A. Pritchard analyzed the market-driven strategy used by Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, Illinois as they sought to convert "unchurched Harrys" into evangelical Christians.<sup>32</sup> Scott Lee Guffin identified four key influences on the megachurch movement.<sup>33</sup> Richard Olson created a database of large Protestant congregations in the U.S. for the Leadership Network in 1989.<sup>34</sup> For his dissertation on leadership practices in large churches in 1993, Thomas Zook created a database of 213 congregations which later became the foundation for the current HIRR megachurch database.<sup>35</sup> Scott Thumma wrote an ethnographic analysis of a megachurch in Atlanta.<sup>36</sup> Two recent studies of megachurches in the United States documented a few demographic characteristics of the pastors currently serving the congregation such as age, gender, race, education, and tenure. Unfortunately, the findings

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<sup>32</sup> Gregory A. Pritchard, "The Strategy of Willow Creek Community Church: A Study in the Sociology of Religion" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1994). Pritchard's dissertation was later published as a book. Pritchard, *Willow Creek Seeker Services: Evaluating a New Way of Doing Church*.

<sup>33</sup> Guffin, "An Examination of Key Foundational Influences on the Megachurch Movement in America, 1960-1978".

<sup>34</sup> Richard Lee Olson, "The Largest Congregations in the United States: An Empirical Study of Church Growth and Decline" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1989). Olson's criteria for defining a large church was an average worship attendance of 800 adults or more.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas D. Zook, "An Examination of Leadership Practices in Large, Protestant Congregations" (D.Ed. diss., Indiana University of Pennsylvania, 1993). Thomas Zook recommended further study of both succession planning and leadership transition in his dissertation.

<sup>36</sup> Scott L. Thumma, "The Kingdom, the Power, and the Glory: The Megachurch in Modern American Society" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1996). Nancy T. Ammerman was one of his dissertation advisors.

from these small samples may not be applicable to the larger population of pastors serving megachurches.<sup>37</sup>

Lyle Schaller has made several prophetic observations of the megachurch phenomenon and its leaders. In his groundbreaking article, “Megachurch!,” Schaller identified the “central secrets of the success of many megachurches” and several areas of concern, including pastoral succession.<sup>38</sup> Schaller continued to write about pastoral succession in several of his subsequent books.<sup>39</sup> Schaller anticipated that many megachurches would encounter significant challenges over the next ten to fifteen years as the American culture responds to the aging and retirement of the Baby Boomers. He expressed concern over the potential disruptions caused by pastoral transitions, the scarcity of qualified pastors, and that the current methods for training pastors were inadequate for leadership in megachurches.

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<sup>37</sup> Scott L. Thumma, “Exploring the Megachurch Phenomena: Their Characteristics and Cultural Context.” (Hartford, CT: Hartford Institute for Religious Research) [http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/thumma\\_article2.html](http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/thumma_article2.html) (accessed January 23, 2003); Thumma, “Megachurches Today: Summary of Data from the Faith Communities Today Project.” Scott L. Thumma, David Travis, and Warren Bird. *Megachurches Today 2005: Summary of Research Findings*. (Hartford, CT: Hartford Institute for Religious Research, 2006). In 2000, n= 53 and n=382 in 2005.

<sup>38</sup> Schaller, “Megachurch!”

<sup>39</sup> Lyle E. Schaller, *The Seven-Day-a-Week Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), 137-47; Lyle E. Schaller, *The Very Large Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 125-27, 64-67.



## Research Methodology

*For most researchers committed to the thorough study of a research problem, method is secondary to the research question itself.<sup>40</sup>*

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the little-known phenomena of pastoral change and transition in megachurches in order to describe who the pastors and congregations are, and determine how, if at all, they are addressing pastoral change and transition. The secondary purpose was to develop a methodology in this exploratory phase that would facilitate future research. The research methodology used to accomplish these goals, including the research questions, research process, population and sampling procedures, data collection strategies, and data analysis strategies, is described in this section.

## Research Questions

Teddlie and Tashakkori suggest that the purpose of a study in exploratory research is “typically stated in terms of research questions” instead of hypotheses.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, given the descriptive and exploratory purposes of the research, this study did not have a theoretical framework or any a priori hypotheses.<sup>42</sup> Instead, it was guided by two primary questions:

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<sup>40</sup> Tashakkori and Teddlie, *Mixed Methodology: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 21. This sentiment is echoed in their latest book Teddlie and Tashakkori, *Foundations of Mixed Methods Research: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches in the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 129.

<sup>41</sup> Tashakkori and Teddlie, *Mixed Methodology: Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 53.

<sup>42</sup> Corbin and Strauss suggest that “description is the basis for more abstract interpretations of data and theory development, though it may not necessarily lead to theory if that is not the researcher’s goal . . . not everyone wants to develop theory.” Juliet M. Corbin and Anselm L. Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative*

- (1) What are the characteristics of these leaders and the congregations they serve?
- (2) How, if at all, have these leaders and congregations addressed pastoral change and transition?

### Exploration Process

Exploration is the preferred methodological approach when a group, process, activity, or situation has received little or no systematic scrutiny.<sup>43</sup> The focus of exploration is on “the inductive generation of new concepts and empirical generalizations.”<sup>44</sup> Exploration must be understood as a process that unfolds “within individual studies but also across several studies.”<sup>45</sup>

Concatenated exploration describes a process in which a series of related field studies begin with the generation of new ideas which ultimately may result in an inductive or a grounded theory.<sup>46</sup> Figure 16 illustrates (from left to right) how the exploration of a little-known phenomena moves from (1) description to (2) hypothesis testing toward confirmation through (3) model building resulting in a better-known phenomena.<sup>47</sup> The concatenated exploration process allows for the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data in all three phases. The degree to which either is used

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*Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 3d ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2008), 55.

<sup>43</sup> Robert A. Stebbins, *Exploratory Research in the Social Sciences* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001), 9.

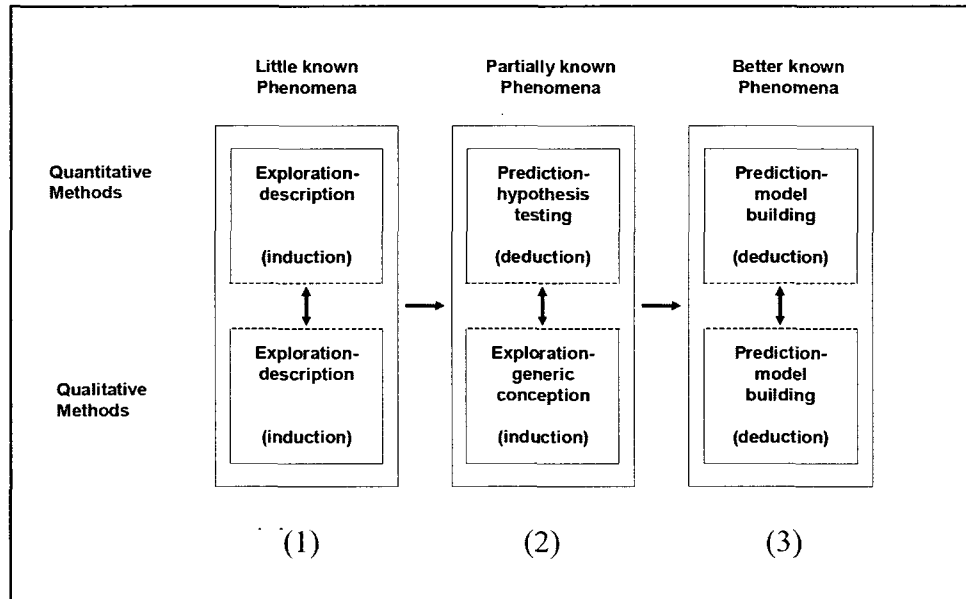
<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 7. This diagram was reprinted in Stebbins, *Exploratory Research in the Social Sciences*, 7. (I added the numbers in parentheses below the boxes for discussion purposes.) It was originally published in William Shaffir and Robert A. Stebbins, *Experiencing Fieldwork: An Inside View of Qualitative Research* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1991). Stebbins notes that the diagram was not drawn to scale; meaning that though the boxes are of equal size, the amount of research conducted most likely increases in each successive phase.

depends on the individual study. By design, the process relies more on descriptive statistics during the inductive phases, and inferential statistics for hypothesis testing and model building.



**Figure 16. Concatenated Exploration Process**

Guided by the Concatenated Exploration Process in figure 16, I designed the research process illustrated in figure 18 to explore the little-known phenomena of pastoral change and transition. A description of the process, beginning with Population and Sampling (figure 17), is presented in the following sections.

### Population and Sampling

The population for this study was selected using a purposive sampling technique which allows for the “selection of specific cases that will provide the most information for the questions under study.”<sup>48</sup> Handpicked sampling involves the selection of a sample

<sup>48</sup> Abbas Tashakkori and Charles Teddlie, eds., *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), 279.

for a particular purpose.<sup>49</sup> This technique does not claim to generate a representative sample but it allows for the “study of intrinsically interesting cases, or enhances learning by exploring the limits or boundaries of a situation or phenomenon.”<sup>50</sup>

The population was limited to these three denominations for several reasons. First, each of these denominations has a very different ecclesiology and polity. Second, the ELCA and the PC(USA) have been experiencing declining membership and attendance for many years, which stands in contrast to the patterns of growth in the BGC. Third, data were available in print and electronic formats.

### **Identifying the Congregations**

Twenty-eight congregations with worship attendance (WATD) greater than 2,000 in the year 2003 were initially identified (appendix C).<sup>51</sup> Membership and worship attendance data were then gathered for each congregation for the years 1990-2003.<sup>52</sup> These data were analyzed for accuracy and trends.

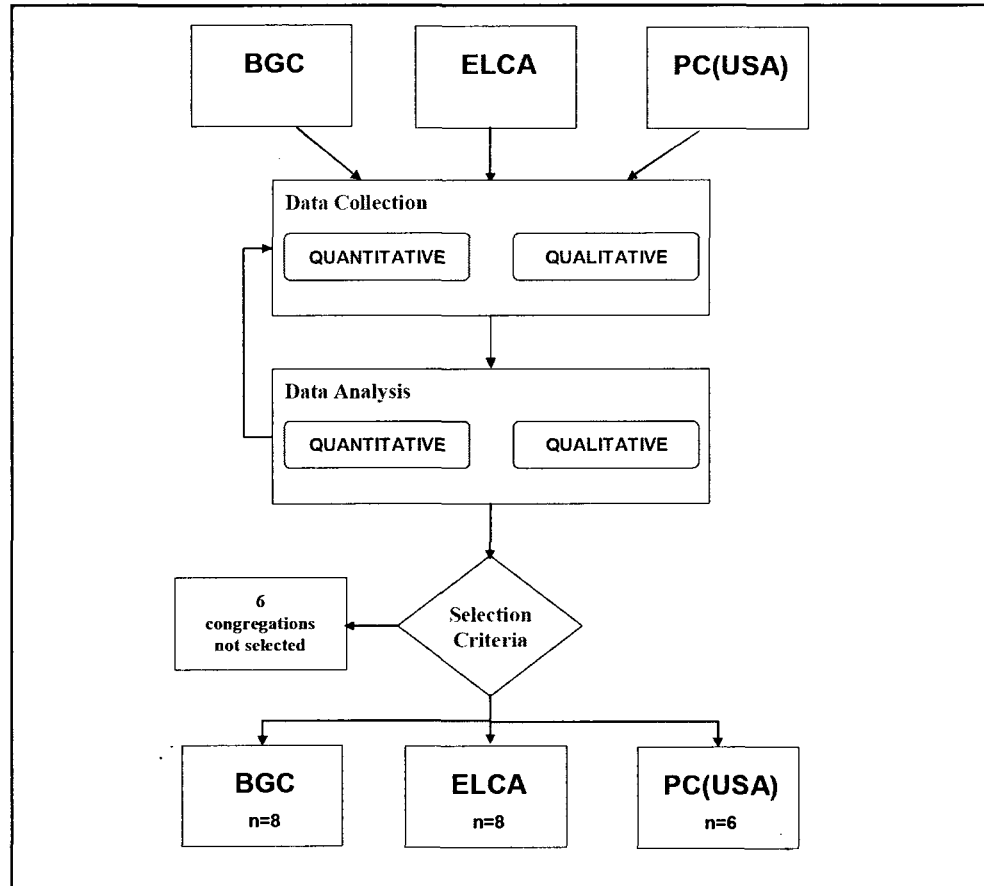
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<sup>49</sup> Zina O’Leary, *The Essential Research Guide* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004), 109-10.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>51</sup> The initial scan was completed in January, 2006. ELCA and PC(USA) data were available online and in yearbooks through 2004. BGC data were available only in the annual yearbooks through 2003. The BGC 2004/05 yearbook was not published until June 2006. All three denominations request data from every congregation annually.

<sup>52</sup> Each denomination in this study began reporting WATD in different years – BGC in 1977, ELCA in 1987, and PC(USA) in 1990.



**Figure 17. Population and Sampling Process**

I observed in my previous research that congregations with WATD less than 2,500 have more in common with large churches than with megachurches.<sup>53</sup> So I was concerned that eleven of the twenty-eight congregations (39%) had WATD less than 2,500. Three congregations reached the 2,000 benchmark for the first time in 2003. Two others had WATD slightly more than 2,100 in 2003. Additional information was gathered on these five congregations, including personal visits to two of them.

Additional analysis of the 1990-2004 data was conducted after the BGC data for 2004 were published. The same eleven congregations (39%) had WATD less than 2,500

<sup>53</sup> Smith, "Megachurches: The Complexities of Leadership Transition".

for 2000-2004 (appendix D). The three congregations with WATD less than 2,000 for 2000-2004 were removed from the list.

Additional research of the two congregations close to 2,100 supported the decision to remove them as well.<sup>54</sup> I personally spoke with the pastor of First Baptist of Glenarden in June 2006. He declined to participate in the study, so this congregation was also removed.

The final sample included twenty-two congregations (Refer to appendices E, F, G, and H). The BGC and ELCA each had eight congregations and the PC(USA) had six congregations in the final sample.

### **Identifying the Pastors**

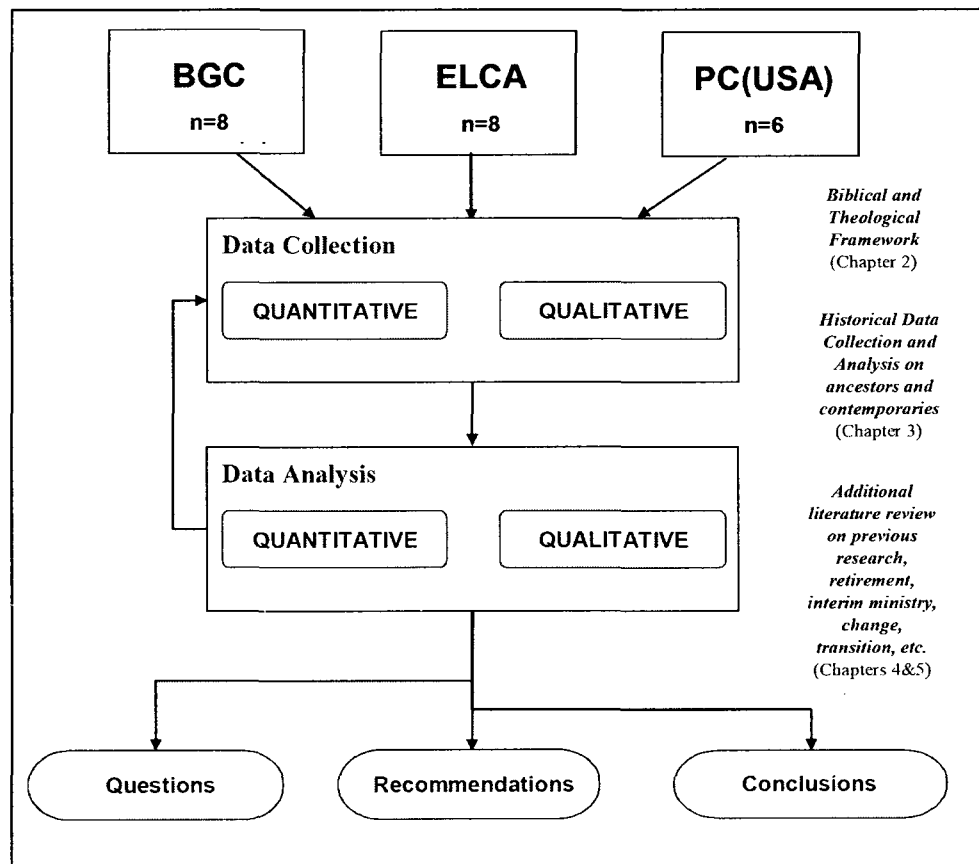
Twenty of the twenty-two congregations had installed pastors when the study began. Two congregations had interim pastors. There were changes in pastoral leadership in two other congregations during the course of the study. The final sample of twenty-two pastors included the current or most recent installed senior pastor as of December 31, 2006. The list in appendix I includes their names, congregation, and employment dates.

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<sup>54</sup> I personally visited one of these congregations. I also spoke with several people very familiar with the other congregation before deciding to remove them from the sample.

## Research Process Design

Guided by the Concatenated Exploration Process in figure 16, I designed the research process so that it could be implemented by one person. The diagram in figure 18 illustrates the research process after the sample was selected (figure 17) and includes the influence of the Biblical and theological foundation, historical data, and additional literature review. Detailed explanations of the QUAN and QUAL data collection and analysis strategies are provided in the following sections.



**Figure 18. Research Process**

## Data Collection Strategies and Procedures

*Data collection methods should be combined so that the combination used by the researcher may provide convergent and divergent evidence about the phenomenon being studied.*<sup>55</sup>

There are six major data collection strategies – questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, tests, observation, and unobtrusive measures (formerly called secondary data).<sup>56</sup>

Traditionally, these data collection strategies were classified as strictly QUAL (those which generate narrative data that are analyzed using thematic analysis techniques) or strictly QUAN (those which generate numeric data that are analyzed statistically.) These classifications are becoming less distinct since these data collection strategies can generate both QUAN and QUAL data which are frequently triangulated or converted from one to the other.<sup>57</sup> Data for this exploratory study were primarily gathered using unobtrusive measures and interviews.

### Unobtrusive Measures

From the beginning, I wanted to learn as much as possible about these pastors and congregations. Since the purpose of this study was to explore this phenomenon, I didn't know what I wanted to know. I needed the freedom to cast a wide net in order to discover what was important and relevant.

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<sup>55</sup> Burke Johnson and Lisa A. Turner, "Data Collection Strategies in Mixed Methods Research," in *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research*, ed. Abbas Tashakkori and Charles Teddlie (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), 299.

<sup>56</sup> Teddlie and Tashakkori, *Foundations of Mixed Methods Research: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches in the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 207.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 204-08. Johnson and Turner, "Data Collection Strategies in Mixed Methods Research," 297-99.



I believed that using questionnaires to collect biographical and congregational data would be restrictive for several reasons. First, I was concerned that in this context the response rate would be low, especially for a questionnaire designed for the senior pastors of megachurches. It was unlikely that these busy pastors would actually see the questionnaire, or have time to complete it, much less be willing to provide such personal information to a complete stranger. Second, I wanted to minimize the potential for the data to be biased by self-reporting by the pastors and congregations. Third, I did not want the pastors or congregations to be aware of my research until the interview stage. Fourth, I wanted to discover how much data and information were publicly available.

Unobtrusive measures are particularly useful in exploratory research such as this study for several reasons. First, data can be gathered without inconveniencing the subjects or be biased by self-reporting techniques. Second, the phenomena under study is not impacted by the researcher. Third, the researcher can avoid manipulation by the subjects. Though there are multiple unobtrusive measures, the primary techniques used to gather data for this study were archival records and observation.<sup>58</sup>

#### Archival Records

Archival records are available in a variety of formats today including written, electronic, and audio. Data and information were gathered for pastors and congregations from many sources including: historical, personal, or public documents; reports; brochures; sermons; photographs or other images; maps; books; dissertations;

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<sup>58</sup> Eugene J. Webb, *Unobtrusive Measures*, Rev. ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000).

newspapers; magazines; journal articles; audio recordings; and web sites.<sup>59</sup> Datasets were generously provided by the research departments of the ELCA (for the years 1987-2006) and PC(USA) (for the years 1983-2005).

Several factors affected the data collection process. First, BGC data were not available electronically so all membership and attendance data were gathered manually from yearbooks.<sup>60</sup> Second, the most current data available for BGC congregations for the initial scan was 2003. The 2004 data became available in July 2006 and were used to determine the final sample. Third, the datasets received from the ELCA and PC(USA) research departments were supplemented by data gathered from yearbooks.<sup>61</sup> Fourth, the

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<sup>59</sup> An invaluable source of biographical information on the ELCA pastors was the *Biographical Directory of Clergy: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*, 2 vols. (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House/Fortress Press, 1988).

<sup>60</sup> Baptist General Conference, *Annual of the (Swedish) Baptist General Conference of America* (Chicago, IL: The Board of Overseers of the Baptist General Conference, 1889-2005).

<sup>61</sup> Sources for the ELCA included: American Lutheran Church, *Yearbook of the American Lutheran Church (1930-1959)* (Columbus, OH: Wartburg, 1930); Sigfrid E. Engstrom, Birger Swenson, and Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church, *Yearbook of the Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church (1860-1962)* (Rock Island, IL: Augustana Book Concern, 1962); Evangelical Lutheran Church, *Lutheran Yearbook of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (1918-1959)* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1918); Evangelical Lutheran Church, United Evangelical Lutheran Church (U.S.), and American Lutheran Church (1961-1987), *Yearbook of the Uniting Churches, 1960: American Lutheran Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church and United Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1959); Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *Yearbook of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (1988-Present)* (Minneapolis, MN: Publishing House of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1988); William Larsen and American Lutheran Church (1961-1987), *Yearbook of the American Lutheran Church (1961-1987)* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Pub. House, 1960); Lutheran Church in America, *Yearbook of the Lutheran Church in America (1962-1987)* (Philadelphia, PA: Board of Publication of the Lutheran Church in America., 1963). Sources for the PC(USA) included: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly, *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) (1983-Present)* (Louisville, KY: Office of the General Assembly, 1983); Presbyterian Church in the U.S. General Assembly, *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (1865-1981)* (Augusta, GA: Presbyterian Church in the U.S. General Assembly, 1865); Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. General Assembly, *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America*, 88 vols. (New York, NY: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1958); United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. General Assembly, *Minutes of The ... General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (1958-1982)* (Philadelphia, PA: Office of the General Assembly, 1958); United Presbyterian Church of North America, *Minutes of The ... General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church of North America* (Pittsburgh, PA: United Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1958).

amount of worship attendance data available varied by denomination. The BGC has reported WATD since 1977, the ELCA since 1986, and the PC(USA) since 1990. Fifth, the data available for all three denominations were based upon the annual reports submitted to the national judicatory by each congregation and published in annual yearbooks.

These data were primarily used to identify the congregations with worship attendance greater than 2,000. Gaps in the data reported by each congregation and differences in reporting practices across the denominations restricted detailed analysis of these data. Data obtained directly from the congregations would be necessary for future research, particularly financial data.

#### Observation

In order to better understand the pastors and congregations, it was necessary to observe them in context. This was accomplished primarily through covert visits to congregations at their current location(s) and previous location(s) when possible.<sup>62</sup>

I visited 16 of the 28 congregations (57%) in the initial sample, and 14 of the 22 congregations (64%) in the final sample, several on more than one occasion.<sup>63</sup> I typically participated in at least one worship service, toured the facilities, and collected as many printed documents as I could. I heard thirteen of the pastors preach. Over the years I observed baptisms, infant dedications, communion, dedication of a new facility, commissioning of a pastor search committee, and the installation of a new pastor.

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<sup>62</sup> I also attended the annual meeting of the Baptist General Conference in June 2006 at Bethel University in Arden Hills, Minnesota.

<sup>63</sup> A list of the congregations I visited is provided in appendix J.

In all cases, I did not identify myself before the worship service. Sometimes I signed the pew pad to see if, and how, the congregation followed up with visitors. In most situations, printed materials about the congregation and its ministries were readily available throughout the facility, though sometimes I had to ask for information at the welcome desk which occasionally involved providing my name and address. In one congregation, the head usher proudly showed me the ledger in which he posted the worship attendance for each service.<sup>64</sup> In another congregation, the greeter was a member and one of the janitors on staff. Unprompted, he gave me a complete behind-the-scenes tour of the facility including the history room and pastor's office. On three occasions, I approached the pastor after the worship service, introduced myself, and explained my research. All three of those pastors later agreed to be interviewed.

During each visit, I took detailed field notes and photographed the exterior of the facility as weather permitted. I usually drove around the neighborhood; sometimes I was able to walk, such as in downtown Chicago. When possible, I located and photographed previous locations. Google maps and satellite images were also used to locate the congregations and study their context especially for those I was unable to visit in person.

### **Interviews**

The initial strategy was to interview two pastors in each denomination with different leadership transition experiences. Three of the six requests for interviews were made in person and all six received letters via email. All of the pastors were willing to participate but scheduling the interviews was challenging. When it became apparent that

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<sup>64</sup> His numbers were lower than those reported to the denomination.

all three denominations would not be equally represented, the primary selection criterion was changed to pastoral transition pattern. Emails were sent to six additional pastors whose leadership transition experience was different from the pastors already contacted.

Ultimately, twelve of the twenty-two pastors received a written request to be interviewed. Ten of the twelve pastors responded to the request. One pastor was unable to participate due to scheduling constraints. Rev. Leith Anderson of Wooddale Church also had scheduling constraints so he graciously arranged for Rev. Fred McCormick to meet with me on his behalf.

**Table 5. Pastors Interviewed**

Pastor's Name				Congregation Name	City	ST
Rev. Larry	H.	Adams		Golden Hills Community Church	Brentwood	CA
Dr. John	M.	Buchanan		Fourth Presbyterian Church	Chicago	IL
Rev. Roger	C.	Eigenfeld		St. Andrew's Lutheran Church	Mahtomedi	MN
Dr. Matthew	G.	Hannan		New Heights Church	Vancouver	WA
Dr. Ronald	W.	Kincaid		Sunset Presbyterian Church	Portland	OR
Rev. Fred		McCormick		Wooddale Church	Eden Prairie	MN
Dr. Earl	F.	Palmer		University Presbyterian Church	Seattle	WA
Dr. Victor	D.	Pentz		Peachtree Presbyterian Church	Atlanta	GA
Dr. James	M.	Singleton	Jr.	First Presbyterian Church	Colorado Springs	CO

The interview protocol (appendix L) was designed to gather additional personal information about each pastor, and to determine how, if at all, these pastors and congregations were addressing pastoral change and transition.<sup>65</sup> Nine semi-structured interviews were conducted in person or via telephone with the pastors listed in table 5. The interviews ranged from thirty-five to sixty-eight minutes.

<sup>65</sup> Rev. Ken Mulder of Sunset Presbyterian Church in Portland, Oregon graciously helped frame the questions and provided his perspective as a pastor in a megachurch.

Field notes were taken during all of the interviews. Seven of the conversations were digitally recorded with the pastor's permission and later transcribed. All of the information is considered confidential. The quotes from the interviews which appear in Chapter 6 were edited for clarity and to protect the identity of the pastor as appropriate.

### Data Analysis Strategies

In keeping with the purposes of this study, the data analysis strategies focused on gaining a better understanding of these pastors, congregations, and pastoral transition, and developing a methodology that would facilitate future research. The data analysis process was intentionally designed to be iterative.

A variety of methods, tools, and techniques were developed and implemented along the way because it was impossible to anticipate them in advance. Typically, data analysis occurred as data were collected, often generating questions which required additional data collection, and additional analysis.

### Data Preparation

Strategies were developed for organizing, storing, integrating, retrieving, and analyzing all of the data and information, including:

- Pastors and congregations had four folders: a paper folder for printed documents; an electronic folder for electronic documents; an electronic folder for photographs; and a folder in my Internet browser containing bookmarks.
- Each denomination had a paper folder for printed documents; an electronic folder for electronic documents and recordings; and a folder containing bookmarks.
- Bibliographic data for published documents such as books, reports, dissertations, and articles were stored using EndNote software.
- The seven recorded interviews were transcribed into Microsoft WORD files.
- Membership and worship attendance data were entered into worksheets using Microsoft EXCEL.

Most of the data and information were integrated into a relational database.<sup>66</sup> The objective of my relational database design was to create a structure that was easily accessible, logical, robust, and flexible in order to ensure data accuracy, minimize the duplication of data, and minimize the data entry time. Microsoft ACCESS allowed for the integration of data throughout the numerous tables in the database in order to perform detailed analysis through multiple methods such as queries, reports, and graphs; import and export data between other programs such as EXCEL and SPSS; and convert data from QUAN to QUAL and vice versa through a variety of techniques.<sup>67</sup> The original database design provided a flexible foundation that was continually modified as the complexity of the database increased. The table structure and field permissions allowed for QUAN and QUAL data to be entered into the same tables within the database.

Data were continually verified and validated beginning at the data entry point through visual inspection, queries, and reports. Errors were corrected as necessary. Duplicate records were deleted. The interview transcripts were reviewed in conjunction with the field notes in order to identify transcription issues such as misspelling, unfamiliarity with specific terms, or inability to understand the recording. Transcripts were edited for clarity and to protect the identity of the pastor as appropriate.

QUAN and QUAL data were re-coded and grouped so that they could be analyzed together. For example, some of the QUAL data were converted into numerical

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<sup>66</sup> Dr. Edgar F. Codd invented the relational database while working at IBM in the late 1960s. He based his design upon the mathematical foundations of set theory and first-order predicate logic. The name is derived from the term *relation* which is part of set theory, not because tables within a relational database can be related to one another. Michael J. Hernandez, *Database Design for Mere Mortals: A Hands-on Guide to Relational Database Design*, 2d ed. (Boston, MA: Addison-Wesley, 2003), 12-13.

<sup>67</sup> For example, though region appears in this table as a word, it also has a numeric value within the database which was used when exporting data to SPSS.

codes such as father's occupation, state, region, and pastoral transition status; QUAN data were converted into text such as the pastoral relationship indicator and reasons for pastoral change. A few of the variables were transformed into groups such as age, degrees, and states into regions.

QUAN and QUAL data from multiple sources were consolidated into a data set in ACCESS in order to create tables, reports, and queries for analysis. For example, summary reports which included QUAN and QUAL data were created in ACCESS for the 22 pastors and all of the congregations they served since ordination.<sup>68</sup> Specific data sets were created and exported to SPSS for analysis with descriptive statistical methods including case summaries, frequencies, means, and cross-tabulations. Summary tables, charts, and graphs were created in EXCEL. Diagrams were created in PowerPoint to illustrate the relationships between people, organizations, and events. Transcripts were edited and reformatted multiple times for processing by ATLAS*t*i and Crawdad.

### **Data Analysis**

As indicated above, ACCESS provided the flexibility for consolidating QUAN and QUAL data into queries, reports, and tables for detailed analysis. The summary reports for pastors and congregations (see appendices T and U) facilitated the iterative analysis for the research questions. I sorted the paper copies in numerous ways in order to better understand the pastors and congregations individually and collectively. I also created numerous queries in ACCESS for analysis of the merged QUAN and QUAL data. Many of these queries were exported to SPSS where they were analyzed with descriptive

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<sup>68</sup> Examples of these two reports are included in appendices T and U.



statistics. Given the exploratory nature of this study and the size of the population, inferential statistics were not conducted but will be necessary in future research.

The data were analyzed for similarities as well as differences by various factors including denomination, congregation age, region, and father's occupation in order to answer the research questions. One of the major insights was the discovery of the typology which I named *pastoral transition status* – Already, Now, and Not Yet. This new perspective prompted additional analysis of pastoral and congregational variables, much of which appears in Chapter 6.

I manually analyzed each transcript deductively using the major themes developed a priori which framed the questions – personal and professional information, faith journey, current position, and succession planning and leadership transition. I circled key words or phrases, and made comments on the transcripts and field notes. I also listened to each interview several additional times to confirm my impressions of tone and inflection. After several interviews, I began to compare them to each other in order to discern similarities and differences. I color coded each transcript in WORD, consolidated the answers to each question together, and compared the responses.

### **Inference Quality and Transferability**

The scope of this study was limited to the congregations in the BGC, ELCA, and PC(USA) with an average worship attendance in excess of 2,200 for five years (2000-2004) as reported by the individual congregations to the national governing bodies of these denominations. The study focused primarily on the senior pastor, not the entire pastoral staff.

The results and conclusions of this study primarily apply to these pastors and megachurches in the BGC, ELCA, and the PC(USA). The methodology, results, and conclusions of this study may be transferable to other pastors serving megachurches in the United States, especially those in traditional denominations.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The purpose of this study was accurately and adequately represented to all participants. The national offices of BGC, ELCA, and PC(USA) were aware of this study. All data received directly from the ELCA and PC(USA) were released with approval by the appropriate parties at the national headquarters. Appropriate precautions were taken to protect the persons, congregations, documents, and data involved in this study. All of these data were considered confidential and were treated as such by all persons involved in this research including myself, the data base programmer, and transcriptionist. Data were continually monitored during the research process in order to assure validity and accuracy. Inclusive language was used as appropriate.

Seven interviews were digitally recorded with the pastor's approval. These conversations were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist. The quotes from the interviews which appear in Chapter 6 have been edited for clarity and to protect the identity of the pastor as appropriate.

I claim and retain intellectual property rights to all data and information collected during this study. I will not use these data and information for any purposes outside of this study, future research, and related publications. I do not have any Social Security numbers, bank account numbers, salaries, or any other highly sensitive data for any persons in the study.

### Summary

The strategies and methodologies used to explore the little-known phenomena of pastoral change and transition in megachurches were described in this chapter. First, a review of related research literature revealed that considerable research on clergy and congregations has been conducted over the years, but most of it has focused on what pastors and congregations do, and how they do it, not who they are or where they came from. As Towns, Vaughan, and Schaller documented the emergence of the megachurch, they provided initial glimpses into the characteristics and contributions of the pastors who served them.

Second, the research methodology was described, including the research purposes and questions, research process, population and sampling procedures, data collection strategies, and data analysis strategies. Guided by the Concatenated Exploration Process (figure 16), I designed the research process illustrated in figure 18. During the implementation, I discovered that my experience with narrative analysis was adequate for this exploratory study, but more expertise will be needed for future research. Recommendations are made in Chapter 7. The results from this research are presented in Chapter 6.

## CHAPTER 6

### RESULTS

*If it is true that this study reviews an enthusiasm  
rather than a movement,  
nevertheless it should be remembered that  
it is out of such enthusiasms that movements grow.<sup>1</sup>*

In this chapter, the results for the two research questions are presented and summarized. The presentation of the results begins with detailed profiles of the pastors and congregations, followed by an analysis of how they have addressed pastoral change and transition.

#### **Characteristics of Pastors and Congregations (Research Question #1)**

*Character, a wise person once said, is what we do when no one is looking.  
It is not the same as reputation – what other people think of us.  
It is not the same as success or achievement.  
Character is not what we have done, but who we are.<sup>2</sup>*

#### *Research Question #1*

*What are the characteristics of these pastors and the congregations that they serve?*

Many of the characteristics and themes identified in previous chapters are encountered again in this chapter. This section begins with a personal and professional profile of the pastors, followed by a description of these complex congregations.

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<sup>1</sup> Brunner, *The Larger Parish: A Movement or an Enthusiasm?*, viii.

<sup>2</sup> Bill Hybels and LaVonne Neff, *Who You Are When No One's Looking: Choosing Consistency, Resisting Compromise* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 7-8.

## Pastor Profile

*Some pastors seem to have an “extra power,”  
so that the masses are moved by their sermons;  
their requests are unquestionably obeyed by followers,  
people seem to empty their pocketbooks into the offering plate,  
and sinners almost run down the aisle at their invitation.*

*These few unique pastors go forth and preach the gospel, as most pastors,  
yet their results are startling. They turn communities upside-down,  
and some even capture whole cities for God. They revive dead churches,  
restore broken homes, and see alcoholics released from bondage under their ministry.  
Their results are much greater than the average pastor.<sup>3</sup>*

The pastors in this study bear a remarkable resemblance to the people discussed in Chapter 3.<sup>4</sup> Their personal characteristics are presented here first, followed by their professional accomplishments.

### Personal Profile

Basic demographic information describing these pastors is presented in table 6. All of the pastors are male.<sup>5</sup> One of the pastors is African American. Their mean age is 57 years and median age is 58 years. Four pastors are 65 years or older.

The PC(USA) pastors are older on average by five years. Seven of the ELCA pastors (88%) were 58 years or older in 2006. Only one pastor (Housholder in ELCA) is less than 49 years old.

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<sup>3</sup> Towns, *America's Fastest Growing Churches: Why 10 Sunday Schools Are Growing Fast*, 193.

<sup>4</sup> Personal and professional data were collected and analyzed for the twenty-two pastors listed in appendix I, plus many of their predecessors, if applicable.

<sup>5</sup> The ELCA and PC(USA) ordain women.

**Table 6. Demographic Information for Pastors**

	TOTAL		BGC		ELCA		PC(USA)	
<b>Gender: Male</b>	22	100%	8		8		6	
<b>Race: African American</b>	1	5%	1		0		0	
<b>Age</b>								
Mean Year of Birth	1949		1952		1947		1947	
Mean Age	57.3		54.5		58.6		59.3	
Oldest	75		62		69		75	
Youngest	42		49		42		49	
Range	33		13		27		26	
<b>Groups by Age</b>								
40-49	5	22.7%	3	37.5%	1	12.5%	1	16.7%
50-59	11	50.0%	3	37.5%	5	62.5%	3	50.0%
60-69	5	22.7%	2	25.0%	2	25.0%	1	16.7%
70-79	1	4.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	16.7%
<b>Groups by Year</b>								
<=1945	5	22.7%	1	4.5	2	9.1	2	9.1
1946-1954 Early Boomers	11	50.0%	4	18.2	5	22.7	2	9.1
1955-1964 Late Boomers	6	27.3%	3	13.6	1	4.5	2	9.1

The majority of the pastors are Baby Boomers. Eleven are Early Boomers (born between 1946 and 1954) and six are Late Boomers (born between 1955 and 1964).<sup>6</sup>

Eight were born between 1946 and 1948. Five were born between 1956 and 1957.

#### Family of Origin

Most of the pastors grew up in two-parent families, typically with two siblings. As shown in table 7, five pastors were first-born and eight were second-born. The most common pattern was to be the second child of two or three children in the family. At least nine of all of the fathers (41%) were pastors, including half of the ELCA pastors. Other occupations included airplane pilot, farmer, firefighter, lumberman, machinist, tool and die maker, and railroad engineer.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Alter, "Twilight of the Baby Boom," *Newsweek*, February 11, 2008, 33.

**Table 7. Family of Origin**

	TOTAL		BGC		ELCA		PC(USA)	
<b>Nbr of Siblings</b>	2.1		2.6		2.0		1.8	
<b>Birth Order</b>								
1	5	22.7%	1		2		2	
2	8	36.4%	2		3		3	
3	3	13.6%	1		1		1	
Missing	5	22.7%	3		2			
<b>Father's Occupation</b>								
Pastor	9	40.9%	3	37.5%	4	50.0%	2	33.3%
Production, Transportation	5	22.7%	1		2		2	
Management, Professional	2	9.1%			2			
Service	1	4.5%					1	
Sales	1	4.5%	1					
Forestry	1	4.5%					1	
Missing	3	13.6%	3					

### *The Aaron Factor*

The influence of the pastoral profession on these pastors and their families is deeply embedded and deserves additional research.<sup>7</sup> At least ten of the pastors (45%), not just the pastor's kids (PKs), have other ordained family members including grandfathers, uncles, fathers-in-law, brothers, brothers-in-law, and nephews. Five of the nine PKs (55%) have brothers who are also ordained. Two pastors are married to PKs and two pastors are married to ordained pastors. Two pastors have daughters who are ordained pastors. At least six pastors (27%) have family members on staff at the congregation they currently serve.

### Birth Location

The majority of the pastors were born in the Midwest or the West. As reported in table 8, 41% of the pastors were born in small cities or rural communities and 36% were

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<sup>7</sup> Additional research is needed to study the influence of ordained relatives (particularly maternal) and others serving religious organizations in other capacities. Special attention should be given to mothers, sisters, wives, and daughters.

born in or near large cities. One pastor spoke of the lasting impact of his hometown on his identity.

I would like to think I am who essentially I was when I grew up in (location omitted). I've learned bigger words, learned to wear a white shirt and tie, but I'm still the same person I've always been.

**Table 8. Birth Location**

	TOTAL		BGC	ELCA	PC(USA)
<b>Birth Region</b>					
Midwest	10	45.5%	2	6	2
West	6	27.3%	2	2	2
Northeast	3	13.6%	1		1
South	2	9.1%	2		1
Missing	1	4.5%	1		
<b>Birth State</b>					
Minnesota	4	18.2%		4	
California	3	13.6%	1		2
Other (14 different states)	14	63.6%	6	4	4
Missing	1	4.5%	1		
<b>Birth City Type</b>					
Open country or farm	4	18.2%	1	2	1
Small City or Town (<50,000)	5	22.7%	2	2	1
Medium Sized City (50,000-200,000)	4	18.2%	2		2
Suburb near Large City	1	4.5%	1		
In a Large City	7	31.8%	1	4	2
Missing	1	4.5%	1		

The ELCA pastors were more geographically concentrated than the other two groups by region, state, and city type due in part to the occupation of their fathers. Four of the ELCA pastors (50%) born in the Midwest or the West had fathers who were pastors, including 3 of the 4 born in Minnesota.

#### Spouses and Children

All of the pastors are married and have children. Many have grandchildren. Table 9 indicates that they have been married for an average of 36 years. They typically married during or just after college at age 23 and have 3 children. One family has nine children.



**Table 9. Marital Status and Children**

	TOTAL	BGC	ELCA	PC(USA)
Mean Years Married (n=20)	35.7	32.7	38.7	35.7
20-29 years	5   25.0%	3	0	2
30-39 years	10   50.0%	3	5	2
40-49 years	5   25.0%	1	2	2
Mean Year of Marriage (n=20)	1970	1973	1967	1970
Mean Age at Marriage (n=20)	22.8	22.6	22.3	23.7
Mean Number of Children (n=21)	3.2	3.1	2.4	4.2

During the interviews, the pastors were asked how their ministry affected them and their families. They tried to honestly assess how well they had managed their own lives in addition to their responsibilities at home and at the church. One pastor commented, “I think I do a fair job of tending to personal and familial needs. I do have a life that I love apart from being in the pulpit of this church or behind that desk.” This pastor seemed concerned that his perspective would appear to be too rosy so he suggested that all of the spouses be interviewed as well. He was certain that his wife would be very honest about the challenges and joys that they had experienced. He said, “My wife is not defined by this and has never been. She’s always been a faithful church person, loves God, loves the church, is generous and gracious. She doesn’t need me and doesn’t need my job . . . to make her feel good about herself.”

Several of the spouses have their own careers, including two who are ordained ministers. Others are involved in the congregation or other related ministries. One pastor remarked, “My wife is really an outstanding person in her own right. I’ve been very supportive of her career. She’s a great supporter of the church and loves this church.” Another pastor spoke about how his wife’s relationship with Jesus impacted his life, his faith, and their children:

My wife has a real sincere love for Jesus that's been demonstrated day in and day out. That has been a real blessing because that's what I wanted my life to be as well. We have sought, by modeling and example, to instill and demonstrate that kind of commitment before our children. The kids are all grown now . . . All of them are walking with Jesus vibrantly, all of them are in the word of God every day, all of them have a prayer life. They seem to walk with great integrity.

### Personal Relationships

The pastors indicated that leading a rapidly growing congregation is personally challenging and they seek support from a variety of sources. One pastor shared advice that had been given to him, “As the responsibility gets greater, the need to take more time off becomes more important.” Another pastor concurred saying, “You've got to have other things that are giving you rewards. I love teaching. I love relating to people in small settings. I love writing. I have grandchildren. I have a lot of things that are very big in my life right now too.”

Some of the pastors intentionally created a personal support network that is separate from their professional network. One pastor commented, “My life has been positively influenced in many ways by my beloved parents, my wonderful wife, my children, and other family members and friends. I am thankful for those supportive relationships.” Another pastor spoke of his best friend since the eighth grade whom he calls at least once per week.

Another pastor stressed the importance of having friends who are not afraid to hold him accountable for his personal and professional behavior. He described the intensity of the bond that his friends share, “We have a huge devotion to one another and we aren't afraid to say anything to each other.”

## Spiritual Disciplines

Personal relationships with God provide continual support to these pastors, though they have different approaches. One pastor admitted that he used to pray less when he got busy but his prayer life has become more important in recent years.

Another pastor indicated that he used to start each day by reading the Psalms and praying. Over the years, his devotional life has become more closely tied to scripture study in preparation for his weekly sermon. He said that “my spirit is challenged and deepened and stirred up and settled down in the weekly encounter with the word.” For another pastor, each day must begin with prayer.

Every morning, the first thing I do when I get up is take two steps and grab my Bible. I go in the other room alone, and before I hear any other voice in the day, I spend a concerted amount of time just meeting Jesus in the pages of the book. That's not for preaching, it's not for teaching, it's not for Bible study, it's just spend time listening to the voice of God, to let him tell me things, show me things, reveal things to me.

## Professional History

The previous section provided a biographical profile of the twenty-two pastors in this cohort. Their professional personae are described in this section.

### Education - Degrees

Most of the pastors followed a typical education pattern – both in sequence and timing. As reported in table 10, all of the pastors have undergraduate degrees from a college or university. Most went straight from high school to college and graduated in four years when they were 23 years old. Two of the BGC pastors were closer to 30 years old when they graduated from college.

All of the pastors received a masters degree from a seminary. One pastor has an M.A. and an M.Div. Two pastors did not go directly from college to seminary. Twenty of the pastors (91%) earned a Masters of Divinity degree. They were 26 years old when they graduated. The other two earned master degrees in theology (M.Th. and M.S.M.).<sup>8</sup>

**Table 10. Education History**

	TOTAL	BGC	ELCA	PC(USA)
<b>Undergraduate (AB, BA, BS) (n=22)</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>8 33.3%</b>	<b>8 38.1%</b>	<b>6 28.6%</b>
Mean Age (n=21)	22.8	24.1	22.3	21.8
Mean Graduation Year (n=21)	1971	1975	1969	1969
<b>Masters</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>
(MA, ThM, MSM)	3	2	1	0
(BD, MDIV)	20	6	8	6
Mean Age (n=19)	26.1	25.7	26.8	25.6
Mean Graduation Year (n=19)	1974	1976	1974	1970
<b>Doctoral</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>
DMIN (n=22)	5	2	1	2
Mean Age	40.0	38.0	42.0	41.0
Mean Graduation Year	1988	1986	1990	1990
PhD, ThD (n=22)	5	3	0	2
Mean Age	32.4	31.0	0	34.5
Mean Graduation Year	1987	1984	0	1991
<b>Honorary Doctorate</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Moody Bible Institute</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Fourteen of the pastors use the official title of “Dr.” Ten of these pastors earned doctoral degrees – five D.Min. and five Ph.D. or Th.D. The other four pastors received at least one honorary doctorate. Five of the eight BGC pastors earned doctoral degrees.<sup>9</sup> Only one of the ELCA pastors earned a doctorate (D.Min.).

The D.Min. degrees were completed after an average of 16 years of experience in congregations. The pastors were 40 years old on average when they received their D.Min. degrees. The Ph.D. and Th.D. degrees were completed at a younger average age. Two

<sup>8</sup> In this case, M.S.M. is Masters of Sacred Ministry.

<sup>9</sup> John Ortberg was ordained in the BGC, served several BGC congregations, and served at Willow Creek. He is now serving Menlo Park Presbyterian Church in Menlo Park, California. Since Menlo Park is a PC(USA) congregation, Ortberg’s data will appear in the PC(USA) column.

pastors served at least one call before attending graduate school while the others went directly from seminary. A list of their dissertation titles is included in appendix M.

### Schools Attended

A list of the undergraduate colleges and universities attended is presented in table 11. Nine of these schools (47%) are located in the Midwest and seven (37%) in the West. California and Minnesota have four schools each. Fourteen schools have religious affiliations, five of which are ELCA. Six of the eight ELCA pastors attended ELCA colleges.

**Table 11. Colleges and Universities Attended**

College/University Name	Freq	%	Current Denom	Prev Denom	City	State	Region Code
Concordia College	2	9.1%	ELCA	ALC	Moorhead	MN	MW
University of Minnesota	2	9.1%			Minneapolis	MN	MW
Wheaton College	2	9.1%	NON		Wheaton	IL	MW
Augustana College (SF)	1	4.5%	NLCA	ALC	Sioux Falls	SD	MW
Bethel College/University	1	4.5%	BGC	BGC	St. Paul	MN	MW
Biola University	1	4.5%	NON		LaMirada	CA	W
Bradley University	1	4.5%			Peoria	IL	MW
Carthage College	1	4.5%	ELCA		Kenosha	WI	MW
Claremont McKenna College	1	4.5%	NON		Claremont	CA	W
Dallas Bible College	1	4.5%	NON		Dallas	TX	S
Franklin and Marshall College	1	4.5%	NON		Lancaster	PA	NE
Gustavus Adolphus College	1	4.5%	ELCA	LCA	St. Peter	MN	MW
Iowa State University	1	4.5%			Ames	IA	MW
Lewis and Clark College	1	4.5%			Portland	OR	W
Multnomah Bible College	1	4.5%	NON		Portland	OR	W
Pacific Lutheran University	1	4.5%	ELCA	ALC	Tacoma	WA	W
Pomona College	1	4.5%	NON		Claremont	CA	W
Rhodes College	1	4.5%	PC(USA)		Memphis	TN	S
University of California Berkeley	1	4.5%			Berkeley	CA	W

A list of the sixteen seminaries attended is presented in table 12.<sup>10</sup> Eight of these schools (50%) were located in the Midwest and four in the West. Four seminaries were

<sup>10</sup> Several of these seminaries no longer exist. Luther Theological Seminary, Northwestern Lutheran Theological Seminary, and Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary are now known as Luther

located in Minnesota. Nine of the seminaries have denominational affiliations, five of which were Lutheran. All of the ELCA pastors graduated from a Lutheran seminary. Three of the seminaries were formerly ALC and two were LCA. Six of the BGC pastors attended nondenominational seminaries.

**Table 12. Seminaries Attended**

Seminary Name	Freq	%	Current Denom	Previous Denom	City	State	Region Code
Luther Theological Seminary	3	13.6%	ELCA	TALC	St. Paul	MN	MW
Fuller Theological Seminary	2	9.1%	NON		Pasadena	CA	W
Northwestern Lutheran Theological Seminary	2	9.1%	ELCA	LCA	St. Paul	MN	MW
Princeton Theological Seminary	2	9.1%	PC(USA)	UPCUSA	Princeton	NJ	NE
Talbot School of Theology	2	9.1%	NON		LaMirada	CA	W
Bethel Seminary	1	4.5%	BGC		St. Paul	MN	MW
Dallas Theological Seminary	1	4.5%	NON		Dallas	TX	S
Denver Seminary	1	4.5%	NON	CBAmerica	Littleton	CO	W
Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary	1	4.5%	ELCA	TALC_LCA	St. Paul	MN	MW
Lutheran School of Theology at Rock Island	1	4.5%	AUG		Rock Island	IL	MW
Multnomah Biblical Seminary	1	4.5%	NON		Portland	OR	W
Trinity Evangelical Divinity School	1	4.5%	Efree		Deerfield	IL	MW
Union Seminary	1	4.5%	PC(USA)	PCUS	Richmond	VA	S
University of Chicago Divinity School	1	4.5%	NON		Chicago	IL	MW
Wartburg Seminary	1	4.5%	ELCA	TALC	Dubuque	IA	MW
Yale Divinity School	1	4.5%	NON		New Haven	CT	NE

A list of the seven graduate schools attended is presented in table 13. Five of the ten pastors (50%) who earned doctoral degrees attended Fuller Theological Seminary. Three of the schools were located in the Northeast and three in the West. Only two of the schools have denominational affiliations.

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Seminary. The Lutheran Theological Seminary at Rock Island is now part of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

**Table 13. Graduate Schools Attended**

Graduate School Name	Freq	%	Current Denom	Prev Denom	City	State	Region Code
Fuller Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry Program	3	30%	NON		Pasadena	CA	W
Fuller Theological Seminary School of Psychology	2	20%	NON		Pasadena	CA	W
Boston University School of Theology	1	10%	UMC		Boston	MA	NE
Penn State University	1	10%	Public		University Park	PA	NE
Princeton Theological Seminary	1	10%	PC(USA)	UPCUSA	Princeton	NJ	NE
Talbot School of Theology	1	10%	NON		LaMirada	CA	W
University of Munich	1	10%	NON		Munich		NA

### Ordination

Table 14 presents the ordination data for nineteen of the pastors.<sup>11</sup> Fifteen of the pastors (68%) were ordained within one year after graduation from seminary. The mean age at ordination is slightly higher for the BGC and PC(USA) because three pastors were ordained three to six years after graduation from seminary.

**Table 14. Ordination**

	TOTAL	BGC	ELCA	PC(USA)
<b>Ordination</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>
Mean Age at Ordination (n=19)	27.4	28.6	26.9	27.2
Mean Year Ordained (n=19)	1975	1979	1974	1971
Mean Years Ordained (n=19)	31.3	28.6	31.8	32.5
<b>Ordaining Denomination (n=19)</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>
TALC	4	18.2%	4	
LCA	3	13.6%	3	
UPCUSA	3	13.6%		3
CBA	3	13.6%	3	
BGC	3	13.6%	2	1
ELCA	1	4.5%	1	
PC(USA)	1	4.5%		1
PCUSA	1	4.5%		1
Missing	3	13.6%	3	

The table also illustrates the influence of the ordaining denomination. Only four pastors were actually ordained by the current configuration of the denomination in which they now serve. Three of the BGC pastors were ordained by the CBA. Seven of the

<sup>11</sup> All of the pastors were licensed or ordained but the dates and locations could not be verified for three of the pastors.

ELCA pastors were ordained by TALC or LCA, which merged in 1988. The majority of the PC(USA) pastors were ordained in the northern branches of the denomination. One pastor was under care in the PCUS but was one of the first to be ordained in the newly formed PC(USA) in 1983.

### Military History

Twelve of the pastors were eligible for the Vietnam War draft lotteries held between 1969 and 1972.<sup>12</sup> There is limited evidence of military experience among these pastors. One pastor did participate in the Reserve Officer's Training Corps (ROTC).

### Founders and Growers

Thirteen of the current pastors (59%) were leading these congregations when they became megachurches (WATD exceeded 2,000) including four founders – Adams, Bohline, Boyd, and Housholder. Table 15 indicates that nine of the current pastors (41%) are growers, including five in the BGC. They are several years older than the founders on average and have slightly more tenure on average.

At least 15 of the 22 pastors in this study (68%) have founded a congregation and/or another organization such as ministries, schools, and networks. Seven pastors (32%) have founded a congregation, five of whom served other congregations before becoming founders.<sup>13</sup> Two ELCA pastors (Eigenfeld and Youngdahl) started congregations as their first call, then served other congregations. Two pastors (Kallestad

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<sup>12</sup> For more information on the Vietnam War lotteries, see <http://www.sss.gov/lotter1.htm> (accessed February 28, 2008).

<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that John Ortberg, raised and ordained in the BGC, is currently serving Menlo Park Presbyterian Church. Though the congregation he founded was in the BGC, it is counted in the PC(USA) column.



and Piper) became growers during their first call. Five of the growers previously served as solo pastors and one as an executive pastor.

**Table 15. Founders and Growers**

	TOTAL	BGC	ELCA	PC(USA)
<b>Founders</b>				
<b>Congregations Founded</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>
Current Congregation	4	2	2	0
Mean Age 2006	50.8	51.5	50.0	0
Mean Age Begin Call	32.8	33.5	32.0	0
Mean Tenure	19.0	18.0	20.0	0
Previous Congregation	3	0	2	1
Mean Age Begin Call	32.8	0	28.0	34.0
Mean Tenure	2.3	0	2.0	3.0
<b>Growers</b>				
Current Congregation	9	5	2	2
Mean Age 2006	59.1	56.8	62.0	62.0
Mean Age Begin Call	35.2	35.4	31.0	39.0
Mean Tenure	23.8	21.4	30.5	23.0

### Employment History

These pastors have accepted 79 calls in 67 different congregations, as reported in table 16. The majority of the calls (94%) were to installed positions. On average, these pastors have served four congregations during their careers.<sup>14</sup>

Twenty of the pastors (without Kallestad and Piper)<sup>15</sup> served approximately 3 congregations before accepting the current call. They served each of these congregations for an average of 5.5 years, though the PC(USA) pastors served almost two years longer on average per call. Greg Boyd served as an interim pastor five times before founding Woodland Hills Church in 1992.

<sup>14</sup> The mean number of calls per pastor are similar across denominations when adjusted for Walt Kallestad and John Piper. Walt Kallestad (ELCA pastor at Community Church of Joy, Glendale, AZ since 1978) and John Piper (BGC pastor at Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, MN since 1980) have served only one congregation for more than 28 years each. Given the small size of this population, these data points impact the mean number of calls per pastor and first call tenure. Therefore, these variables are reported twice in table 16.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

**Table 16. Employment History**

	TOTAL	BGC	ELCA	PC(USA)
<b>Congregations Served</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Calls</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>24</b>
Installed	74	22	28	24
Interim	5	5	0	0
Mean Number of Calls per Pastor	3.6	3.4	3.5	4.0
without Kallestad and Piper	4.0	3.9	4.0	4.0
<b>Current Call</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>
Mean Tenure in Years	17.0	18.0	19.8	11.9
Mean Current Age	57.3	54.5	58.6	59.3
<b>Previous Calls</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>
Mean Tenure in Years (n=20)	5.5	4.3	4.9	7.2
Mean Number of Calls per Pastor	2.9	2.7	2.9	3.0

### *Current Call*

These pastors have served the current congregation on average for 17 years, as indicated in table 16. During the interviews, the pastors were asked why they accepted the call to the current congregation. Their responses echoed the reluctance, resistance, and faithfulness of the pastors in Chapter Five.

- It's the closest I have ever heard God speak in an audible voice. I didn't hear it audibly, but I felt like it could have been, and from that experience I knew that God was asking me to come here, and so I went the next day to the people and I said, "You know, I don't understand this, I don't want to come, I don't feel called to come, but I feel God is asking me, and I can't tell Him no, so if you want us, we'll come."
- I had not applied. In fact, when they first contacted me, I said "No, I think I'll just stay (here.)" Finally the (judicatory) called me and said "You know, they have you down as saying no, and yet you're one of their top three candidates, and we don't even have (any paperwork) on you." Then I realized they were serious, so I filled out (the paperwork). I thought they were just being polite at first. I knew a lot of people (here). . . . They won me over completely because of the vision of the church. They wanted a church to be biblical and Christ centered.
- I was very happy as the pastor of (church) and my family was happy. For months the committee was coming to my doorstep and I just kept giving them the names of the other people they should be talking to instead of me. I didn't want to take the call. They eventually wore down my defenses. By the end, it

just was a call from God that I needed to come. It turned out to be the greatest thing that ever happened to me and my ministry.

### *First Call*

As reported in table 17, fifteen of the pastors accepted their first call within one year of seminary graduation at the age of 27. The BGC pastors were older because three of them went to graduate school and two others started later. Three other BGC pastors were serving congregations before graduation. The impact of Kallestad and Piper is also reflected in table 17.<sup>16</sup> Two of the BGC pastors served an average of 14 years in their first calls. Thirty-two percent of the pastors accepted their first call between 1974 and 1976.

**Table 17. First Call**

	TOTAL		BGC		ELCA		PC(USA)	
<b>First Call</b>								
Mean Start Year (n=21)	1976		1981		1974		1972	
Mean Age (n=21)	27.0		28.6		26.9		25.4	
Mean Tenure in Years (n=21)	6.8		9.9		6.1		4.8	
without Kallestad and Piper	4.7		6.5		3.0		4.8	
<b>First Call Position Titles</b>	<b>22</b>		<b>8</b>		<b>8</b>		<b>6</b>	
Pastor	8	36.4%	5	62.5%	2	25.0%	1	16.7%
Associate Pastor	11	50.0%	2	25.0%	4	50.0%	5	83.3%
Pastor Developer	2	9.1%			2	25.0%		
Executive Pastor	1	4.5%	1	12.5%				

Half of the pastors, mostly in the BGC, started their ministry in leadership positions as solo pastors, pastor developers, or executive pastor. The majority of the ELCA and PC(USA) pastors began as associates. Five of the eleven associate pastors (45%) were youth pastors.

In addition to their congregational responsibilities, these pastors serve on boards and committees as permanent or interim members. For example, Leith Anderson was

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

named the president of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in October 2007 after serving as the interim president since November 2006. He also served as interim president of the NAE from 2001 until 2003.

These pastors also teach in colleges, universities, and seminaries. All five of the pastors with Ph.D.s or Th.D.s have served as full-time or part-time professors, often in conjunction with their pastoral responsibilities. Half of the BGC pastors (Anderson, Boyd, Merritt, and Piper) have taught (or are teaching) at Bethel University or Bethel Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Many of the pastors speak and teach regularly on the seminar and lecture circuit. Several sponsor events through their congregation or associated ministries. Others speak regularly at national events such as Robert H. Schuller's Institute for Successful Leadership, the National Pastor's Conference, or Willow Creek's Leadership Summit.

#### Communication and Publication

Most of these pastors actively communicate through a variety of media including print, audio, and the Internet. Many maintain an active presence on radio through transmission of worship services and motivational messages. Their sermons are often available on CD and through web casts. Each of the congregations has a website. In addition, at least three of the pastors have their own website where they blog regularly.

Many have published in print through books, articles, and dissertations.<sup>17</sup> John Buchanan has been the editor of *The Christian Century* since 1999.<sup>18</sup> Though they have written many journal and magazine articles, table 18 focuses specifically on books.

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<sup>17</sup> A list of their dissertation titles is in appendix M.

**Table 18. Publications**

	TOTAL	BGC	ELCA	PC(USA)
<b>Authors</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Books</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>72 52.9%</b>	<b>19 14.0%</b>	<b>45 33.1%</b>
Ph.D. (n=3)	84 61.8%	59	0	25
D.Min. (n=3)	20 14.7%	13	13	4
No advanced degree (n=4)	22 16.2%	0	6	16

Ten pastors published 136 books between 1975 and 2007. Approximately 53% of the books were published by three pastors in the BGC.<sup>19</sup> More than 60% of the books were written by pastors with Ph.D.s, including John Piper who published forty-three books between 1979 and 2007, averaging 1.5 books per year. Piper, Ortberg, and Boyd (all Ph.D.s) have published 62% of the books.<sup>20</sup>

#### Professional Relationships

For some pastors, it is difficult to distinguish personal from professional relationships. Parents, teachers, pastors, and colleagues were often identified as mentors. One pastor affectionately said, “My earliest role model was my father, who was a good man. From the day I could understand, he told me “You do not have to be limited to working as I have. You have every opportunity to do anything you want to do. Don't ever, ever not think that you can't be everything that you want to be.”

Another pastor expressed appreciation for his own pastor saying, “I wasn't raised in a Christian home, so when I became a Christian I really didn't have any models to look

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<sup>18</sup> *The Christian Century* is a Christian magazine based in Chicago, Illinois which “nurtures the faith and examines issues of politics, culture, and theology.” See <http://www.christiancentury.org/> (accessed March 1, 2008).

<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that John Ortberg, raised and ordained in the BGC, is currently serving Menlo Park Presbyterian Church. His twenty-five books are listed in the PC(USA) column. If his books were added to the BGC column, the total would be ninety-seven (72%) books.

<sup>20</sup> Again, the Ortberg factor affects the distribution by denomination. See Ch. 6, n. 13.

at. The pastor of our church at the time took me under his wing and he disciplined me a bit. The thing that he instilled in me from the beginning was a real love for God's word and a love for the ministry.”

Several of the pastors identified multiple relationships that affected them over the years. One pastor commented, “I thank God daily for others along the way—work associates, teachers, and friends—who have had an influence in shaping my life as a leader in the church today.” Another pastor spoke of people in congregations where he has served saying, “I’ve been lucky to have a lot of pastors through the years that have been good friends, and also lay people. I’ve had wonderful lay people that have played a generous role in my life.

Several pastors have close relationships with their colleagues in other large congregations. They find that these colleagues understand and share similar challenges. One pastor commented, “My best collegiality is with the larger church pastors, because it's just a world we are all struggling with.” Another pastor concurred saying, “I meet every year with a group of pastors from around the country who are in larger churches to talk about a variety of issues . . . .”

### *The Schuller Factor*

As indicated in Chapter Five, Robert H. Schuller has been a role model for thousands of pastors. Several of the pastors interviewed indicated that they had not personally met Schuller but they knew that their predecessor was directly connected to Schuller himself, or had attended the Institute. At least three of the pastors in this study personally attended the Institute for Successful Church Leadership.

Rev. Dr. Walt Kallestad attended the Institute in 1975 while serving as the youth director for Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Burnsville, Minnesota. Kallestad's family was staying with friends nearby. While attending a session, he was notified that his two-year-old son, Patrick, had fallen into a swimming pool, was found unconscious, and rushed to a hospital. As Kallestad rushed to his car, Dr. Schuller followed him. They prayed for a miracle together in the parking lot. Schuller then went back to the session and led all of the participants in prayer. Patrick quickly recovered and attended the closing worship service with his parents a few days later. Kallestad later wrote:

I thank God for what Dr. Robert Schuller has meant to me and my ministry. He has helped me grow in dreaming big dreams, setting big goals, planning big plans and expecting big things from God. My friendship with him (Schuller) is a gift from God, and I look forward to that friendship and partnership in the ministry for years to come.<sup>21</sup>

Kallestad became a frequent speaker at the Institute and a preacher at the Crystal Cathedral. He is currently a member of the Crystal Cathedral Ministries International Board of Directors. He was the guest preacher at the Crystal Cathedral on October 26, 2008 when Rev. Dr. Robert H. Schuller announced that his son, Rev. Dr. Robert A. Schuller his son would no longer be the primary preacher on the Hour of Power.

When asked about attending the Institute during the interview, one of the pastors simply replied "No, but I met him once." He then proceeded to tell this remarkable story about his personal encounter with Robert H. Schuller.

When I was in seminary, I wanted to meet Robert H. Schuller. I bravely called his assistant and she graciously scheduled an appointment. She said that he loved to meet with seminarians. She scheduled an appointment and I went to his office in the Tower of Hope.

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<sup>21</sup> Schuller, *Your Church Has a Fantastic Future! A Possibility Thinker's Guide to a Successful Church*, 200.

It was quite a conversation. When we finished, he said “I’d like to pray for you.” He just knelt down on the floor and prayed for me like the world couldn’t be saved if I wasn’t faithful. It was very touching, it still is. Then he got up, tears over his face, thanked me so much for coming in and sent me on my way.

(The conversation) was so helpful because my pastor had been a missionary and kept telling me all the places I could be a missionary. I didn’t want to disappoint my pastor but I couldn’t tell him that I didn’t think I should be a missionary.

So as I was driving home (from my meeting with Dr. Schuller), I got it. I’m going to be a missionary pastor. It just cemented it all. I quickly wrote down my marching orders right down on a little pad – just what kind of Christian do I want to deploy in the world, what kind of church makes that Christian, what kind of leader makes that church, what needs to happen in my life to become that kind of a leader, and that’s it, just a little regressive series of questions . . . I owe Robert Schuller . . .

### Complex Congregations

*The missionary task is the Church’s very reason for existence. Nevertheless, the Church is not just another institution; in fact, her life is constantly subject to the will of Him who summons and sends her; thus, her ministry is always subject to evaluation in light of her mandate.<sup>22</sup>*

Analysis of these congregations revealed their common characteristics as well as distinctive attributes. This section focuses on the complexities of these congregations.

### **Denominational Affiliation**

Historically, a primary source of identity for congregations in the United States was denomination. Since the 1960s, membership in the major denominations has declined as worship attendance in non-denominational congregations has increased.

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<sup>22</sup> Winter, *The Suburban Captivity of the Churches*, 174.



Distinct denominational differences have become difficult to discern and less important to the average worshipper.<sup>23</sup>

None of these congregations emphasize their denominational affiliation even though the majority (68%) have names that contain denominational labels.<sup>24</sup> Examination of all 22 websites revealed that 10 congregations (5 were BGC) did not provide any indication of the denominational affiliation. Even though 6 of the 10 had Baptist, Lutheran, or Presbyterian in their name, there was no reference to the BGC, ELCA, or PC(USA) anywhere on the website. Finding denominational affiliation on the other 12 websites was possible but time-consuming. Only Sunset Presbyterian Church referenced the denomination on the homepage.<sup>25</sup>

When asked about the relationship between the congregation and denomination, 4 of the 9 pastors interviewed responded negatively. In reference to the local judicatory, one pastor reported that the relationship was “uncomfortable” and “awkward.” In contrast, another pastor described the relationship as “very warm and supportive.” According to the pastors interviewed, these relationships are affected by three factors:

**Congregation size**

- The denomination is not prepared to support large congregations and their pastors.
- This congregation traditionally had an arms-length relationship with the (judicatory.) There is something that goes along with being a big church . . .

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<sup>23</sup> The polities of the denominations are: BGC – congregational; ELCA – episcopal; and the PC(USA) – connectional.

<sup>24</sup> All six of the PC(USA) congregations have Presbyterian in their name. Three congregations removed “Baptist” from their names since 1980.

<sup>25</sup> Sunset Presbyterian Church was the only congregation to have a link (labeled denomination information) on its homepage. In November 2008, Sunset transferred its denominational affiliation from the PC(USA) to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC). During the transition period, the link on the homepage simplified communication and provided easy access to key documents.

many of (the smaller) churches are kind of suspicious and resentful. It's not always easy when you are the biggest church and perceived to have more resources than anybody else.

- I think the dynamics of being so large in a world that is mostly small congregations seems awkward at times.

### **Theology**

- The tendency is that the (judicatory staff) tends to be quite provincial. They are more concerned about making (Baptists/Lutherans/Presbyterians) than followers of Christ. So it doesn't work very well to be quite frank with you.
- I withdrew about five years ago when I decided that I was pretty disgusted with the direction the denomination was going (theologically).

### **Denominational Relationships**

- I would guess that not even 3% of the people know what we are (denomination affiliation.) My interaction with (the judicatory) has been quite limited and certainly not very positive.
- My predecessor wasn't particularly interested in them (the local judicatory and denomination.) He went about his business here on the basis of his own sense of what the church is. After I came, I tried to get them (the judicatory and denomination) to see us more as a resource and not a pain in the neck.

### **Networks and Associations**

In addition to or in reaction to the relationship with the denomination, many of the pastors and congregations have established relationships outside of their respective denomination with like-minded persons and organizations.<sup>26</sup> For example as reported in table 19, twelve of the congregations are members of the Willow Creek Association.<sup>27</sup>

### **Table 19. Associations by Congregation**

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<sup>26</sup> These congregations are associated with other organizations by default through their denominational affiliation. For example, the BGC is a member of the National Association for Evangelicals. The ELCA and PC(USA) are members of the National Council of Churches.

<sup>27</sup> “The mission of the WCA is to envision, equip and encourage pioneering Christian leaders to build prevailing churches. The WCA links like-minded, outreach-oriented churches with each other, and with strategic vision, training, and resources.” For more information on the Willow Creek Association, see Chapter 3. Data were not available to compare the participation of these congregations to all congregations in each denomination.

	TOTAL		BGC		ELCA		PC(USA)	
<b>Associations</b>								
Willow Creek Association (n=22)	12	54.5%	4	18.2%	5	22.7%	3	13.6%
Word Alone [ELCA only] (n=8)	4		0		4	50.0%	0	
Confessing Church [PC(USA) only] (n=6)	4		0		0		4	66.7%
Covenant Network [PC(USA) only] (n=6)	1		0		0		1	16.7%

The other organizations listed in table 19 were founded to address specific, typically controversial, theological issues within the denomination. These associations provide insight into the theological position of these pastors and congregations. Two of the pastors in this study were instrumental in the founding of these organizations.<sup>28</sup>

### **Congregation Age and Year Organized**

These three denominations and their predecessors have long been part of the American religious landscape. Therefore, it is not surprising that the mean age of the largest congregations in these denominations is 69 years old, with a range from 12 to 124 years. The PC(USA) congregations are considerably older on average, with a mean age of 103 years, in comparison to the BGC (62 years) and the ELCA (49 years).

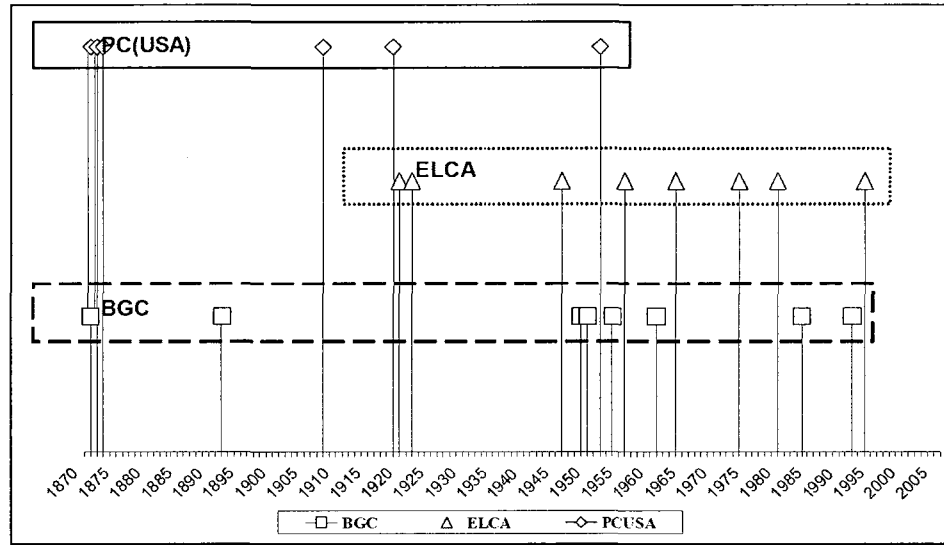
As listed in table 20, five of the congregations were organized before 1900. The oldest two congregations in this study – Fourth Presbyterian in Chicago and Bethlehem Baptist in Minneapolis – were organized in 1871. The oldest ELCA congregation in this study – Mt. Olivet in Minneapolis – was organized in 1920.

### **Table 20. Congregations by Year Organized**

<sup>28</sup> Roger Eigenfeld – Word Alone, and John Buchanan – Covenant Network.

Congregation Name	Denomination	Year Organized	City	State	WATD 2003	Mean WATD 2000-2004	Region	Metro Area
Fourth Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1871	Chicago	IL	2,600	2,525	MW	CHI
Bethlehem Baptist Church	BGC	1871	Minneapolis	MN	2,433	2,318	MW	MSP
First Presbyterian Ch Colorado Springs	PC(USA)	1872	Colorado Springs	CO	2,300	2,325	W	CSP
Menlo Park Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1873	Menlo Park	CA	3,708	3,881	W	SF
College Avenue Baptist Church	BGC	1892	San Diego	CA	3,942	3,449	W	SD
University Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1908	Seattle	WA	3,891	3,973	W	SEA
Peachtree Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1919	Atlanta	GA	2,319	2,317	S	ATL
Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church	ELCA	1920	Minneapolis	MN	5,775	5,837	MW	MSP
St. Andrew's Lutheran Church	ELCA	1922	Mahtomedi	MN	2,823	2,861	MW	MSP
Calvary Lutheran Church	ELCA	1946	Golden Valley	MN	2,287	2,282	MW	MSP
Wooddale Church	BGC	1949	Eden Prairie	MN	4,372	4,318	MW	MSP
Eagle Brook Church	BGC	1950	Hugo	MN	3,042	3,524	MW	MSP
Sunset Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1952	Portland	OR	2,261	2,389	W	POR
New Heights Church	BGC	1954	Vancouver	WA	3,857	3,477	W	POR
Upper Arlington Lutheran Church	ELCA	1956	Columbus	OH	2,316	2,267	MW	COL
Grace Baptist Church	BGC	1961	Santa Clarita	CA	5,000	5,000	W	LA
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church	ELCA	1964	Burnsville	MN	4,000	4,040	MW	MSP
Community Church of Joy	ELCA	1974	Glendale	AZ	3,111	3,260	W	PHX
Hosanna!	ELCA	1980	Lakeville	MN	4,057	3,413	MW	MSP
Golden Hills Community Church	BGC	1984	Brentwood	CA	2,592	2,555	W	SF
Woodland Hills Church	BGC	1992	Maplewood	MN	4,300	4,020	MW	MSP
Lutheran Church of Hope	ELCA	1994	West Des Moines	IA	2,877	2,587	MW	DM

Figure 19 illustrates the year each congregation was organized by denomination. Five of the PC(USA) congregations (83%) were organized before WWII, including three founded between 1871 and 1873. The majority of the BGC and ELCA congregations in this study were organized after WWII. The four congregations organized since 1980 are still being served by their founder and are located in the suburbs.



**Figure 19. Year Congregation Organized by Denomination**

### Worship Attendance

As indicated in Chapter 5, detailed analysis of worship attendance data was limited by several factors, including the number of available data points for each congregation.<sup>29</sup> However, several trends were identified by aggregating these data by denomination.

Given the challenges that these congregations endured over the years, it is remarkable that most of them still exist, much less became megachurches. On average, these 22 congregations were 56 years old before they exceeded an average weekly worship attendance of more than 2,000 persons which most of these congregations accomplished at the same time during the early 1990s.

<sup>29</sup> For example, the BGC congregations began reporting worship attendance in 1977, the ELCA in 1988, and the PC(USA) in 1990.

As reported in table 21, increases in WATD varied by denomination. Between 1990 and 2004, WATD in the BGC congregations increased by 8.6%, followed by the ELCA at 3.6%, and the PC(USA) at 0.6%.

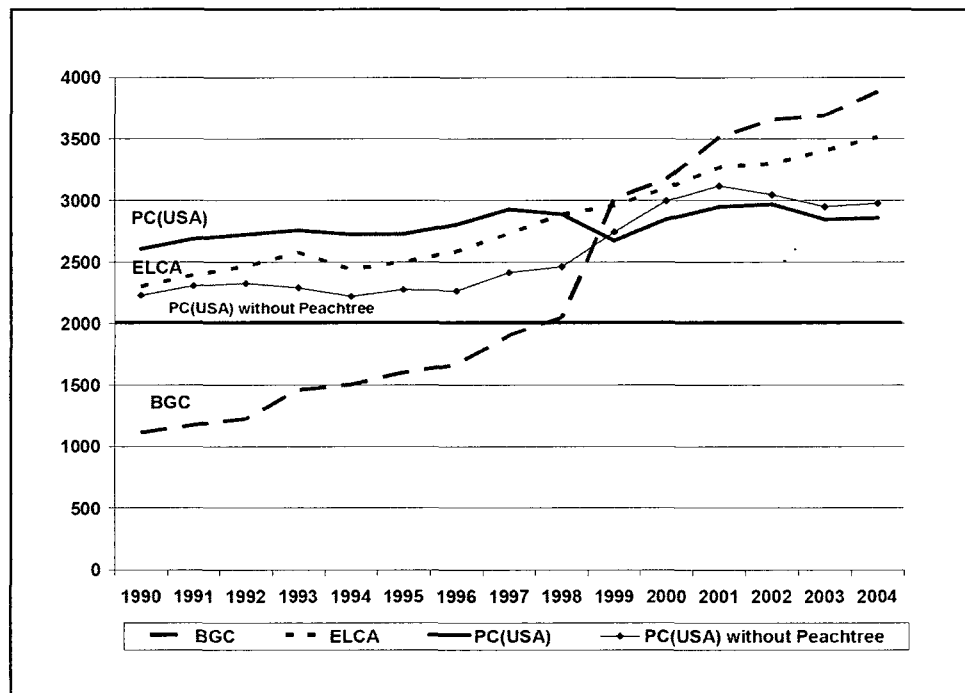
**Table 21. Worship Attendance (1990 – 2004) (n=22)**

	BGC	ELCA	PC(USA) including Peachtree	PC(USA) without Peachtree
<b>n =</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1990-94</b>				
Net Change	2,770	3,407	711	(39)
WATD Total	46,250	87,795	81,050	56,890
% Change	6.0%	3.9%	0.9%	-0.1%
% per Year	1.5%	1.0%	0.2%	0.0%
Mean WATD	1,321	2,195	2,702	2,276
<b>1995-99</b>				
Net Change	13,566	4,123	(320)	2,630
WATD Total	80,264	109,373	84,188	60,888
% Change	16.9%	3.8%	-0.4%	4.3%
% per Year	3.4%	0.8%	-0.1%	0.9%
Mean WATD	2,007	2,734	2,806	2,436
<b>2000-04</b>				
Net Change	6,955	4,448	1,107	1,127
WATD Total	143,306	132,736	86,832	75,464
% Change	4.9%	3.4%	1.3%	1.5%
% per Year	1.0%	0.7%	0.3%	0.3%
Mean WATD	3,583	3,318	2,894	3,019
<b>1990-2004</b>				
Net Change	23,291	11,978	1,498	3,718
WATD Total	270,131	329,904	252,070	193,242
% Change	8.6%	3.6%	0.6%	1.9%
% per Year	0.6%	0.3%	0.04%	0.38%
Mean WATD	2,374	2,802	2,801	2,577

The most prosperous period (based on % change) for twenty-one of the congregations was between 1995 and 1999. Unfortunately, the Rev. Dr. W. Frank Harrington, pastor of Peachtree Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, the largest congregation in PC(USA) at the time, died unexpectedly on March 3, 1999. Worship attendance decreased from 5,000 in 1998 to 2,300 in 1999. Given that Peachtree accounted for

almost 30% of the PC(USA) worship attendance, this event significantly overshadowed the increases in the other PC(USA) congregations. Therefore, table 21 includes two separate columns for the PC(USA).

Between 1995 and 1999, the BGC congregations in the study outpaced the congregations in the other denominations by increasing WATD by an average of 3.4% per year. The ELCA increased WATD by 0.8% per year. Without Peachtree, the other five PC(USA) congregations increased WATD by an average of 0.9% per year.



**Figure 20. Mean Worship Attendance (1990 – 2004) (n=22)**

The mean WATD increased in all three denominations for the period between 2000 and 2004. However, the net increase in the BGC was almost 50% less than in the previous five years. In the ELCA, increases in WATD at the Lutheran Church of Hope and Hosanna! offset decreases at other congregations. Though the PC(USA) had a net increase of 1,107, several of the congregations reported decreases in WATD for multiple

years between 2000 and 2004. Figure 20 illustrates changes in the mean WATD by denomination between 1990 and 2004. The BGC's mean worship attendance surpassed the other two denominations in 1999 and has continued to increase at an average rate of 0.6% per year.

## Location

The geographic location of these congregations is predominantly in the Midwest and West regions of the country.<sup>30</sup> This is consistent with the denomination distribution in the BGC and ELCA.

**Table 22. Congregation Location**

	TOTAL		BGC		ELCA		PC(USA)	
<b>Region</b>								
Midwest	12	54.5%	4	50.0%	7	87.5%	1	16.7%
West	9	40.9%	4	50.0%	1	12.5%	4	66.7%
South	1	4.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	16.7%
<b>States</b>								
Minnesota	9	40.9%	4	50.0%	5	62.5%	0	0.0%
California	4	18.2%	3	37.5%	0	0.0%	1	16.7%
Washington	2	9.1%	1	12.5%	0	0.0%	1	16.7%
Other (one in each state)	7	31.8%	0	0.0%	3	37.5%	4	66.7%
<b>Metro Area</b>								
Mpls/St. Paul	9	40.9%	4	50.0%	5	62.5%	0	0.0%
Portland	2	9.1%	1	12.5%	0	0.0%	1	16.7%
San Francisco	2	9.1%	1	12.5%	0	0.0%	1	16.7%
Other (one in each Metro)	9	40.9%	2	25.0%	3	37.5%	5	83.3%
<b>Type of Community</b>								
Downtown	3	13.6%	1	12.5%	0	0.0%	2	33.3%
City Residential	5	22.7%	1	12.5%	1	12.5%	3	50.0%
Suburban	14	63.6%	6	75.0%	7	87.5%	1	16.7%

Table 22 indicates that only one congregation (Peachtree Presbyterian Church in Atlanta) is located in the South. Nine of the congregations (41%) in the BGC and ELCA are located in Minnesota, specifically in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan area.

<sup>30</sup> Appendices G and H include lists of the congregations by state and region. Metro area is included in appendix H. The apparent regional bias was unintentional.



The congregations are currently located in three different types of communities. The majority of the congregations are located in suburban neighborhoods outside of the central city limits. Three of the congregations in the city residential category are located near a college or university.

Table 23 illustrates the mean congregation age by type of community. The congregations within the city limits are much older than those in the suburbs. The three oldest congregations have continually served their downtown communities for 135 years.<sup>31</sup>

**Table 23. Congregation Age by Type of Community**

	TOTAL		BGC		ELCA		PC(USA)	
<b>Congregation Age by Type of Community</b>								
Downtown	3	134.7	1	135.0	0	0	2	134.5
City Residential	5	103.6	1	114.0	1	86.0	3	106.0
Suburb	14	43.3	6	41.0	7	43.7	1	54.0

## Facilities

Most of these congregations were organized by a small group of people who initially gathered to worship God together in homes, auditoriums, or gymnasiums. All of them eventually established a permanent place to worship. These congregations became regional churches as increasing numbers of people willingly drove from afar to worship and participate in other activities.

Eighteen congregations (82%) have relocated at least once from their original location.<sup>32</sup> The eight congregations located within the central city limits are land-locked

<sup>31</sup> These congregations are Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago, Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, and First Presbyterian Church in Colorado Springs (founded by Rev. Sheldon Jackson.)

<sup>32</sup> Only one congregation moved from one type of community to another. Bethel Baptist Church originally located near downtown San Diego in 1892 but relocated to a residential neighborhood in 1940 and changed its name to College Avenue Baptist Church. In addition, only one congregation is on the

and struggle to efficiently utilize the available space. All have developed creative approaches, including four who have adopted a multisite expansion strategy. In contrast, the suburban congregations own an average of forty acres of land, often near major highways.

The worship center typically dominates these properties. The architecture varies from ornate Gothic cathedrals to renovated discount stores. Several of the postmodern structures have towering steeples. Each congregation owns and/or rents a complex array of physical resources including manses, schools, assisted living facilities, clinics, cemeteries, columbariums, computer labs, bookstores, buses, gyms, chapels, coffee shops, libraries, meeting rooms, offices, amphitheaters, gardens, and walking trails.

The worship centers and other facilities vary in age and capacity. As reported in table 24, the average age of the primary worship center is 24 years. The PC(USA) congregations have worship centers that are considerably older and smaller than the other denominations. Seven congregations have built new worship centers since 2001. Ten of the fourteen suburban congregations (71%) have built new worship centers since 1998.

**Table 24. Primary Worship Center Age and Capacity**

	TOTAL	BGC	ELCA	PC(USA)
<b>Primary Worship Center</b>				
Age in 2006 (years)	23.8	11.4	17.1	49.2
Seating Capacity	1,504	1,619	1,591	1,233

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original site and worships in the original worship center. Woodland Hills Church (BGC) is the only congregation conducting worship services on its first permanent site and in the original worship center. Organized in 1992, the congregation worshipped in local schools until 2001 when they moved into a renovated discount store in Maplewood, MN.

## Expansion Strategies

As mentioned above, church planting and multisite expansion are two of the strategies these congregations are utilizing to manage current and anticipated future growth.<sup>33</sup> These strategies are changing the definition of “regional church.” These congregations are now serving the region with multiple sites which are intentionally more diverse contextually and culturally.

The multisite strategy manifests itself in countless, creative ways in regards to property ownership, worship styles, music, preaching, staffing and stewardship of resources. These congregations often rent space in restaurants, schools, and other churches instead of constructing costly facilities which require constant maintenance. Worshippers drive shorter distances and use less fuel.

**Table 25. Multisite Strategy**

	TOTAL		BGC		ELCA		PC(USA)	
<b>Multisite</b>	8	36.4%	3	37.5%	3	37.5%	2	33.3%
Total Sites								
Mean Number of Sites	2.2		2.3		2.3		2.0	
Mean Congregation Age	77.8		81.0		49.3		115.5	
Mean Primary Worship Center Age in 2006 (years)	26.3		8.0		27.3		52.0	
Location								
Downtown	1		1		0		0	
City Residential	3		0		1		2	
Suburban	4		2		2		0	

As reported in table 25, eight of the congregations (36%) have more than one site, half of which are located within the central city limits. Bethlehem, Eagle Brook, and Upper Arlington had three separate sites as of December 31, 2006.

<sup>33</sup> These two strategies are closely related and potentially may overlap in some congregations depending on the circumstances. Typically, church plants are designed to be independent extensions of the parent congregation though financial and other resources may initially be provided. This strategy has been widely employed by congregations for hundreds of years. Multisite expansions are physical extensions of one congregation. These expansions are referred to as *churches* within the congregation in this study.

Technology plays an important role since many of these congregations transmit the sermon from the primary worship center to the additional worship centers. Other components of the worship service can be customized for the location such as music and language spoken. Several congregations are using this strategy to develop younger pastors.

### **Organizational Structure**

The organizational structures of these congregations are complex.<sup>34</sup> Examination of their websites, brochures, newsletters, magazines, and weekly bulletins reveal a vast array of ministries available to visitors and members alike. Opportunities to serve and be served abound. These ministries require large staffs and thousands of volunteers.

There are two common features in the organizational structures. First, the senior pastor is ultimately responsible for the entire organization. Second, each pastor is supported by a strong team of lay and ordained leaders. Typically, each congregation has an executive pastor/director/administrator who reports directly to the senior pastor, supervises the executive staff, and manages the daily operations.

Beyond these two factors, it was difficult to compare the organizational structures because there is little consistency in position titles and department names. However, analysis of the staff directories posted online did suggest that the average number of pastoral staff is 11 and the average number of paid administrative staff is 55.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Detailed analysis of the organizational structures; specific responsibilities of the senior pastor, executive staff, and boards; and financial statements were not within the scope of this study. Such analysis would be possible and beneficial in the future with the cooperation of each congregation.

<sup>35</sup> The use of the title of pastor is not consistent across congregations. Therefore, being a member of the pastoral staff does not assume ordination.

The estimated average annual budget for these congregations in 2006 was \$6,500,000, not including any major capital expenditures. Eighteen of the 22 pastors (82%) have been involved with a site relocation, major building renovation, site expansion, or capital campaign at least once during their tenure.

During the interviews, several of the pastors described the complexities of the organizational structure of the congregation they currently serve and how they attempt to manage it.

- There is just a complexity, volume, and an intensity here that is different from any congregation I have ever seen. The staff itself is just large. At other churches where I served, I still was close enough and the staff was small enough that I could get my arms of influence around them all. That is not the case here. It is just too big. I am swimming fast but some days I am losing ground because it's just more complex than I could have ever even guessed.
- We have about 25 full-time pastors and directors, and support staff. I think we have 50 or 60 total. I have an executive pastor whose primary responsibility is staff oversight and handling a lot of the personnel issues. I work directly with what I call our management team – the five guys who I believe in and invest time in. They have control over all the other departments of the church.
- This church is a unique church in a sense because we have a large and totally confident staff. I have been able to build a staff of people around me who are all outstanding teachers and leaders in their own right. I inherited that from my predecessor.
- My predecessor almost worked himself to death by the style of his ministry – running this big church (by himself.) So I tried to pull together a great team of excellent high-performing associate pastors and change the style of how we do ministry here.

## Summary

### *Research Question #1*

*What are the characteristics of these pastors and the congregations that they serve?*

This section began with a detailed personal and professional profile of the pastors, followed by a description of these complex congregations. These profiles included many variables and corresponding data which have not been previously gathered. Overall, these pastors and congregations have much in common.

These pastors have made significant contributions in these congregations, their communities and the world. Their stories are similar, yet unique. They are visionaries, entrepreneurs, and risk takers. They are founders of multiple organizations and specialized ministries including congregations, schools, social service agencies, and media outlets. They are teachers, preachers, and prolific writers. They build strategic relationships and develop intricate networks. They are very visible through their media presence, speaking engagements, teaching conferences, and publications. Notable characteristics include:

- The majority of these pastors (59%) founded and/or grew these congregations into megachurches.
- The average age of these pastors was 57 years at the end of 2006. Their average tenure was 17 years.
- Eighteen of the pastors (82%) have been involved with a site relocation, major building renovation, site expansion, or capital campaign at least once during their tenure.
- At least nine of all of the fathers (41%) were pastors, including half of the ELCA pastors. The influence of the pastoral profession on these pastors and their families is deeply embedded.
- All of the pastors had previous ministry and/or teaching experience before accepting the current call.
- More than half of the BGC and PC(USA) pastors earned doctoral degrees (D.Min., Ph.D., or Th.D.) in contrast to only one of the eight ELCA pastors.

From humble beginnings, these congregations became megachurches with complex organizational structures. Through slow or exponential growth, these congregations became icons in their communities by demonstrating their passion for the unaffiliated and desire to increase God's kingdom through the development of personal relationships with Jesus Christ. Notable characteristics include:

- The average age of these congregations was 69 years at the end of 2006. The PC(USA) congregations are considerably older than those in the other two denominations.
- Though it took an average of 56 years for these 22 congregations to exceed an average weekly worship attendance of more than 2,000 persons. Most of them accomplished it at the same time during the early 1990s.
- More than one-third of the congregations have more than one site.
- None of these congregations emphasize their denominational affiliation even though the majority (68%) have names that contain denominational labels.
- The organizational structures of these congregations include an average of 11 pastoral staff, 55 paid administrative staff, and scores of volunteers.

These pastors and congregations face an uncertain future as their locations on the proverbial life cycle converges or deviates. They are in uncharted territory as young megachurches with high-profile, aging pastors and complex organizations in denominations primarily comprised of small congregations. On the surface, the relationships between these pastors, congregations, and denominations are professional and cordial. That said, it appears that most of the pastors and congregations function independently of the denomination until a pastoral change.

### **Pastoral Change and Transition Profile (Research Question #2)**

*To secure able men for the Christian ministry  
is an object of transcendent, urgent, and world-wide concern.  
It involves the life, the growth,  
the extension of the Church – the future of Christianity itself.<sup>36</sup>*

#### **Research Question #2**

*How, if at all, have these pastors and congregations addressed  
pastoral change and transition?*

The characteristics of the pastors and congregations were presented in the previous section. Attention now focuses on how these pastors and congregations have already addressed pastoral change and transition, what they are doing now, and their plans for the future.

#### **Responding to Pastoral Vacancies**

The majority of these congregations (64%) did not plan for predictable or sudden changes in pastoral leadership. Most responded to pastoral vacancies by following traditional policies and procedures such as described in Chapter 4.

#### **Reasons for Pastoral Changes**

Since 1871, there were 117 pastoral changes made in 18 of these 22 congregations.<sup>37</sup> The actual motivating or contributing factors for each change were difficult to determine, particularly for the older congregations. Therefore, table 26 presents the reasons for 55 pastoral changes since 1928 (based on the three previous pastors.) The majority of these changes could have been anticipated and managed,

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<sup>36</sup> John Raleigh Mott, *The Future Leadership of the Church* (New York, NY: Student Department Y.M.C.A., 1908), 3. Mott did not use gender sensitive language in 1908.

<sup>37</sup> Four congregations are currently being led by the founding pastor.



including new calls to another congregation or a new position such as teaching, missionary work, or staff judicatory (49%), and retirements (22%).

**Table 26. Reasons for Pastoral Changes**

	TOTAL		BGC		ELCA		PC(USA)	
<b>Pastoral Changes (n=18)</b>	<b>117</b>		<b>46</b>		<b>28</b>		<b>43</b>	
<b>Reasons*</b>	<b>55</b>		<b>19</b>		<b>18</b>		<b>18</b>	
New Call or Position	27	49.1%	14	73.7%	7	38.9%	6	33.3%
Retired	12	21.8%	2	10.5%	4	22.2%	6	33.3%
Resigned	1	1.8%	0	0.0%	1	5.6%	0	0.0%
Died	3	5.5%	1	5.3%	1	5.6%	1	5.6%
Not Available	12	21.8%	2	10.5%	5	27.8%	5	27.8%

\* Based on the three previous pastoral transitions since 1928.

### Managing the Vacancy Period

Traditionally, most of these congregations managed the vacancy period with existing staff or temporary preachers who received little recognition in congregational lore. In recent years, at least nine congregations (41%) consistently called interim ministers to manage the vacancy period even though it was not explicitly required by written polity. Since becoming megachurches, a few congregations have continued to call interim ministers.

Others are challenging the necessity and effectiveness of interim ministers, especially in large congregations. Even though they were not asked specific questions about interim ministry, several of the pastors interviewed vocalized their concerns which were based upon unpleasant personal experiences following an interim and/or problems observed in other congregations.

- My predecessor got involved in another ministry which took more and more of his time and his passion. As he was losing interest in the church, the church was dwindling. After he resigned, there was a gap with an interim pastor and the church took a fuller nosedive. It was a disaster.

- The theory is that we have to have an interim because the congregation has to heal itself. Sometimes that may be true, and sometimes I think it's not true. Sometimes I think the interim is simply delaying the inevitable. But now, we have a couple thousand professional interims out there who have credentialed themselves, some of whom are dear friends of mine. Now they've got a stake in this thing. It would be very difficult to uproot that right now.
- Interims are agony. There's just no other way around it. Interims are very painful. We've always been told it's necessary, and you've got to go through that. If we don't have to go through that, it would be great.

### **Selection and Call Process**

Changes in pastoral leadership are a source of contention between pastors, congregations, and denominations. Denominational affiliation directly impacts the process through formal and informal policies, procedures, and traditions. The rationale for many of these constraints is unclear.

The majority of these congregations elected a committee to nominate a candidate for the congregation to consider. The roles and responsibilities of these committees were similar but the influence of the denomination varied. In all three of these denominations, judicatory representatives participated in the process. The ELCA was the most restrictive in that the local bishop oversees the mobility of pastors and therefore the list of candidates a congregation may consider. The PC(USA) has an online system for congregations to post open positions and pastors to post their resumes (aka personal information profiles.) This enabled committees to search for candidates and pastors to search for positions. In the ELCA and PC(USA), local judicatories must approve the candidate selected by the congregation. Some of the regional conferences in the BGC work with the Ministry Placement Network.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> For more information on the Ministry Placement Network, see <http://gompn.com/mpn/home> (accessed March 1, 2008).

Twenty of the current pastors (91%) were called from outside of the congregation. PC(USA) polity currently prohibits calling a member of the current ordained staff to become the next senior pastor (except for the co-pastor clause discussed below.)<sup>39</sup> The ELCA has similar restrictions but two of the current pastors were associate pastors immediately prior to becoming the senior pastor – Paul Youngdahl at Mt. Olivet in 1974 and Paul Ulring at Upper Arlington in 2003.<sup>40</sup> None of the eight BGC congregations have promoted from within, though this is not prohibited.

The pastors articulated several reasons why current policies and procedures are problematic for large congregations.

- The rules mandate that you can't elect a committee until the pastor is out of the way. The theory is that the pastor is so prominent, so strongly entrenched that he or she would manipulate the process. I don't know how to deal with that but I do know that lots of corporations and lots of universities would never think of letting the president go without having the next person ready to step in.
- The first thing the (search) committee has to do is conduct a mission study and write up church information for it. You're talking about six months to a year before you can even advertise or start thinking about a successor, so that's why the thing takes so long.
- One reason that the system is fraught with problems is that you're not necessarily getting the right people (on the search committee) who are looking for the right person. They don't really understand the DNA of the church or

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<sup>39</sup> Historically, there are at least four PC(USA) congregations in this study who called an associate pastor to become senior pastor directly. One associate pastor served other congregations before returning as senior pastor.

<sup>40</sup> As noted earlier, many of the pastors in this study are “PKs.” The Youngdahl’s provide a rare example of patriarchy within a particular congregation allowed by the ELCA. Reuben Youngdahl served as senior pastor at Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church in Minneapolis from 1938 until his death in 1968. Paul Noren, Reuben’s close friend since high school, served as senior pastor from 1968 until 1974. Two of Reuben’s sons – Paul and Stephen – were ordained as ministers in the ELCA. Paul Youngdahl served as associate pastor at Mt. Olivet following his father’s death in 1968 until 1974 when he became the senior pastor. Paul’s daughter Kristi has served as Youth Director at Mt. Olivet since 1990. Stephen Youngdahl has served as the senior pastor of Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church in Austin, Texas since 1976. His son, Eric began serving Mt. Olivet as an associate pastor in 2006.

what it is that makes it go, so they have no idea what they're looking for. If a person can preach and has a good personality and decent references, then they'll hire him/her. It usually is a disaster.

### Pastoral Transition Status

The majority of these congregations respond to pastoral vacancies by following traditional policies and procedures. But they are no longer traditional congregations, they are megachurches. Three categories – Already, Now, and Not Yet – describe the pastoral transition status of these congregations since they became megachurches.

<b>Already</b>	Congregation has installed at least one new senior pastor since WATD exceeded 2,000
<b>Now</b>	Congregation does not have an installed senior pastor or is in transition
<b>Not Yet</b>	Congregation has not installed a new senior pastor since WATD exceeded 2,000

Table 27 includes the names of the individual congregations and pastors by transition status as of December 31, 2006. Since becoming megachurches, nine congregations (Already) had installed new senior pastors, 2 congregations (Now) were in transition, and 11 congregations (Not Yet) had not installed a new senior pastor.

All of the Already congregations have replaced the grower since becoming megachurches, including four of the ELCA congregations and four of the PC(USA) congregations. The reasons for these pastoral changes included five pastors retired, three accepted a new call or position, and one died unexpectedly.

Seven of the pastors in the Already category (78%) directly succeeded the grower who had served the congregation for an average of 19 years. However, the 3 pastors who are under 50 years old have served less than 3 years. The other 6 congregations should be just as concerned about pastoral change as the 11 congregations in the Not Yet category because of the ages of their senior pastors.

**Table 27. Congregations and Pastors by Transition Status**

Congregation Name	Current Pastor Name	Denom	Age 2006	Dissolution Date
<b>ALREADY</b>				
Calvary Lutheran Church	Steven Dornbusch	ELCA	59	
College Avenue Baptist Church	Carlton Harris	BGC	49	
First Pres Colorado Springs	James Singleton	PC(USA)	50	
Menlo Park Presbyterian Church	John Ortberg	PC(USA)	49	
Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church	Paul Youngdahl	ELCA	69	
Peachtree Presbyterian Church	Victor Pentz	PC(USA)	58	
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church	Michael Foss	ELCA	58	10/15/2006
University Presbyterian Church	Earl Palmer	PC(USA)	75	10/24/2006 ***
Upper Arlington Lutheran Church	Paul Ulring	ELCA	59	
<b>NOW</b>				
Grace Baptist Church	Tommy Givens**	BGC	59	7/31/2006
St. Andrew's Lutheran Church	Roger Eigenfeld**	ELCA	66	6/12/2005
<b>NOT YET</b>				
Bethlehem Baptist Church	John Piper**	BGC	66	
Community Church of Joy	Walther Kallestad**	ELCA	58	
Eagle Brook Church	Robert Merritt**	BGC	49	
Fourth Presbyterian Church	John Buchanan**	PC(USA)	68	
Golden Hills Community Church	Larry Adams*	BGC	54	
Hosanna Lutheran Church	William Bohline*	ELCA	58	
Lutheran Church of Hope	Michael Housholder*	ELCA	42	
New Heights Church	Matthew Hannan**	BGC	54	
Sunset Presbyterian Church	Ronald Kincaid**	PC(USA)	56	
Wooddale Church	Leith Anderson**	BGC	62	
Woodland Hills Church	Gregory Boyd*	BGC	49	

\* denotes Founder

\*\* denotes Grower

\*\*\* denotes date UPC Session accepted Palmer's request to begin the search for his successor

As of December 31, 2006, two Already congregations were in transition for the second time since becoming a megachurch. Prince of Peace Lutheran Church was unprepared when Rev. Michael Foss unexpectedly accepted a new call and departed within weeks.<sup>41</sup> In contrast, Rev. Dr. Earl Palmer and the session of University

<sup>41</sup> Existing staff managed the transition period. Rev. Jeff Marian was installed as senior pastor at Prince of Peace on March 30, 2008.

Presbyterian Church developed a succession plan using the co-pastor model in anticipation of the pastor's departure.<sup>42</sup>

Two congregations (Now) were searching for a new senior pastor to replace their growers as of December 31, 2006. Neither congregation had a succession plan in anticipation of Tommy Givens' retirement after 22 years nor Roger Eigenfeld's unexpected resignation after 33 years. Both congregations called interim pastors to manage the transition period.<sup>43</sup>

Half of the congregations, including six in the BGC, have not installed (Not Yet) a new senior pastor since becoming a megachurch. These congregations are currently being served by the founding pastor or grower, whose mean age was 56 years old and mean tenure was 21 years. Several of these pastors have already endured serious health issues including heart attacks and cancer.

Table 28 provides more insight into the age and tenure of these pastors by transition status. The nine pastors in the Already category were considerably older at the beginning of the current call than their counterparts in the other categories. It has been argued that most of the current pastors grew with these congregations. Now that they are

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<sup>42</sup> According to PC(USA) polity, congregations may not begin the call process for the next pastor until after the current call has been officially dissolved by the congregation and the presbytery (G-14.0502a). Though the intent to preclude the current pastor from interfering with the call process is understandable, this policy lengthens the time between installed pastors. To avoid this situation, congregations utilize the co-pastor clause in the Book of Order: "Co-pastors are ministers who are called and installed with equal responsibility for pastoral ministry. Each shall be considered a pastor and they may share duties within the congregation as agreed upon by the session and approved by the presbytery. When a particular church has two pastors serving as co-pastors and the relationship with one of them is dissolved, the other remains as pastor of the church." (G-14.0501c) Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), *The Constitution of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Part II. Book of Order, 2005-2007*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Louisville, KY: Office of the General Assembly, 2005).

<sup>43</sup> Rev. John Hogenson was installed at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church on September 9, 2007. On October 30, 2008, the Search Team at Grace Baptist Church announced that after 27 months, they had identified a candidate for the congregation to consider.

megachurches, it is logical that their successors would be older and more experienced. Recent pastoral changes in these congregations support this claim but additional data are needed to determine if this trend will continue.

**Table 28. Pastor Mean Age and Mean Tenure by Transition Status**

	TOTAL		BGC		ELCA		PC(USA)	
<b>Already (Replaced Grower)</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>40.9%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>50.0%</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>66.7%</b>
Age 2006	58.4		49.0		61.3		58.0	
Age Beginning Call	49.3		49.0		47.0		51.8	
Tenure	9.2		1.0		14.3		6.3	
Founder	0		0		0		0	
Grower	0		0		0		0	
Father's Occupation: Pastor	4		0		2		2	
<b>Now (in progress)</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9.1%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
Age 2006	62.5		59.0		66.0		0	
Age Beginning Call	34.5		37.0		32.0		0	
Tenure	27.5		22.0		33.0		0	
Founder	0		0		0		0	
Grower	2		1		1		0	
Father's Occupation: Pastor	0		0		0		0	
<b>Not Yet (have not replaced Founder or Grower)</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>50.0%</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>75.0%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>37.5%</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>33.3%</b>
Age 2006	55.5		54.7		52.7		62.0	
Age Beginning Call	34.5		34.5		31.3		39.0	
Tenure	21.4		20.1		22.7		23.0	
Founder	4		2		2		0	
Grower	7		4		1		2	
Father's Occupation: Pastor	6		3		3			

### Anticipating and Managing Pastoral Changes

There are many factors which contribute to the increasing anxiety that these pastors and congregations have as they attempt to discern God's preferred future. One pastor said:

I'm building this into something bigger than I inherited. So I need a leader who is going to be better than I am, to be able to do justice to where God wants to take this church. As a pastor of a big church, you realize that you have very few years to do this before the next person takes over.

They are concerned that the policies, procedures, and traditions utilized in the past will not be adequate or appropriate in the future. One pastor explained:

I don't think they (the denomination) ever imagined a church like this. There are a lot of rules that work for 90 to 95% of the churches, but then you have these

monsters. They are very different. They are corporate sized churches. They are not corporations. I know that they are not businesses, but in point of fact, they are robustly corporate. The issue of transition in leadership in a big church makes absolutely no sense. We are the only enterprise who would even contemplate not thinking about transition issues until the pastor is gone and there's been an 18 month or 24 month interim. That just seems insane to me.

All of the nine pastors interviewed concurred that megachurches cannot afford to respond to pastoral vacancies. They agreed that continuity of pastoral leadership was preferable to the current process of responding to pastoral vacancies. One pastor said:

Bigger churches are more fragile because they are like beached whales when they don't have somebody at the center who is willing to take responsibility to call the shots and point out the direction and the vision. People naturally just disappear without that central guiding person.

Though all of the pastors interviewed recognized the importance of succession planning and were eager to talk about the issue, their personal preparation for the impending transfer of leadership varied.<sup>44</sup> A few of the pastors and congregations have not prepared a succession plan for various reasons. None of them indicated that they felt constrained by polity or tradition. Some were simply too busy to think about it (but knew that they should.) One pastor admitted “Unfortunately, I'm just trying to survive until Sunday. I haven't thought much about that yet.”

Others are actively challenging the assumptions, expectations, and results of the current processes. One pastor commented:

I often thought to myself, why in the world does the church have to go through that just because one guy decides to quit or change? There's got to be a better way. So we started thinking about succession planning.

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<sup>44</sup> Given the confidential nature of this information and the small number of pastors interviewed, their comments on succession planning have been protected to avoid disclosing specific details that would identify the pastors or congregations.



In theory, succession planning, leadership development, and leadership transition are defined as separate processes. In reality, these pastors and congregations have incorporated elements from multiple processes to meet their needs. Consequently, their approach melds Bridges' change management plan and a transition management plan into what most of them simply call succession planning. The terminology is not as important as the result – continuity of pastoral leadership.

The plans developed by these congregations hinge on two factors: 1) An internal or external candidate, and 2) Timing of transition. Their decisions were influenced by the congregation's context, culture, and current circumstances. Therefore, this decision does not establish a permanent precedent. For example, the co-pastor model has provided congregations in the PC(USA) with flexibility on both the candidate and timing of the transition. However, there are differences of opinion over how long the transition should take. One pastor expressed his concern during the interview:

The problem is that if you bring somebody in as your successor and keep them as the so-called co-pastor for very long, they have been placed in a subservient position. I think that for the co-pastor model to work, the senior minister needs to get out soon after that new person comes aboard so that the congregation sees the new person coming in the role of authority rather than someone who is second fiddle.

Fourth Presbyterian Church had co-pastors from 1928 until 1930 so that Rev. John Timothy Stone could serve as part-time senior pastor as well as the president of McCormick Seminary. Stone personally recommended to the search committee that Rev. Dr. Harrison Ray Anderson be called as co-pastor.<sup>45</sup> The relationship was essentially in

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<sup>45</sup> Anderson had served as assistant pastor to Stone at Fourth while Anderson was in seminary from 1914-1917. Anderson was serving the First Presbyterian Church in Wichita when he was contacted by the search committee. He reluctantly accepted the call to Fourth. Marilee Munger Scroggs and Micah Marty, *A Light in the City: The Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago* (Chicago, IL: Fourth Presbyterian Church 1990), 109-13.

name only for eighteen months until Stone officially retired from Fourth in 1930.

Fourth's second attempt at co-pastors did not work as intended. Rev. Dr. Joanna Adams was called by Fourth Presbyterian Church in March 2002 to serve as co-pastor with Rev. Dr. John Buchanan in anticipation of his retirement. Citing personal reasons, she dissolved the call in January 2004.

In contrast, First Presbyterian Church of Colorado Springs and University Presbyterian Church used the co-pastor model in order to begin the search process for an external candidate before the current pastor departed. Both planned for a very short transition. Palmer described the situation at UPC during the interview:

I told the session that I wanted to move into a new era of my life. I love being pastor here, but I just felt that I wanted to do something else too. I'm 75 years old and I feel great, but I want to end this phase of my career with all the wind in my sails. The session suggested forming a 501(c)(3) called Earl Palmer Ministries so I can continue my work after I leave UPC.<sup>46</sup> In the meantime, the congregation elected a pastor search committee who is hard at work. Since it may be months before they are prepared to recommend someone to the congregation, I will remain as the senior pastor of the church and moderator of the session. I'm doing everything I always did. When that person is called by the congregation, I'll hand the baton off and move on.

The current pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Colorado Springs, Rev. Dr. Jim Singleton, explained the congregation's decision and strategy:

When John Stevens announced that he was going to retire, the church made a decision that they did not want to have an interim partly because they believed that the interim model was going to bring them too much interruption. So they made a determined effort with the presbytery. They remembered that 30 years ago, John Stevens succeeded Howard Hanson without any interruption as well. John had been here a couple of years as an associate pastor and then was elected to be the senior pastor. This church has not had an interim pastor for almost 70 years (maybe never) because Howard Hanson stayed here over 30 years and John Stevens stayed here over 30 years.

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<sup>46</sup> For more information on Earl Palmer Ministries, go to <http://www.earlpalmer.org> (accessed February 11, 2009).

As the other pastors assess and anticipate the leadership needs for the future, they are intentionally developing leaders for service in God's kingdom as others had done for them. "We don't have seminaries that raise up or train leaders who can move into these positions," said Rev. Michael Foss in 2002.<sup>47</sup> Several of the pastors indicated that they are mentoring leaders from within the congregation who may become their successor or perhaps serve another large congregation. One pastor considering retirement said:

I certainly want to have a transition plan in place for the church to thrive and carry on. I see myself transitioning leadership, preaching, and other responsibilities to an individual who may be the one who takes over when I retire . . .

Another pastor spoke at length about how he and the church council were developing succession plans for the senior pastor and staff.

- I don't know what God's going to do, but we realized that we needed to start doing succession planning for the key leaders because they are getting older and they hold strategic roles in the church. Our belief is that if we get the right people in the right place then everything should go on without any problems.
- We would like to find someone who we believe has the potential to replace me so I could have several years to work with him, giving him increased opportunity to preach, increased opportunity to help form and shape things, to learn our DNA, and to be accepted by the people. It would be good to phase him in slowly over a period of time while I'm phasing out, where you actually get to the point where people prefer to have him speak, they're looking more to him as the leader, they're looking more at him for the direction of the church. Seamless is what we're after.

Another pastor spoke about mentoring persons outside of the congregation.

At this point, my succession plan is to constantly be looking for and cultivating people in their 30s and 40s who are excellent leaders for the possibility of being my successor. There may come a point at which we say okay, now let's hire somebody.

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<sup>47</sup> John Dart, "Who's Counting? Doing the Numbers on Membership," *Christian Century* 119, no. 10 (2002).

During the interviews, the pastors were asked to identify what characteristics their successor should have. Their responses provide insight into how they are mentoring and preparing future leaders. Several of the pastors addressed the importance of preaching.

- The one thing is fundamental, to be the senior colleague of a large church, you've got to be able to preach. That means a person has got to be able to preach every week. The well can't keep going dry. They've got to be growing in their own faith, and their own faith journey. Their own biblical knowledge has got to be on the growing edge, so that they don't just borrow from other people, but they are really doing original work. In a large church, the preacher does get to create the climate, and it's the preaching that does that. That's why the preaching is so important, and why these committees are looking for the man or woman that's able to preach.
- I share the preaching with my colleagues. We don't have outside preachers come in. My own colleagues are the preachers in the series of sermons that we do. If you look at our web site, you'll see my colleagues are very key players. They are outstanding preachers in their own right.
- I shared the pulpit with my colleagues so everyone got to preach on a regular basis. I never publicized who was going to preach each Sunday because I wanted people to come to worship God regardless of who was preaching.
- Being a solo pastor in a small church is a great preparation in that you learn a lot about preaching.

Others spoke about vision:

- A senior pastor has got to be able to cast a vision and win support for it and be able to have the graces of being able to choose other leaders within the congregation well, mold them together, and motivate them along the way, and then get there and have a party and thank everybody.
- The pastor has to express the vision of the church in workable, understandable, down-to-earth language. If the congregation is going to be a growing congregation in its faith, it's got to be biblically meaningful.

Others addressed preparation and experience:

- I do quite a bit of preparation and training on administrative and theological issues. Sometimes I present the challenges I'm facing and ask how would they handle them. I also give them opportunities to lead with decision-making

power and authority because if they don't lead, if they don't face the heartburn and challenges, they're never going to learn it.

- I really think being on staff is a great preparation for being a senior colleague. Then you learn how staffs work, and how to be careful about the silo effect of staffs having their own independent ministries and not caring about the whole church.
- The good thing about being in a staff relationship is you learn how to relate to colleagues. To be a senior pastor of a large church, you have to be able to relate to your colleagues.
- A senior pastor has to be able to make decisions. If you can't make decisions, or if you want to dominate in every decision, then you become a road block. So you have to be able to encourage other people to make decisions and then back them up.

In the end, these pastors recognize that a viable succession plan must allow for the unexpected movement of the Holy Spirit. They readily acknowledged the importance of the Holy Spirit in overcoming their reluctance to accept this call and in their daily decision-making. One pastor explained:

I remember saying to the people on my first day, "I don't know how to be a pastor and you don't know how to be a church, so why don't we learn together, and here's our guide, the Holy Spirit." That sounds simplistic, but we were determined to study what God said and try to apply it. Three things emerged from the beginning that still mark our church today, things that the church must do in any age, any time, anywhere, any place – 1) exalt Jesus, 2) preach the word, and 3) share love. If you do those three things, it's amazing what God will do.

## Summary

### Research Question #2

*How, if at all, have these pastors and congregations addressed pastoral change and transition?*

Historically, the majority of these congregations did not plan for predictable or sudden changes in pastoral leadership, even though the majority of pastoral changes since 1928 could have been anticipated and managed, including new calls or positions (49%) and retirements (22%). Most responded to pastoral vacancies by following traditional policies and procedures such as:

- Consistently calling interim ministers to manage the vacancy period even though it was not explicitly required by written polity.
- Electing a committee to nominate a candidate for the congregation to consider.
- Calling candidates from outside of the congregation.

But these are no longer traditional congregations. They are megachurches whose long-tenured pastors are rapidly reaching retirement age and have little or no experience with pastoral change and transition. Compounding the situation is the impact of the founder and grower. The majority of these pastors (59%) founded or grew these congregations. Both the pastor and the congregation changed as membership and worship attendance increased. How can that experience be duplicated? Should it?

One of the challenges is how to prepare the next generation of pastoral leaders for service in large congregations. What skills and abilities are needed in the future especially since many of these congregations are currently declining? Seminaries typically prepare students for the most common context – small congregations. The development process depends on the individual efforts of the current pastors, not an intentional process coordinated or supported by the denominations. A few pastors

indicated that they were actively mentoring future leaders, some within their current congregation and others in more distant contexts.

It is important to remember that a wall of secrecy has long enveloped the process of pastoral change. However, some of the pastors and congregations are slowly changing their assumptions and expectations regarding pastoral change and transition, particularly about interim ministry. All of the nine pastors interviewed concurred that megachurches need to plan for pastoral changes rather than react. They are concerned that the policies, procedures, and traditions utilized in the past will not be adequate or appropriate in the future.

Though all of the pastors interviewed recognized the importance of succession planning, only a few are prepared. Why? Some said that they were too busy to think about it while others seemed reluctant to be specific about their plans. The PC(USA) megachurches have been the most proactive since three of the six have used the co-pastor model to promote continuity of pastoral leadership. Several of the BGC pastors indicated that they are engaged in succession planning and leadership development in cooperation with the church council/board/session.

The most unexpected finding from the interviews was the pastors' reluctance and resistance to accept the current call. Several of the pastors indicated that they had no knowledge of, or interest in, the position they now hold. In retrospect, they readily acknowledged the Holy Spirit's influence on the congregation's decision to extend the call and in overcoming their own reluctance to accept. Consequently, these pastors recognize that a viable succession plan must allow for the unexpected movement of the Holy Spirit.

## CHAPTER 7

### SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

*Before the altar of God, at the bedside of the sick,  
in conversation with troubled souls, befuddled before the biblical text,  
there is the pastor.*

*Standing in that fateful intersection between God's people and God,  
at that risky transaction between Christ and his Body, the church,  
stands the priest.*

*It is no small thing to be in mediation between God and humanity,  
to offer the gifts of God's people,  
to intercede for the suffering of the world in prayer,  
rightly to divide the Word of God.  
With trembling and with joy, the pastor works that fateful space  
between here and the throne of God.*

*This yoke, while not always as easy as Jesus implies, is often quite joyful.  
It is a joyful thing to be a pastor,  
to have one's life drawn toward dealings that are divine;  
to bear burdens that are, while not always light,  
at least more significant than those that the world tries to lay upon our backs.  
It is a joy to be expended in some vocation that is greater than one's self.<sup>1</sup>*

This exploration of the little-known phenomena of pastoral change and transition in twenty-two megachurches in three denominational systems confirmed that the future for many of these congregations is at risk because few have prepared for the impending transfer of leadership. Protecting the sacred relationship between pastor and congregation is critical because the disruption of the sacred trust impacts the faith and spiritual practices of the pastor(s), staff, and congregation, as well as local and global ministries.

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<sup>1</sup> William H. Willimon, *Pastor: The Theology and Practice of Ordained Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2002), 11.



Biblical and theological resources established the importance of relationships, divine and human, which pervades this study. Analysis of the historical influences on the emergence of megachurches exposed the lasting impact of specific leaders and congregations on this phenomenon. In particular, detailed personal and professional profiles of the pastors in this study revealed the importance of relationships in their lives and ministries. These relationships, as well as the relationships with the congregation, local community, and around the world, contributed to the complexities of pastoral change and transition.

From humble beginnings, these twenty-two congregations became the largest in their respective denominations, most under the leadership of the current pastor.<sup>2</sup> As young megachurches in denominations primarily comprised of small congregations, they are in uncharted territory. The long-tenured pastors, the majority of whom founded or grew these congregations, are rapidly reaching retirement age.

Many of the current processes, policies, and politics discourage, even preclude, any proactive planning or preparation by pastors and congregations for changes in pastoral leadership. In addition, Loren Mead's illness-based, interim ministry approach has been absorbed into, or in some cases supersedes, congregational and denominational policies. Consequently, a disruption in the relationship between the pastor and the congregation has been assumed into the policies and processes.

In this final chapter, I first identify alternative approaches for the selection, development, and transition of pastoral leaders using biblical, theological, historical, and theoretical resources. Second, I make recommendations for future research, including

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<sup>2</sup> Based on worship attendance, not membership.

proposals for redefining the term megachurch and a research process design. Finally, I conclude with a few comments on the role of the Holy Spirit in pastoral change and transition.

### **Summary of Key Findings**

A pastoral change has a ripple effect throughout the entire community as people discuss the situation with family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues. This affects key events in people's lives such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals. Scores of people are involved in managing the transition and the search for the next pastor. Additional resources may be needed such as counselors, attorneys, interim pastors, or judicatory representatives. Consultants may be employed to engage the congregation in identifying its purpose, vision, and mission; address conflict within the congregation or with other organizations; investigate financial or sexual misconduct; coordinate communication with the congregation and media; or assist with the search for the next pastor.

Regardless of the circumstances, there are many stakeholders who should work together to anticipate, rather than respond to, changes in pastoral leadership. Most importantly, pastors, congregations, and denominations need to change their assumptions and expectations regarding pastoral change and transition since they are all responsible for stewarding the current community of believers and those who have yet to enter into relationship with Jesus Christ.

William Bridges argues that the single biggest reason organizational changes fail is that no one has thought about endings or planned to manage their impact on people.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, 37.

Though none of these twenty-two congregations have failed, their future is at risk because few are prepared for inevitable changes in leadership. Bridges recommends preparing a change management plan and a transition management plan. In this context, a change management plan should include a strategic planning process which anticipates pastoral changes. In particular, the succession plan should provide for the selection and development of pastoral leaders. A transition management plan should include processes which help people let go of the past and prepare for the future, and incorporate communal prayer and worship.

Engaging in a strategic planning process indicates the concern for future needs and awareness of the necessity of good leadership for the continued institutional vitality of the congregation.<sup>4</sup> As discussed in Chapter 4, there are numerous resources available to facilitate the development of a strategic plan for public and non-profit organizations, including consultants, websites, software, and print publications.<sup>5</sup> Aubrey Malphurs and others provide practical advice for creating a strategic plan specifically for congregations.<sup>6</sup> In particular, the strategic planning process in congregations should include the creation and maintenance of the critical documents that are often requested or required by the judicatory prior to posting the call, such as position descriptions, an

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<sup>4</sup> Stepp, *Leadership Succession in the World of the Pauline Circle*.

<sup>5</sup> Allison and Kaye, *Strategic Planning for Nonprofit Organizations: A Practical Guide and Workbook*; Bryson, *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations: A Guide to Strengthening and Sustaining Organizational Achievement*; Bryson and Alston, *Creating and Implementing Your Strategic Plan: A Workbook for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*; Kearns, *Private Sector Strategies for Social Sector Success: The Guide to Strategy and Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*.

<sup>6</sup> Callahan, *Twelve Keys to an Effective Church: Strategic Planning for Mission*; Klopp, *The Ministry Playbook: Strategic Planning for Effective Churches*; Malphurs, *Advanced Strategic Planning: A New Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*; Malphurs, *Developing a Vision for Ministry in the 21st Century*; Oswald and Friedrich, *Discerning Your Congregation's Future: A Strategic and Spiritual Approach*.

organization structure diagram, personnel policies and procedures, vision and mission statements, legal documents, and demographic analysis of community.

Though Malphurs recommends that congregations plan for contingencies which have the potential to undermine the ministry of the congregation such as a change in pastoral leadership, he does not specifically address the need for including succession planning in the strategic plan. He fails to recognize that calling a new pastor is one of the most significant strategic decisions that a congregation will ever make. Weese and Crabtree concur with Bridges' urgent plea for preparation and stress the importance of preparation with their biblically framed approach to succession planning.<sup>7</sup>

Analysis of the biblical narrative in Chapter 2 revealed that the continuity of leadership occurred through processes which adapted to the particular context. These texts bear witness to the unlikely people chosen and empowered by God in order to establish, sustain, and restore relationships with all of creation.<sup>8</sup> Their stories attest to the divine and human involvement in the selection, development, and transitions of leaders, and suggest that it is possible to anticipate, rather than only respond to, inevitable changes in leadership.

Anticipation and preparation must allow for the unexpected movement of the Holy Spirit. Planning and the discerning the will of the Holy Spirit are mutually beneficial activities which require the participation of all of the stakeholders in the selection, development, and transition of pastoral leaders. It is their responsibility to

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<sup>7</sup> Weese and Crabtree, *The Elephant in the Boardroom: Speaking the Unspoken About Pastoral Transitions*.

<sup>8</sup> Due to the complex and frequently intertwined nature of these stories, the findings are intended to be informative, not necessarily normative or prescriptive.

discern the will of the Spirit together in order to protect the sacredness of relationships within the community, and with the Triune God.

### Selection

Historically, the majority of these congregations responded to pastoral vacancies rather than plan for changes in pastoral leadership. Of the four congregations who have installed new pastors since this study began in 2006, three had no succession plan and employed interim pastors. The vacancy periods extended from 17 – 36 months.<sup>9</sup> Though many continue to depend on this approach, there has been little recognition of its consequences. Depending on the length of the vacancy period, congregations may develop a sacred trust with the interim minister. The departure of the interim minister, even though it is expected, creates another disruption for the congregation and community.

This is just one of the reasons why some of the pastors and congregations in this study are attempting to address the situation by developing their own processes or by circumventing existing policies and procedures. Like Moses, many of these pastors are the only leader these congregations have known, and they do/did not want to leave the congregation without a leader.

The PC(USA) megachurches have been the most proactive by using the co-pastor model to promote continuity of pastoral leadership.<sup>10</sup> At First Presbyterian Church in Colorado Springs and University Presbyterian Church in Seattle, John Stevens and Earl

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<sup>9</sup> The vacancy periods were: Grace Baptist Church, 31 months; Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, 17 months; and St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, 26 months. University Presbyterian Church utilized the co-pastor model thereby avoiding any vacancy period.

<sup>10</sup> See chap. 6, n. 43.

Palmer informed the session and congregation of their intent to retire and their desire to remain as senior pastor until a successor was called by the congregation. The pastor, session, congregation, nominating committee, and local judicatory worked together to provide for continuity of leadership. In both cases, the next pastor was called from outside the congregation.<sup>11</sup> Stevens and Palmer left after the next pastor was installed.

Several of the BGC pastors indicated that they are currently engaged in succession planning and leadership development in cooperation with their church elders. They are mentoring younger pastors who are currently serving the congregation with the expectation that someone in the group will be the successor.

During the data collection phase, I was very excited to discover that there were pastors and congregations being proactive about the continuity of leadership. Now, I wish that I had asked a few more questions during the interviews. Have these pastors and congregations considered the potential problems with their plans?

Will the pastor retire as promised? The co-pastor examples cited above worked as planned. There was another situation that did not. There are two historical examples, W. A. Criswell and Robert Schuller, whose legacies were tarnished by their inability to recognize their own limitations, trust their congregations, and transfer their authority to the next leader in a timely manner.

Given Schuller's influence on the emergence of the megachurch, particularly through the Institute for Successful Leadership, his struggles with succession are particularly troubling. His behavior, as recounted in detail in Chapter 3, does not provide a positive example for the many pastors who have long admired him. What many thought

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<sup>11</sup> The apostle Paul was also called from outside of the community.

was a smooth transition from father to son, resulted in the unexpected removal of the son from the pulpit, and a schism within the family. At this time, it is unclear how much this situation has impacted the deteriorating financial situation at the Crystal Cathedral.<sup>12</sup> Who will these pastors emulate now?

How much influence should the current pastor have in the process? There are pastors in this study who are preparing for the future in conjunction with the church elders/council by developing younger pastors. In one situation, it appeared that the senior pastor prefers a particular person for his successor. In another situation, there was a group of pastors from which the successor would likely emerge. Are the congregations aware of the pastor's strategy? What do the protégés think about the process? Do they even know about the plan? Are they competing with one another like the apostles who wondered who was to sit to the right and left of Jesus in heaven?

How and when will the final decision be made? Will the congregation have the opportunity to participate in communal discernment? For example, the Board of Deacons of the First Baptist Church of Dallas acted on behalf of the congregation to prevent W. A. Criswell from choosing his own successor without involving the congregation. The deacons understood that continuity of leadership requires the charismata of the entire community and that it is in the congregation where charismata are recognized and received.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Deepa Bharath, "Lawsuit Allege Crystal Cathedral Owes Millions," *Orange County Register*, April 1, 2010; "Crystal Cathedral Megachurch Meets with Creditors," *Associated Press*, April 9, 2010; Alejandra Molina, "Crystal Cathedral Parishioners Said Cuts Were Unexpected," *Orange County Register*, January 31, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, 255.

Congregations must continually identify and assess the leadership skills and capabilities that will be needed in the future, not simply replace the current pastor. This requires intentional planning and preparation as demonstrated in the biblical narrative, including communal discernment, fasting, and prayer. According to Volf, the process should be a “complex interaction of mutual giving and accepting (or also rejecting) between officeholders and the congregation.”<sup>14</sup> The process must be based upon mutual trust and cooperation. Secrecy is unnecessary and harmful.

### Leadership Development

The pastors in this study share many personal and professional characteristics with their biblical and historical predecessors. They are visionaries, entrepreneurs, and risk takers who have founded multiple organizations and specialized ministries, including congregations, schools, and social service agencies. They are teachers, preachers, researchers, and prolific writers. They have developed strategic relationships and intricate networks. Many have become well-known through their preaching, teaching, speaking engagements, and publications. Who will succeed them?

As illustrated in Table 1, relationships (divine and human) and life experience were the primary methods for developing leaders in the biblical narrative. In both the Hebrew and New Testaments, the community actively participated in leadership development.

As a community created by the Holy Spirit in the image of the Triune God, Volf argues that the people of God are called to participate in the preparation of pastoral

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 256.



leaders. He suggests that persons under consideration for offices should be shaped by the community of faith so that the members are familiar with, and capable of, receiving their charismata. On the surface, this approach stands in contrast to policies, processes, or precedents that never, or perhaps rarely, allow an associate pastor to be called as the next senior pastor in the same congregation. But, it is also possible that the community of faith Volf refers to could include members and officeholders in a particular congregation, as well as other congregations, pastors, seminaries, and judicatories.

Both of these options allow for multiple members of the community of faith to share the responsibilities for leadership development. In this broader context, Rothwell's suggested methods for developing leaders, such as mentoring, talent pools, job sharing, and job rotation, become more feasible, diverse, and beneficial.<sup>15</sup>

All of the stakeholders must understand the necessity of training and participate in the preparation of future leaders. Stepp argues that the work of the Kingdom of God is too vital and too difficult for leaders simply to assume that the mantle will be picked up when they no longer hold it. He emphasizes that today's leaders cannot assume that tomorrow's leaders are qualified, or that they have been successfully trained by osmosis.<sup>16</sup>

Fortunately, several of the pastors in this study indicated that they are personally mentoring other pastors. Since there is not a particular process in these denominations for preparing pastors to lead megachurches, a few of these pastors are carefully and intentionally mentoring their protégés, some of whom may become their successors. But,

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<sup>15</sup> See Chap. 4, n. 57.

<sup>16</sup> Stepp, *Leadership Succession in the World of the Pauline Circle*, 205.

it is likely that the need for successors in the near future is much greater than the number who are currently being mentored.

### Transition

According to Bridges, a transition management plan should include processes which help people let go of the past and prepare for the future. In this context, it is important to discuss transition from two perspectives – who and how.

Analysis of the biblical narrative revealed several patterns of transition – father to son, mentor to successor, mentor to protégé, and leader to community. These patterns describe the leadership development processes as well as the relationship between the people involved in the transition. Interestingly, these transitions were made between people who already knew each other. These patterns were also encountered in the historical analysis in Chapter 3. The results in Chapter 6 can be interpreted through a nuanced application of these patterns.

Though I did not find an example for a direct transition from father-to-son among the current pastors or their predecessors, the Youngdahl family's service to Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church in Minneapolis provides a rare example of patriarchy within a particular congregation and allowed by the ELCA.<sup>17</sup> The father-to-son pattern may also be considered in a larger sense in reference to “pastor's kids” given that at least nine of all of the fathers (41%) were pastors, including half of the ELCA pastors. These PKs could also be understood as protégés since they were likely mentored by, but did not directly assume the responsibilities of, their fathers.

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<sup>17</sup> See chap. 6, n. 41.

As noted above, the mentor to successor pattern is being used by a few congregations in this study. At this point, the outcome of these situations is unknown until the pastoral change occurs.

It can be argued that the co-pastor model used by the PC(USA) was based upon the mentor to successor pattern. In the examples I found in the 1900s, there was a mentoring relationship over a period of time before the senior pastor stepped aside. However, in recent years there is typically little overlap between pastors who do not know each other. In many cases, the congregation does not know the new pastor either.

The biblical patterns in this analysis do not provide for the disruption of leadership and the employment of interim ministers. By design, the interim pastors are not known by the congregation, but given the extended periods of time that they now serve, a sacred relationship is inevitable. This creates another disruption that the congregation must endure. This is why Bridges is so concerned about the psychological aspects of transition.

How can pastors and congregations embrace the emotional transition from the past, through the wilderness, and into the future? Though there are several resources identified in Chapter 4, I recommend that all of the stakeholders carefully consider the transition from Moses to Joshua, as described in the biblical narrative, as an informative, but not prescriptive, example of leadership change and transition. Most, if not all, of the key elements discussed throughout this study are found in this story which was discussed in Chapter 2, and bears repeating here.

From the moment when God told Moses that he would not reach the promised land, Moses demonstrated that he was more concerned about the community than

himself. Though he may have been very disappointed by God's decision, he immediately asked God to select another leader so that the Israelites would not be like sheep without a shepherd. After God selected Joshua, Moses followed God's instructions for the transition.

- Moses gathered the community and assured them that God would remain faithful to them.
- Moses endorsed Joshua in the presence of the gathered community.
- Moses publicly shared his wisdom with Joshua and assured him that God would remain faithful to him.
- Moses provided written instructions to the community and assigned the Levites to instruct future generations about their relationship with God and how to observe the law.
- Joshua stood before the people as they, and the chief priest, discerned God's will.
- Moses publicly transferred his authority by laying his hands on Joshua.
- Moses and Joshua presented themselves before God who commissioned Joshua.
- The gathered community worshiped God as Moses sang His praises. Then Moses blessed each tribe before he died.

One key component of this story that deserves emphasis is the public transfer of leadership during a worship service. I suggest that congregations develop their own liturgy, or customize existing liturgies, by including the rituals, symbols, and musical styles which fit their particular context. It is important that the congregation and other stakeholders participate in the transition process. In doing so, they bear witness to their relationship with God and each other.

How does Moses' behavior inform leaders today? Moses did everything possible to provide for continuity of leadership. In particular, he assured the community and Joshua that God would remain faithful to them. He also made provisions for future generations to remain faithful to their relationship with God.

It is interesting to note Moses' concern over the potential loss of faithfulness through the disruption of sacred relationships. This same concern is shared by Miroslav Volf who argues that transmission of faith is a matter of survival because relationships between believers and the Triune God, and among believers themselves, are established through faith.

Volf dares to claim that faith is not transmitted primarily by priests and pastors and academics, but rather by the loyal and inspired people of God. His relational approach stresses the importance of the participation of the congregation, laity and officeholders, in the transmission of faith through their ministry and decision making. Further, it is their responsibility to discern the will of the Spirit together in order to protect the sacredness of relationships within the community, and with the Triune God. As Scripture and Volf suggest, this may be accomplished through divine and human involvement in the selection, development, and transition of leadership.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Megachurches throughout the United States are facing impending changes in pastoral leadership. As with the many of the congregations in this study, the largest congregations in the United States have little or no experience with pastoral change and transition.<sup>18</sup> I recommend that continued exploration of pastoral change and transition in megachurches include new criteria for defining megachurches and a fully integrated mixed model research design.

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<sup>18</sup> The majority of the senior-pastors (92%) in the 50 largest megachurches in 2008 were either the founder or grower. The 31 founders were 53 years old with an average tenure of 23 years, and the 15 growers were 55 years old with an average tenure of 22 years in 2008.

## New Criteria for Defining Megachurches

Current research depends on worship attendance as the primary criterion for defining megachurches. The benchmark of 2,000 persons, established by John Vaughan in 1984, has not been re-evaluated despite the significant increases in worship attendance, the number of megachurches in the U.S., and the impact of their ministries.<sup>19</sup>

Additional criteria for defining, describing, and classifying megachurches are needed to facilitate future research. The obvious and subtle characteristics of these congregations must be identified and operationalized. A standard method for calculating worship attendance should also be established.<sup>20</sup> Without a standard, it is difficult to determine the accuracy and consistency of the worship attendance data provided by congregations and researchers.<sup>21</sup> The reliability and validity of the existing data sources must also be addressed. Data collection methods should be publicly accessible, including identification of data that were self-reported by congregations, pastors, or staff members.

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<sup>19</sup> Vaughan defined a megachurch in 1984 as a Protestant congregation with an average weekly worship attendance of more than 2,000 persons. Vaughan, *The Large Church: A Twentieth-Century Expression of the First-Century Church*, 11.

<sup>20</sup> Significant research has been done on attendance as a percent of membership but these studies do not specifically address the actual counting process. See C. Kirk Hadaway and Penny Long Marler, "How Many Americans Attend Worship Each Week? An Alternative Approach to Measurement," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 44, no. 3 (2005); Laurence R. Iannaccone and Sean F. Everton, "Never on Sunny Days: Lessons from Weekly Attendance Counts," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 43, no. 2 (2004); Penny Long Marler and C. Kirk Hadaway, "Testing the Attendance Gap in a Conservative Church," *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 2 (1999).

<sup>21</sup> For example, some congregations may conduct actual head counts while others may estimate attendance based on seating capacity. How do congregations with multiple locations report attendance? Are children included? John P. Marcum, "Measuring Church Attendance: A Further Look," *Review of Religious Research* 41, no. 1 (1999).

Many of the variables identified in this study could be used to establish meaningful categories for analyzing and comparing these pastors and congregations in the future including:

- Congregation variables such as year organized, current location, previous location(s), year WATD exceeded 2,000, congregation age when WATD exceeded 2,000, number of years since WATD exceeded 2,000, expansion strategies, denominational affiliation, region, and WATD change rate.
- Pastor variables such as age, tenure, pastor's kid indicator, pastoral relationship indicator, education, and denominational affiliation.
- Pastoral transition variables such as pastoral transition pattern, pastoral transition status, transition period, and reason for pastoral change.
- Worship Attendance stratification
  - 2,000 – 3,499
  - 3,500 – 4,999
  - 5,000 – 7,999
  - 8,000 – 9,999
  - 10,000 – 11,999
  - 12,000 – 14,999
  - 15,000 – 45,000

Combinations of these variables, and data gathered from focus groups or individual interviews, will be needed to address the following opportunities for future research.

#### Potential Research Opportunities

The findings from this study provide the foundation for future research. There are several important topics that I would like to explore with a larger, more diverse sample, including:

- Identifying and analyzing additional personal and professional characteristics of the pastors who serve these congregations including leadership styles, conflict management styles, and theology.
- Identifying the issues related to pastoral change and transition from the perspective of associate pastors, judicatory personnel, interim pastors, congregation members, staff, boards, consultants, etc.

- Creating a detailed personal and professional profile of the spouses of these pastors.
- Assessing the influence of ordained relatives (maternal and paternal), and others serving religious organizations in other capacities, on pastors of megachurches. Special attention should be given to the influence of mothers, sisters, spouses, and daughters.

The following list includes a few of the many questions which would expand the current understanding of pastoral change and transition in megachurches.

- How, if at all, does pastoral change and transition impact membership, worship attendance, financial contributions, staff turnover, and other factors?
- Is the vacancy period getting longer?
- How, if at all, do other biblical texts inform the understanding of pastoral change and transition?
- How, if at all, does denominational affiliation influence preparedness for pastoral change and transition?
- Is there a correlation between denominational affiliation (including non-denominational) and the use of intentional interim ministers during the vacancy period?

Answering these questions will require a different methodology than the one used for this study. My proposed research design is described in the following section.

### Research Methodology

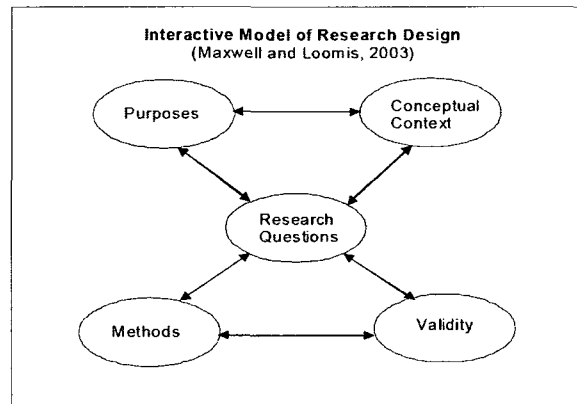
Maxwell's and Loomis' Interactive Model for Research Design suggest that a research design should consist of "the actual components of a study and the ways in which these components connect with and influence each other."<sup>22</sup> In their model, the components form an integrated and interacting whole with each component closely tied

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<sup>22</sup> Maxwell and Loomis, "Mixed Methods Design: An Alternative Approach," 241-71. This 2003 essay is an extension of Maxwell's 1998 essay. Joseph A. Maxwell, "Designing a Qualitative Study," in *Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods*, ed. Leonard Bickman and Debra J. Rog (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998).



to several others rather than being linked in a linear or cyclical sequence (figure 21). Each of the five components can influence and be influenced by any of the other components.



**Figure 21. Maxwell and Loomis Interactive Model of Research Design**

Using the research questions as the “hub or heart” of the design, informing and responding to all of the other components of the design, I created a map which exposed the potentially complex, multi-layered, non-linear process.<sup>23</sup> Tashakkori and Teddlie’s fully integrated mixed model design (appendix X) was carefully considered because it was the only one that allows intentional and iterative integration at every stage of the study as both of the QUAN and QUAL research questions are addressed through the collection and analysis of QUAN and QUAL data.<sup>24</sup>

However, Teddlie and Tashakkori caution that fully integrated mixed model designs are typically implemented by a research team with diverse methodological

<sup>23</sup> Maxwell and Loomis, “Mixed Methods Design: An Alternative Approach,” 246.

<sup>24</sup> Tashakkori and Teddlie’s model was based on the interactive model approach created by Maxwell and Loomis. Ibid., 241-71. Abbas Tashakkori and Charles Teddlie, “The Past and Future of Mixed Methods Research: From Data Triangulation to Mixed Model Designs,” in *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research*, ed. Abbas Tashakkori and Charles Teddlie (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), 689-90.

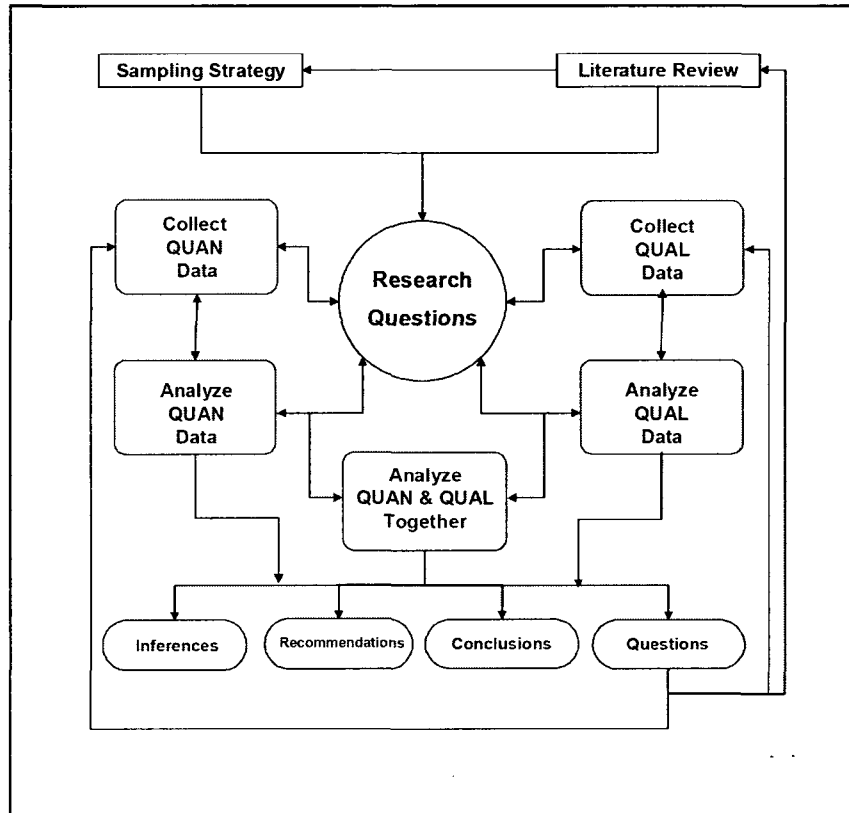
expertise.<sup>25</sup> For example, Johnstone's and Schulenberg's previous exploratory research motivated them to implement a fully integrated mixed model design with a team of researchers in order to better understand their specific topic. They argue for, and demonstrate that, the integration of QUAN and QUAL methods leads to a better understanding of the phenomenon under study.<sup>26</sup>

After carefully reviewing these two studies, I confirmed the appropriateness of a fully integrated mixed model design for future research on this phenomenon in Phase 3 (Better-Known Phenomena) of Stebbins' Concatenated Exploration Process (figure 17). The diagram in figure 22 illustrates a potential design for future research for Stebbins' Phase 2 (Partially-Known Phenomena) to be conducted by a team of researchers with expertise in QUAL and QUAN data collection and analysis.

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<sup>25</sup> Teddlie and Tashakkori, *Foundations of Mixed Methods Research: Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches in the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 158.

<sup>26</sup> Interestingly, Johnstone chose the fully integrated mixed methodology design based upon the 1994 edition of Creswell's *Research Design* which did not include a drawing of the fully integrated mixed design as illustrated in appendix X, so she created her own conceptual model of the iterative, non-linear research process which she followed. John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative & Quantitative Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994). While acknowledging Creswell's warning that conducting such a study required "sophisticated knowledge" of both paradigms (meaning QUAN and QUAL), she "accepted the challenge of a relatively uncharted research method in order to produce the quality of outcome that I desired for this thesis." Patricia Lynne Johnstone, "The Process and Organisational Consequences of New Artefact Adoption in Surgery" (Ph.D. diss., Macquarie University, Macquarie Graduate School of Management, 2001), 16. Johnstone's model appears in her thesis which is protected by copyright, so it was not included here. See Johnstone, "The Process and Organisational Consequences of New Artefact Adoption in Surgery", 20.



**Figure 22. Proposed Future Research Process**

Future research should include robust analysis of QUAL data, particularly from interviews of individuals or focus groups, and QUAN data using inferential statistics. Careful attention should be given to intentional and iterative integration of data and methods at every stage of the study. The results from the QUAN and QUAL data analyses should be integrated in order to inform the final inferences, recommendations, and conclusions.

### Concluding Comments

As a researcher, it is difficult to recognize God's activity in the world with absolute certainty even with state-of-the-art quantitative and qualitative methods. But as a Christian theologian, I must acknowledge the presence of the Holy Spirit throughout this study. Beyond the obvious biblical and theological discussion in Chapter 2, the presence and influence of the Holy Spirit was recognized by congregations and leaders in Chapters 3 and 6.

The most unexpected finding was the pastors' reluctance and resistance to accept a particular call. From Truett and Criswell, to the current pastors, I was very surprised to discover that many of them had no knowledge of, or interest in, the position they eventually accepted. Their stories point to the Holy Spirit's influence on the congregation's recognition and reception of their gifts, decision to extend the call, and in overcoming their own reluctance to accept. In most of these cases, there was a disruption in pastoral leadership. The congregations were responding to a pastoral vacancy, not anticipating a pastoral change.

That may lead some to argue that the will of the Holy Spirit would be constrained by a succession planning process. But, First Presbyterian Church of Colorado Springs and University Presbyterian of Seattle have demonstrated that the will of the Holy Spirit can be discerned without disrupting the continuity of leadership. In both of these cases, the congregation participated in the selection process in anticipation of the current pastor's retirement.

Unfortunately, two other congregations were unprepared for their pastor's acceptance of a new call. Is this the Holy Spirit's fault? Planning and the discerning the

will of the Holy Spirit are mutually beneficial activities which require the participation of all of the stakeholders in the selection, development, and transition of pastoral leaders. It is their responsibility to continually discern the will of the Spirit together in order to protect the sacredness of relationships within the community, and with the Triune God.

As I said earlier, my concern is that pastoral change is more than an organizational issue, it is a matter of faith. Policies, procedures, and precedents should not create situations which cause people to lose their faith or affect their spiritual practices. For it is through the faith and hope of the people of God, who are called and sent by the Holy Spirit, that God's love for all of creation is revealed and reconciliation can be achieved. Therefore, whenever possible, the sacred relationship between pastor and congregation must be respected so that no one will choose to shop for groceries instead of worship.

Successes of the past are not guarantees for the future.  
Growing a church is like riding a bicycle uphill.  
You're either always moving ahead or you are going backwards,  
you really can't stand still for very long.  
We must move ahead together in faith, trust God to be God,  
commit ourselves to those things that are most important,  
and never stop asking ourselves "Why are we here?"

Larry Adams, Founding and Current Pastor  
Golden Hills Community Church  
April, 1986

APPENDIX A  
DEFINITIONS OF CHURCH AND CONGREGATION

In order to process the data gathered during my research, particularly for multi-site congregations, I defined *church* and *congregation* as separate variables. These terms are commonly used interchangeably in religious literature and conversation but not in this study because there were several congregations in this study with multiple sites or locations.

The definitions below were intended to facilitate the methodology of this research, not reflect on the ecclesiology. The term *church* refers to each site within one *congregation*. *Churches* are subsets of the *congregation*. For example, the congregation called Upper Arlington Lutheran Church (UALC) in Columbus, Ohio has three churches – The Church on Lytham Road, The Church at Mill Run, and Hilltop Lutheran Church. *Congregations* with more than one *church* aggregate their data before submitting their annual reports to the national offices of the denominations.

APPENDIX B  
CHURCH GROWTH BOOKS

YEAR	AUTHOR	TITLE
1970	Donald McGavran	Understanding Church Growth
1970	Alan R. Tippett	Church Growth and the Word of God: The Biblical Basis of the Church Growth Viewpoint
1971	Harold R. Cook	Historic Patterns of Church Growth: A Study of Five Churches
1972	Dean M. Kelley	Why Conservative Churches are Growing: A Study in Sociology of Religion
1973	Donald McGavran	How to Grow a Church
	Win Arn	
<b>1976</b>	<b>C. Peter Wagner</b>	<b>Your Church Can Grow</b>
1976	Harvie M. Conn	Theological Perspectives on Church Growth
1977	Donald McGavran	Ten Steps for Church Growth
	Win Arn	
1979	C. Peter Wagner	Our Kind of People: The Ethical Dimensions of Church Growth In America
1979	C. Peter Wagner	Your Church Can Be Healthy
1980	Donald McGavran	Understanding Church Growth (2d edition)
1980	Donald McGavran	Church Growth: Strategies That Work
	George G. Hunter	
1981	C. Peter Wagner	Church Growth and the Whole Gospel: A Biblical Mandate
1981	George W. Peters	A Theology of Church Growth
1981	Elmer L. Towns	The Complete Book of Church Growth
	John N. Vaughan	
	David J. Seifert	
1983	Wilbert R. Shenk	Exploring Church Growth
<b>1986</b>	<b>C. Peter Wagner</b>	<b>Church Growth: State of the Art</b>
	<b>Win Arn</b>	
	<b>Elmer L. Towns</b>	
1987	C. Peter Wagner	Strategies For Church Growth: Tools for Effective Mission and Evangelism
1988	Donald McGavran	Effective Evangelism: A Theological Mandate
1989	Robert E. Logan	Beyond Church Growth
1990	Donald McGavran	Understanding Church Growth (3d edition)
1990	William M. Easum	The Church Growth Handbook
1991	C. Kirk Hadaway	Church growth principles: Separating Fact from Fiction
1993	Thom S. Rainer	The Book Of Church Growth: History, Theology, and Principles
2004	Gary McIntosh	Evaluating the Church Growth Movement: Five Views



APPENDIX C  
 CONGREGATIONS BY 2003 WATD  
 n=28  
 Sorted by 2003 Worship Attendance

Congregation Name	Denomination	Year Organized	City	State	WATD 2003	Mean WATD 2000-2004	Region	Metro Area
Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church	ELCA	1920	Minneapolis	MN	5775	5837	MW	MSP
First Baptist Church of Glenarden	BGC	1917	Landover	MD	5500	4500	NE	DC
Grace Baptist Church	BGC	1961	Santa Clarita	CA	5000	5000	W	LA
Wooddale Church	BGC	1949	Eden Prairie	MN	4372	4318	MW	MSP
Woodland Hills Church	BGC	1992	Maplewood	MN	4300	4020	MW	MSP
Hosanna!	ELCA	1980	Lakeville	MN	4057	3413	MW	MSP
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church	ELCA	1964	Burnsville	MN	4000	4040	MW	MSP
College Avenue Baptist Church	BGC	1892	San Diego	CA	3942	3449	W	SD
University Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1908	Seattle	WA	3891	3973	W	SEA
New Heights Church	BGC	1954	Vancouver	WA	3857	3477	W	POR
Menlo Park Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1873	Menlo Park	CA	3708	3881	W	SF
Community Church of Joy	ELCA	1974	Glendale	AZ	3111	3260	W	PHX
Eagle Brook Church	BGC	1950	Hugo	MN	3042	3524	MW	MSP
Lutheran Church of Hope	ELCA	1994	West Des Moines	IA	2877	2587	MW	DM
St. Andrew's Lutheran Church	ELCA	1922	Mahtomedi	MN	2823	2861	MW	MSP
Fourth Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1871	Chicago	IL	2600	2525	MW	CHI
Golden Hills Community Church	BGC	1984	Brentwood	CA	2592	2555	W	SF
Bethlehem Baptist Church	BGC	1871	Minneapolis	MN	2433	2318	MW	MSP
Peachtree Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1919	Atlanta	GA	2319	2317	SE	ATL
Upper Arlington Lutheran Church	ELCA	1956	Columbus	OH	2316	2267	MW	COL
First Presbyterian Church Colorado Springs	PC(USA)	1872	Colorado Springs	CO	2300	2325	W	CSP
Bel Air Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1956	Los Angeles	CA	2300	1839	W	LA
Calvary Lutheran Church	ELCA	1946	Golden Valley	MN	2287	2282	MW	MSP
Sunset Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1952	Portland	OR	2261	2389	W	POR
Hope Lutheran Church	ELCA	1958	Fargo	ND	2129	2047	MW	MSP
Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church	ELCA	1981	Apple Valley	MN	2110	2062	MW	MSP
Friendship Community Church	BGC	1979	Prior Lake	MN	2081	1908	MW	MSP
First Presbyterian Church Houston	PC(USA)	1839	Houston	TX	2035	1772	SE	HOU

APPENDIX D  
 28 CONGREGATIONS BY MEAN WATD (2000-2004)  
 n=28  
 Sorted by Mean Worship Attendance 2000-2004

Congregation Name	Denomination	Year Organized	City	State	WATD 2003	Mean WATD 2000-2004	Region	Metro Area
Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church	ELCA	1920	Minneapolis	MN	5775	5837	MW	MSP
Grace Baptist Church	BGC	1961	Santa Clarita	CA	5000	5000	W	LA
First Baptist Church of Glenarden	BGC	1917	Landover	MD	5500	4500	NE	DC
Wooddale Church	BGC	1949	Eden Prairie	MN	4372	4318	MW	MSP
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church	ELCA	1964	Burnsville	MN	4000	4040	MW	MSP
Woodland Hills Church	BGC	1992	Maplewood	MN	4300	4020	MW	MSP
University Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1908	Seattle	WA	3891	3973	W	SEA
Menlo Park Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1873	Menlo Park	CA	3708	3881	W	SF
Eagle Brook Church	BGC	1950	Hugo	MN	3042	3524	MW	MSP
New Heights Church	BGC	1954	Vancouver	WA	3857	3477	W	POR
College Avenue Baptist Church	BGC	1892	San Diego	CA	3942	3449	W	SD
Hosanna!	ELCA	1980	Lakeville	MN	4057	3413	MW	MSP
Community Church of Joy	ELCA	1974	Glendale	AZ	3111	3260	W	PHX
St. Andrew's Lutheran Church	ELCA	1922	Mahtomedi	MN	2823	2861	MW	MSP
Lutheran Church of Hope	ELCA	1994	West Des Moines	IA	2877	2587	MW	DM
Golden Hills Community Church	BGC	1984	Brentwood	CA	2592	2555	W	SF
Fourth Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1871	Chicago	IL	2600	2525	MW	CHI
Sunset Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1952	Portland	OR	2261	2389	W	POR
First Presbyterian Church Colorado Springs	PC(USA)	1872	Colorado Springs	CO	2300	2325	W	CSP
Bethlehem Baptist Church	BGC	1871	Minneapolis	MN	2433	2318	MW	MSP
Peachtree Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1919	Atlanta	GA	2319	2317	SE	ATL
Calvary Lutheran Church	ELCA	1946	Golden Valley	MN	2287	2282	MW	MSP
Upper Arlington Lutheran Church	ELCA	1956	Columbus	OH	2316	2267	MW	COL
Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church	ELCA	1981	Apple Valley	MN	2110	2062	MW	MSP
Hope Lutheran Church	ELCA	1958	Fargo	ND	2129	2047	MW	MSP
Friendship Community Church	BGC	1979	Prior Lake	MN	2081	1908	MW	MSP
Bel Air Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1956	Los Angeles	CA	2300	1839	W	LA
First Presbyterian Church Houston	PC(USA)	1839	Houston	TX	2035	1772	SE	HOU

APPENDIX E  
 22 CONGREGATIONS BY MEAN WATD (2000-2004)  
 n=22  
 Sorted by Mean Worship Attendance 2000-2004

Congregation Name	Denomination	Year Organized	City	State	WATD 2003	Mean WATD 2000-2004	Region	Metro Area
Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church	ELCA	1920	Minneapolis	MN	5,775	5,837	MW	MSP
Grace Baptist Church	BGC	1961	Santa Clarita	CA	5,000	5,000	W	LA
Wooddale Church	BGC	1949	Eden Prairie	MN	4,372	4,318	MW	MSP
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church	ELCA	1964	Burnsville	MN	4,000	4,040	MW	MSP
Woodland Hills Church	BGC	1992	Maplewood	MN	4,300	4,020	MW	MSP
University Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1908	Seattle	WA	3,891	3,973	W	SEA
Menlo Park Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1873	Menlo Park	CA	3,708	3,881	W	SF
Eagle Brook Church	BGC	1950	Hugo	MN	3,042	3,524	MW	MSP
New Heights Church	BGC	1954	Vancouver	WA	3,857	3,477	W	POR
College Avenue Baptist Church	BGC	1892	San Diego	CA	3,942	3,449	W	SD
Hosanna!	ELCA	1980	Lakeville	MN	4,057	3,413	MW	MSP
Community Church of Joy	ELCA	1974	Glendale	AZ	3,111	3,260	W	PHX
St. Andrew's Lutheran Church	ELCA	1922	Mahtomedi	MN	2,823	2,861	MW	MSP
Lutheran Church of Hope	ELCA	1994	West Des Moines	IA	2,877	2,587	MW	DM
Golden Hills Community Church	BGC	1984	Brentwood	CA	2,592	2,555	W	SF
Fourth Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1871	Chicago	IL	2,600	2,525	MW	CHI
Sunset Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1952	Portland	OR	2,261	2,389	W	POR
First Presbyterian Ch Colorado Springs	PC(USA)	1872	Colorado Springs	CO	2,300	2,325	W	CSP
Bethlehem Baptist Church	BGC	1871	Minneapolis	MN	2,433	2,318	MW	MSP
Peachtree Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1919	Atlanta	GA	2,319	2,317	S	ATL
Calvary Lutheran Church	ELCA	1946	Golden Valley	MN	2,287	2,282	MW	MSP
Upper Arlington Lutheran Church	ELCA	1956	Columbus	OH	2,316	2,267	MW	COL

APPENDIX F  
 CONGREGATIONS BY DENOMINATION  
 n=22  
 Sorted by Denomination and Mean WATD (2000-2004)

Congregation Name	Denomination	Year Organized	City	State	WATD 2003	Mean WATD 2000-2004	Region	Metro Area
Grace Baptist Church	BGC	1961	Santa Clarita	CA	5,000	5,000	W	LA
Wooddale Church	BGC	1949	Eden Prairie	MN	4,372	4,318	MW	MSP
Woodland Hills Church	BGC	1992	Maplewood	MN	4,300	4,020	MW	MSP
Eagle Brook Church	BGC	1950	Hugo	MN	3,042	3,524	MW	MSP
New Heights Church	BGC	1954	Vancouver	WA	3,857	3,477	W	POR
College Avenue Baptist Church	BGC	1892	San Diego	CA	3,942	3,449	W	SD
Golden Hills Community Church	BGC	1984	Brentwood	CA	2,592	2,555	W	SF
Bethlehem Baptist Church	BGC	1871	Minneapolis	MN	2,433	2,318	MW	MSP
Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church	ELCA	1920	Minneapolis	MN	5,775	5,837	MW	MSP
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church	ELCA	1964	Burnsville	MN	4,000	4,040	MW	MSP
Hosanna!	ELCA	1980	Lakeville	MN	4,057	3,413	MW	MSP
Community Church of Joy	ELCA	1974	Glendale	AZ	3,111	3,260	W	PHX
St. Andrew's Lutheran Church	ELCA	1922	Mahtomedi	MN	2,823	2,861	MW	MSP
Lutheran Church of Hope	ELCA	1994	West Des Moines	IA	2,877	2,587	MW	DM
Calvary Lutheran Church	ELCA	1946	Golden Valley	MN	2,287	2,282	MW	MSP
Upper Arlington Lutheran Church	ELCA	1956	Columbus	OH	2,316	2,267	MW	COL
University Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1908	Seattle	WA	3,891	3,973	W	SEA
Menlo Park Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1873	Menlo Park	CA	3,708	3,881	W	SF
Fourth Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1871	Chicago	IL	2,600	2,525	MW	CHI
Sunset Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1952	Portland	OR	2,261	2,389	W	POR
First Presbyterian Ch Colorado Springs	PC(USA)	1872	Colorado Springs	CO	2,300	2,325	W	CSP
Peachtree Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1919	Atlanta	GA	2,319	2,317	S	ATL

APPENDIX G  
 CONGREGATIONS BY STATE  
 n=22  
 Sorted by State, Congregation Name

<i>Congregation Name</i>	<b>Denomina tion</b>	<b>Year Organized</b>	<b>City</b>	<i>S t a t e</i>	<b>WATD 2003</b>	<b>Mean WATD 2000- 2004</b>	<b>R e g i o n</b>	<b>Metro Area</b>
Community Church of Joy	ELCA	1974	Glendale	AZ	3,111	3,260	W	PHX
Grace Baptist Church	BGC	1961	Santa Clarita	CA	5,000	5,000	W	LA
Golden Hills Community Church	BGC	1984	Brentwood	CA	2,592	2,555	W	SF
Menlo Park Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1873	Menlo Park	CA	3,708	3,881	W	SF
College Avenue Baptist Church	BGC	1892	San Diego	CA	3,942	3,449	W	SD
First Presbyterian Ch Colorado Springs	PC(USA)	1872	Colorado Springs	CO	2,300	2,325	W	CSP
Peachtree Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1919	Atlanta	GA	2,319	2,317	S	ATL
Lutheran Church of Hope	ELCA	1994	West Des Moines	IA	2,877	2,587	MW	DM
Fourth Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1871	Chicago	IL	2,600	2,525	MW	CHI
Woodland Hills Church	BGC	1992	Maplewood	MN	4,300	4,020	MW	MSP
Wooddale Church	BGC	1949	Eden Prairie	MN	4,372	4,318	MW	MSP
St. Andrew's Lutheran Church	ELCA	1922	Mahtomedi	MN	2,823	2,861	MW	MSP
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church	ELCA	1964	Burnsville	MN	4,000	4,040	MW	MSP
Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church	ELCA	1920	Minneapolis	MN	5,775	5,837	MW	MSP
Hosanna!	ELCA	1980	Lakeville	MN	4,057	3,413	MW	MSP
Eagle Brook Church	BGC	1950	Hugo	MN	3,042	3,524	MW	MSP
Calvary Lutheran Church	ELCA	1946	Golden Valley	MN	2,287	2,282	MW	MSP
Bethlehem Baptist Church	BGC	1871	Minneapolis	MN	2,433	2,318	MW	MSP
Upper Arlington Lutheran Church	ELCA	1956	Columbus	OH	2,316	2,267	MW	COL
Sunset Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1952	Portland	OR	2,261	2,389	W	POR
University Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1908	Seattle	WA	3,891	3,973	W	SEA
New Heights Church	BGC	1954	Vancouver	WA	3,857	3,477	W	POR

APPENDIX H  
 CONGREGATIONS BY REGION  
 n=22  
 Sorted by Region, State, Congregation Name

<i>Congregation Name</i>	<b>Denomina tion</b>	<b>Year Organized</b>	<b>City</b>	<i>S t a t e</i>	<b>WATD 2003</b>	<b>Mean WATD 2000- 2004</b>	<i>R e g i o n</i>	<b>Metro Area</b>
Lutheran Church of Hope	ELCA	1994	West Des Moines	IA	2,877	2,587	MW	DM
Fourth Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1871	Chicago	IL	2,600	2,525	MW	CHI
Bethlehem Baptist Church	BGC	1871	Minneapolis	MN	2,433	2,318	MW	MSP
Calvary Lutheran Church	ELCA	1946	Golden Valley	MN	2,287	2,282	MW	MSP
Eagle Brook Church	BGC	1950	Hugo	MN	3,042	3,524	MW	MSP
Hosanna!	ELCA	1980	Lakeville	MN	4,057	3,413	MW	MSP
Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church	ELCA	1920	Minneapolis	MN	5,775	5,837	MW	MSP
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church	ELCA	1964	Burnsville	MN	4,000	4,040	MW	MSP
St. Andrew's Lutheran Church	ELCA	1922	Mahtomedi	MN	2,823	2,861	MW	MSP
Wooddale Church	BGC	1949	Eden Prairie	MN	4,372	4,318	MW	MSP
Woodland Hills Church	BGC	1992	Maplewood	MN	4,300	4,020	MW	MSP
Upper Arlington Lutheran Church	ELCA	1956	Columbus	OH	2,316	2,267	MW	COL
Peachtree Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1919	Atlanta	GA	2,319	2,317	S	ATL
Community Church of Joy	ELCA	1974	Glendale	AZ	3,111	3,260	W	PHX
Golden Hills Community Church	BGC	1984	Brentwood	CA	2,592	2,555	W	SF
Grace Baptist Church	BGC	1961	Santa Clarita	CA	5,000	5,000	W	LA
College Avenue Baptist Church	BGC	1892	San Diego	CA	3,942	3,449	W	SD
Menlo Park Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1873	Menlo Park	CA	3,708	3,881	W	SF
First Presbyterian Ch Colorado Springs	PC(USA)	1872	Colorado Springs	CO	2,300	2,325	W	CSP
Sunset Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1952	Portland	OR	2,261	2,389	W	POR
New Heights Church	BGC	1954	Vancouver	WA	3,857	3,477	W	POR
University Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1908	Seattle	WA	3,891	3,973	W	SEA

APPENDIX I  
PASTORS AND CONGREGATIONS

Pastor's Name	Congregation Name	Denomination	City	ST	Begin Year	End Year
Rev. Larry H. Adams	Golden Hills Community Church	BGC	Brentwood	CA	1984	
Dr. Leith C. Anderson	Wooddale Church	BGC	Eden Prairie	MN	1977	
Rev. William R. Bohline	Hosanna!	ELCA	Lakeville	MN	1981	
Dr. Gregory A. Boyd	Woodland Hills Church	BGC	Maplewood	MN	1992	
Dr. John M. Buchanan	Fourth Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	Chicago	IL	1985	
Rev. Steven L. Dornbusch	Calvary Lutheran Church	ELCA	Golden Valley	MN	1997	
Rev. Roger C. Eigenfeld	St. Andrew's Lutheran Church	ELCA	Mahtomedi	MN	1972	2005
Dr. Michael W. Foss	Prince of Peace Lutheran Church	ELCA	Burnsville	MN	1993	2006
Rev. Tommy J. Givens	Grace Baptist Church	BGC	Santa Clarita	CA	1984	2006
Dr. Matthew G. Hannan	New Heights Church	BGC	Vancouver	WA	1991	
Rev. Carlton P. Harris	College Avenue Baptist Church	BGC	San Diego	CA	2006	
Rev. Michael J. Housholder	Lutheran Church of Hope	ELCA	West Des Moines	IA	1995	
Dr. Walther P. Kallestad, Jr.	Community Church of Joy	ELCA	Glendale	AZ	1978	
Dr. Ronald W. Kincaid	Sunset Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	Portland	OR	1981	
Dr. Robert A. Merritt	Eagle Brook Church	BGC	Hugo	MN	1991	
Dr. John C. Ortberg, Jr.	Menlo Park Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	Menlo Park	CA	2003	
Dr. Earl F. Palmer	University Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	Seattle	WA	1991	
Dr. Victor D. Pentz	Peachtree Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	Atlanta	GA	2000	
Dr. John P. Piper	Bethlehem Baptist Church	BGC	Minneapolis	MN	1980	
Dr. James M. Singleton, Jr.	First Presbyterian Ch Colorado Springs	PC(USA)	Colorado Springs	CO	2005	
Rev. Paul T. Ullring	Upper Arlington Lutheran Church	ELCA	Columbus	OH	2003	
Dr. Paul M. Youngdahl	Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church	ELCA	Minneapolis	MN	1974	

As of December 31, 2006

APPENDIX J  
CHURCHES VISITED

<i>Congregation Name</i>	Street Address	City	S t a t e
Bethlehem Baptist Church Mpls	720 13th Avenue South	Minneapolis	MN
Calvary Lutheran Church	7520 Golden Valley Road	Golden Valley	MN
Community Church of Joy	21000 N. 75th Ave.	Glendale	AZ
Eagle Brook Church Lino Lakes	5212 130th St N	Hugo	MN
Eagle Brook Church WBL	2401 E Buffalo St	White Bear Lake	MN
First Presbyterian Colorado	219 E Bijou St	Colorado Springs	CO
Fourth Presbyterian Church	126 E. Chestnut Street	Chicago	IL
Friendship Community Church PL*	17741 Fairlawn Avenue	Prior Lake	MN
Friendship Community Church SH*	12800 Marystown Road	Shakopee	MN
Hosanna!	9600 163rd Street W	Lakeville	MN
Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church Mpls	5025 Knox Avenue South	Minneapolis	MN
Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church West	7150 Rolling Acres Road	Victoria	MN
New Heights Church	7913 NE 58th Ave	Vancouver	WA
Prince of Peace Lutheran	13901 Fairview Drive	Burnsville	MN
Shepherd of the Valley*	12650 Johnny Cake Ridge Road	Apple Valley	MN
St. Andrews Lutheran Church	900 Stillwater Road	Mahtomedi	MN
Sunset Presbyterian Church	14986 NW Cornell Rd	Portland	OR
Wooddale Church	6630 Shady Oak Road	Eden Prairie	MN
Woodland Hills Church	1740 Van Dyke Street	Maplewood	MN

\* Churches in the initial sample of 28



APPENDIX K  
MEASUREMENT OF VARIABLES

**Age and Years** – All age and year calculations are based upon December 31, 2006.

**Birth City Type** – Categories were copied from Pulpit and Pew National Survey of Pastoral Leaders, 2001. Refer to <http://www.thearda.com/Archive/Files/Descriptions/CLERGY01.asp>.

**Current Neighborhood**

Downtown – Central business district

City Residential – Residential within city limits

Suburban – Outside of city limits

**Degree Groups** – Bachelors = AB + BA + BS

Masters = M.A. + M.Th + M.S.M.

Masters of Divinity = BD + MDIV

Honorary = D.D.

Doctorate = D.Min + Ph.D. + Ed.D. + Th.D.

**Father's Occupation** - Census 2000 Occupational Categories with Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Equivalents. Pastors were separated from the Management, professional, and related occupations category.

**Marital Status** - Census 2000 categories for marital status: married, never married, separated, divorced or widowed.

**Metro Area** – The cities were grouped into metro areas based upon the 2000 Census Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Areas. Appendix N includes a list of the metro areas included in this study.

**Multisite** – The congregation worships in more than one location. Refer to appendix A.

**Pastors and Staff** – Number provided by the pastor or as listed on the congregation's website as of July 2006.

**Pastor's Kid** - Father was ordained or licensed to serve as a pastor or evangelist.

**Pastoral Relationship Indicator** –

**Founder** – Founder of the congregation, typically the first installed pastor. The founder may also have been the installed pastor when worship attendance exceeded 2,000.

**Grower** – Installed pastor (not founder) who was instrumental in leading the congregation when worship attendance exceeded 2,000.

**Heir** – The pastor of a megachurch installed between the years 2000 and 2005. Remains in this status for five years until impact on worship attendance can be determined.

**Increased** – Worship attendance increased during the installed pastor's tenure. Heirs are qualified to be moved to this status after five years.

**Decreased** – Worship attendance decreased during the installed pastor's tenure. Heirs are qualified to be moved to this status after five years.

**Sustained** – Installed pastor who maintained membership or worship attendance at existing levels.

**No Impact** – Installed pastor whose tenure was less than five years.

**Pastoral Transition** – The transition from one installed senior pastor to another. It must be noted that the congregation was obviously impacted by the leadership transitions between pastorates such as interim pastors, pulpit supply, etc. but it was not possible to identify all of these persons.

**Pastoral Transition Pattern** – preferred or dominant process used for pastoral transition such as intentional interim pastor, co-pastor, pulpit supply, internal, or unknown.

**Pastoral Transition Status (as of December 31, 2006)**

**Already** Congregation has installed at least one new senior pastor since WATD exceeded 2,000.

**Now** Congregation does not have an installed senior pastor or is in transition

**Not Yet** Congregation has not installed a new senior pastor since WATD exceeded 2,000

**Primary Worship Center** – the largest room used for worship at the particular site.

**Publications** – Included books published through 2007.

**Race** - Census 2000 categories for race alone: White alone; Black or African-American alone; American Indian or Alaska Native alone; Asian alone; Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander alone; and some other race alone.

**Reason for Pastoral Change**

**New Call** – Pastor accepted a call at another congregation

**New Position** – Pastor accepted a call or position at another organization (religious or secular) that is not a congregation

**Retired** – Retired from full-time, installed ministry in a congregation

**Promoted** – Promoted from another position within the congregation

**Died** – Called to heavenly service

**Military** – Pastor called or volunteered for military service

**Resigned** – Resigned from current position for reasons other than those listed above

**Not Available** – Data not available

**Region** – The congregations were grouped into four regions based upon Census 2000 categories: Midwest, Northeast, South, and West. Appendix O includes a list of the states within each region.

**Transition Period** – the number of months between installed pastors. For congregations using the co-pastor model, the number of months between the announcement of the current pastor's intent to dissolve the current call and the installation of the next pastor.

**Worship Services** – Number of worship services on Saturdays and Sundays as of March 31, 2007.

**Worship Centers** – Number of worship centers as of March 31, 2007.

## APPENDIX L INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### **PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL**

Please tell me about your family – parents, siblings, etc.

Describe the influence of your family and friends on your ministry.

Describe how your family has been impacted by your ministry.

Describe your personal support network. Who are your friends, role model, mentors?

Describe your professional network. Who are your role models, mentors?

Did you ever attend the Robert H. Schuller Institute for Successful Leadership?

Describe your faith journey.

Describe your personal spiritual practices

### **CURRENT CALL**

Why did you accept the call to this congregation? Why have you stayed?

What in your background and previous training or experienced best prepared you for this position?

In retrospect, what training or experience would you like to have had prior to taking this position?

Describe your/congregation's relationship with the local judicatory, denomination . . .

### **PASTORAL TRANSITION**

Please describe how has this congregation handled pastoral transition in the past. (or currently handling a transition) Interims? Staff? What worked? What didn't work? What did the system learn from this?

Describe your transition into your current position (if applicable). What worked or didn't work? What did you learn from this?

Is/was there a succession plan for you? If so, what is it? If not, why not?

In your opinion, what are the issues related to succession planning and leadership transition?

What are the most important characteristics that the congregation should consider in searching for your successor when that time comes?

APPENDIX M  
LIST OF DISSERTATION TITLES

**Master of Theology**

Harris, Carlton P. "An Exposition and Critique of Mormon Soteriology " Th.M., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1983.

**Doctor of Ministry**

Anderson, Leith Charles. "Wooddale Baptist Church: Five Year Plan for Growth in Fellowship, Discipleship and Evangelism." D.Min., Fuller Theological Seminary, School of Psychology, 1978.

Hannan, Matthew G. "Building a Church Worth Going To: A Guide to Revitalizing Declining and Static Churches (Church Renewal)." D.Min., Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, 1994.

Kallestad, Walther Paul. "Entertainment Evangelism (Evangelism, Church Growth)." D.Min., Fuller Theological Seminary, Doctor of Ministry Program, 1992.

Kincaid, Ronald Warren. "The Missing Ingredient in Christian Maturity: A Call to Church-Centered Evangelism." D.Min., Fuller Theological Seminary, Doctor of Ministry Program, 1989.

Pentz, Victor Donald. "Preaching to Effect Transformation." D.Min., Fuller Theological Seminary, Doctor of Ministry Program, 1991.

**Doctor of Philosophy**

Boyd, Gregory A. "The a Priori Construction of the Doctrine of God in the Philosophy of Charles Hartshorne: A Critical Examination and Reconstruction of Di-Polar Theism Towards a Trinitarian Metaphysics." Ph.D., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1988.

Merritt, Robert Allen. "The Socially Constructed Rhetorical Categories of Protestant Preaching in Early Nineteenth Century New England." Ph.D., Pennsylvania State University, 1991.

Ortberg, John Carl Jr. "Changing Beliefs: The Differential Effects on Attitudes, Values, and Behavior." Ph.D., Fuller Theological Seminary, School of Psychology, 1986.

Piper, John. ""Love Your Enemies": Jesus' Love Command in the Synoptic Gospels and in the Early Christian Paraenesis: A History of the Tradition and Interpretation of Its Uses." Ph.D., Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität, 1974.

**Doctor of Theology**

Singleton, James Martin Jr. "The Changing Place and Priority of Evangelism in the Southern Presbyterian Church, 1861-1961." Th.D., Boston University, School of Theology, 1996.

APPENDIX N  
 CONGREGATIONS BY YEAR ORGANIZED  
 n=22

<i>Congregation Name</i>	<b>Denomina tion</b>	<i>Year Organized</i>	<b>City</b>	<b>S t a t e</b>	<b>WATD 2003</b>	<b>Mean WATD 2000- 2004</b>	<b>R e g i o n</b>	<b>Metro Area</b>
Bethlehem Baptist Church	BGC	1871	Minneapolis	MN	2,433	2,318	MW	MSP
Fourth Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1871	Chicago	IL	2,600	2,525	MW	CHI
First Presbyterian Ch Colorado Springs	PC(USA)	1872	Colorado Springs	CO	2,300	2,325	W	CSP
Menlo Park Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1873	Menlo Park	CA	3,708	3,881	W	SF
College Avenue Baptist Church	BGC	1892	San Diego	CA	3,942	3,449	W	SD
University Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1908	Seattle	WA	3,891	3,973	W	SEA
Peachtree Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1919	Atlanta	GA	2,319	2,317	S	ATL
Mt. Olivet Lutheran Church	ELCA	1920	Minneapolis	MN	5,775	5,837	MW	MSP
St. Andrew's Lutheran Church	ELCA	1922	Mahtomedi	MN	2,823	2,861	MW	MSP
Calvary Lutheran Church	ELCA	1946	Golden Valley	MN	2,287	2,282	MW	MSP
Wooddale Church	BGC	1949	Eden Prairie	MN	4,372	4,318	MW	MSP
Eagle Brook Church	BGC	1950	Hugo	MN	3,042	3,524	MW	MSP
Sunset Presbyterian Church	PC(USA)	1952	Portland	OR	2,261	2,389	W	POR
New Heights Church	BGC	1954	Vancouver	WA	3,857	3,477	W	POR
Upper Arlington Lutheran Church	ELCA	1956	Columbus	OH	2,316	2,267	MW	COL
Grace Baptist Church	BGC	1961	Santa Clarita	CA	5,000	5,000	W	LA
Prince of Peace Lutheran Church	ELCA	1964	Burnsville	MN	4,000	4,040	MW	MSP
Community Church of Joy	ELCA	1974	Glendale	AZ	3,111	3,260	W	PHX
Hosanna!	ELCA	1980	Lakeville	MN	4,057	3,413	MW	MSP
Golden Hills Community Church	BGC	1984	Brentwood	CA	2,592	2,555	W	SF
Woodland Hills Church	BGC	1992	Maplewood	MN	4,300	4,020	MW	MSP
Lutheran Church of Hope	ELCA	1994	West Des Moines	IA	2,877	2,587	MW	DM

APPENDIX O  
LIST OF METRO AREAS

Based upon 2000 U.S. Census Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Areas

<b>Metro</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Region</b>
<b>ATL</b>	Atlanta	GA	S
<b>CHI</b>	Chicago	IL	MW
<b>COL</b>	Columbus	OH	MW
<b>COL</b>	Hilliard	OH	MW
<b>CSP</b>	Colorado Springs	CO	W
<b>DM</b>	Ankeny	IA	MW
<b>DM</b>	West Des Moines	IA	MW
<b>LA</b>	Newhall	CA	W
<b>LA</b>	Santa Clarita	CA	W
<b>MSP</b>	Burnsville	MN	MW
<b>MSP</b>	Eden Prairie	MN	MW
<b>MSP</b>	Golden Valley	MN	MW
<b>MSP</b>	Hugo	MN	MW
<b>MSP</b>	Lakeville	MN	MW
<b>MSP</b>	Mahtomedi	MN	MW
<b>MSP</b>	Maplewood	MN	MW
<b>MSP</b>	Minneapolis	MN	MW
<b>MSP</b>	Mounds View	MN	MW
<b>MSP</b>	Richfield	MN	MW
<b>MSP</b>	Victoria	MN	MW
<b>MSP</b>	White Bear Lake	MN	MW
<b>PHX</b>	Glendale	AZ	W
<b>POR</b>	Portland	OR	W
<b>POR</b>	Vancouver	WA	W
<b>SD</b>	San Diego	CA	W
<b>SEA</b>	Seattle	WA	W
<b>SF</b>	Antioch	CA	W
<b>SF</b>	Brentwood	CA	W
<b>SF</b>	Menlo Park	CA	W

APPENDIX P  
LIST OF STATES BY REGION

Based upon 2000 U.S. Census

<b>Midwest</b>	<b>Northeast</b>	<b>South</b>	<b>West</b>
Illinois	Connecticut	Alabama	Alaska
Indiana	Delaware	Arkansas	Arizona
Iowa	Maine	Delaware	California
Kansas	Massachusetts	Florida	Colorado
Michigan	New Hampshire	Georgia	Hawaii
Minnesota	New Jersey	Kentucky	Idaho
Missouri	New York	Louisiana	Montana
Nebraska	Pennsylvania	Maryland	Nevada
North Dakota	Rhode Island	Mississippi	New Mexico
Ohio	Vermont	North Carolina	Oregon
South Dakota		Oklahoma	Utah
Wisconsin		South Carolina	Washington
		Tennessee	Wyoming
		Texas	
		Virginia	
		West Virginia	

APPENDIX Q  
DENOMINATION PROFILES

**Baptist General Conference<sup>1</sup>**

The Baptist General Conference is a voluntary Christian fellowship or association of Baptist congregations in the United States and Islands of the Caribbean and Bahamas whose theology is biblically evangelical; whose character is multiethnic; whose spirit is positive and affirmative; whose purpose is to fulfill the Great Commission through evangelism, discipleship, and church planting; and whose people celebrate openness and freedom in the context of Christ's Lordship.<sup>2</sup>

The BGC is one of the fastest growing evangelical denominations in America, planting more than 150 new churches since 2000. In 2005, the BGC had 140,494 members in 1,034 congregations in the United States. These congregations are organized into 13 district conferences with a national service center in Arlington Heights, Illinois.<sup>3</sup> Each district has its own executive minister and Board of Overseers who direct the district ministries and support the local, autonomous congregations. Approximately 45%

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<sup>1</sup> The Swedish Baptist General Conference was organized in 1879. The name was changed to the Baptist General Conference in 1945. The name was changed to *Converge Worldwide* in June 2008.

<sup>2</sup> See Article II of the Bylaws of the Baptist General Conference at <http://216.177.136.28/content/view/2144/182/#Article2>.

<sup>3</sup> The Baptist General Conference changed its name to *Converge Worldwide* in June 2008 and relocated some of the national departments to Orlando, Florida in 2009.



of the BGC members are located in the Midwest including 20% in Minnesota and 9% in Illinois.<sup>4</sup> Nineteen percent of the BGC members live in California.

### **Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

The ELCA was formed in 1988 as the result of a merger of the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC), and the American Lutheran Church (ALC). In 2006, the ELCA had 4,774,203 members and 10,470 congregations across the U.S. and Caribbean. Since 2000, membership has declined by 7% and worship attendance has declined by 10%.

The congregations are organized into nine regions and sixty-five synods with churchwide offices in Chicago, Illinois. ELCA members live in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Approximately 58% of the ELCA members are located in the Midwest including 17% in Minnesota and 10% in Wisconsin. Outside of the Midwest, the largest concentration by state is 13% in Pennsylvania, followed by 6% in Ohio. Eleven percent of the ELCA members live in the West with 3% in California.

### **Presbyterian Church (USA)**

The Presbyterian Church (USA) is the largest of several Presbyterian churches in the United States. It was founded in 1983 as the result of a merger of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA and the Presbyterian Church in the United States. In 2005, the PC(USA) had 2,313,662 members in 10,903 congregations in the United States. Membership has declined 28% from 3,131,228 since the merge in 1983, and 8% since 2000. The congregations are organized into 16 synods and 173 presbyteries with national

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<sup>4</sup> The Minnesota Baptist Conference was the fastest growing religious group in the state of Minnesota, increasing in total worship attendance by 45.8% in the decade of the 90's. For more information about the Minnesota Baptist Conference, go to [http://www.mbcworld.org/app/w\\_page.php?id=2&type=section](http://www.mbcworld.org/app/w_page.php?id=2&type=section).

offices in Louisville, Kentucky. Presbyterians live in all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Approximately 40% of the PC(USA)'s members are located in the South region including 7% in North Carolina and 6% in Texas. The largest concentration by state is 10% in Pennsylvania, followed by 7.3% in California.

APPENDIX R  
DENOMINATION ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Denomination Name
AELC	Association of Evangelical Lutheran Church
ALC	American Lutheran Church
ALC_LCA	American Lutheran Church and Lutheran Church in America
AMELC	American Evangelical Lutheran Church
AUG	Augustana Evangelical Lutheran Church
BGC	Baptist General Conference
CBAmerica	Conservative Baptist Association of America
DELCA	Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
DOC	Disciples of Christ
ECC	Evangelical Covenant Church
Efree	Evangelical Free Church
ELAS	Ev. Lutheran Augustana Synod of North America
ELC	Evangelical Lutheran Church
ELCA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
IND	Independent
LCA	Lutheran Church in America
LCMS	Lutheran Church Missouri Synod
LFC	Lutheran Free Church
Missing	Missing Denom
NA	Not Applicable
NABC	North American Baptist Conference
NDConf	Norwegian Danish Conference
NLCA	Norwegian Lutheran Church of America
NON	NonDenominational
PC(USA)	Presbyterian Church (USA)
PCUS	Presbyterian Church in the US
PCUSA	Presbyterian Church in the United States of America
RC	Roman Catholic Church
RCA	Reformed Church in America
SBC	Southern Baptist Convention
SBGC	Swedish Baptist General Conference
TALC	The American Lutheran Church
UCC	United Church of Christ
ULCA	United Lutheran Church in America
UMC	United Methodist Church
UPCNA	United Presbyterian Church of North America
UPCUSA	United Presbyterian Church in the USA

APPENDIX S  
ELMER TOWNS' LISTS

CONGREGATIONS<sup>1</sup>

1. Sunday school and church are one
2. Strong pulpit ministry
3. The length of the pastor's service
4. Pastoral leadership
5. Nine of the ministers are from the south
6. Evangelism
7. Personal salvation is primary; social action is secondary
8. Baptism
9. Church planting
10. Informal services
11. Simple organization
12. Tithing
13. City-wide ministry
14. Total church program
15. An emphasis on separation of members from sinful influences
16. The number of full time paid employees
17. Parking
18. Emphasis on the church as an institution

PASTORS<sup>2</sup>

1. Desire coinciding with God's will
2. Ability to know God's will for Christian service
3. Mature leadership
4. Patience
5. Ability to show appreciation to others
6. Single mindedness and purpose
7. Ability to deal with fear
8. Victory over pride, bitterness, guilt, and doubt
9. Infilling of the Holy Spirit
10. Great self-denial
11. Faithful supporting wives
12. Faith for material needs
13. Concern for the poor
14. Faithfulness in small details
15. Inseeking Godly counselors
16. Strength of solitude
17. Strong emotional stability
18. Spirituality

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<sup>1</sup> Towns, *The Ten Largest Sunday Schools and What Makes Them Grow*, 113-31.

<sup>2</sup> Towns, *Great Soul-Winning Churches*, 229-45.

APPENDIX T  
PASTOR SUMMARY REPORT EXAMPLE

<i>Dr. Wallie Amos Criswell</i>						
<b>Address</b>		<b>State</b> TX	<b>Zip</b>	<b>Maiden Name</b>		
City Dallas				Nickname W.A.		
<b>Home Phone</b>						
<b>Mobile</b>						
<b>Email</b>			<b>Web</b>			
<b><u>Personal Information</u></b>						
<b>Birth Date</b>	12/19/1909	<b>Birth Order</b>	5	<b>Deceased Date</b>	1/10/2002	
<b>Birth Year</b>	1909	<b>Siblings</b>	6	<b>Deceased Year</b>	2002	
<b>Birth City</b>	Eldorado	<b>Brother</b>	2	<b>Deceased City</b>	Dallas	
<b>Birth State</b>	OK	<b>Sister</b>	4	<b>Deceased State</b>	TX	
				<b>Deceased Country</b>	USA	
				<b>Military Service</b>	NO	
<b>Spouse Name</b>	Bessie	<b>Religious Event History</b>				
<b>Year Married</b>	1935	<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Denom</b>	
<b>Children</b>	1	Ordination	7/27/1927	1927	SBC	
<b>Male</b>	0					
<b>Female</b>	1					
<b><u>Education History</u></b>						
<b>School</b>		<b>Degree</b>	<b>Grad Year</b>	<b>Thesis Title</b>		
Baylor University			1931			
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary		MTh	1934			
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary		PhD	1937	The John the Baptist Movement in Relationship to the Christian Movement.		
<b><u>Professional History</u></b>						
<b>Begin Year</b>	<b>Begin Date</b>	<b>End Year</b>	<b>End Date</b>	<b>Founder</b>	<b>Position Title</b>	<b>Organization</b>
1931		1935			Pastor	Mount Washington Baptist Church
1931		1937			Pastor	Oakland Baptist Church
1935		1937			Pastor	Woodburn Baptist Church
1937		1941			Pastor	First Baptist Church of Chickasha
1941	3/2/1941	1944			Pastor	First Baptist Church of Muskogee
1944	10/6/1944	1994			Pastor	First Baptist Church of Dallas
1968		1970			President	Southern Baptist Convention
1994		2002			Pastor Emeritus	First Baptist Church of Dallas
<b><u>Comments</u></b>						

APPENDIX U  
CONGREGATION SUMMARY REPORT EXAMPLE

<b>First Baptist Church of Dallas</b>			<i>A Church You Can Believe In</i>			
1707 San Jacinto			Web <a href="http://www.firstdallas.org/">http://www.firstdallas.org/</a>			
Dallas, TX 75201			Email <a href="mailto:info@firstdallas.org">info@firstdallas.org</a>			
(214) 969.0111						
<b>Current Denomination</b> SBC						
<b>Current Pastor</b> Dr. Robert James Jeffress, Jr.			<b>Organized Year</b> 1868			
Year 2007			<b>Organized Date</b> 7/30/1868			
Tenure 2			<b>Charter Members</b> 11			
<b>Worship Centers</b> 2		<b>Worship Services</b> 4		<b>Main Worship Center</b> 1,500 seats		
<b>Pastors</b> ___		<b>Staff</b> ___				
<b>MultiSite</b> No						
<b>Pastoral History</b>						
<b>Begin</b>	<b>End</b>	<b>Last</b>	<b>First</b>	<b>Middle</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Tenure</b>
1868	1871	Harris	W.		Pastor	3
1871	1872	Stanton	C.		Pastor	1
1873	1875	Weaver	Abram		Pastor	2
1876	1877	Rogers	G.	W.	Pastor	1
1878	1882	Curry	James	Hudson	Pastor	4
1882	1889	Hanks	Robert	Taylor	Pastor	7
1889	1892	Simms	Albert	Meredith	Pastor	3
1892	1897	Seasholes	Charles	Louis	Pastor	5
1897	1944	Truett	George	Washington	Pastor	47
1944	1994	Criswell	Wallie	Amos	Pastor	50
1991	1992	Gregory	Joel	Cliff	Pastor	1
1993	1997	Hawkins	Otis	Swafford	Pastor	4
1994	2002	Criswell	Wallie	Amos	Pastor Emeritus	8
1999	2006	Brunson	Donald	McCall	Pastor	7
2007		Jeffress	Robert	James	Pastor	
<b>Comments</b>						

APPENDIX V  
INTERVIEW REQUEST LETTER SAMPLE

Dear (*Pastor Name*):

My name is Sheila Strobel Smith. I am a Ph.D. candidate at Luther Seminary in the Congregational Mission and Leadership program. After a twenty year career at (*Company Name*), I earned an M.Div. degree from Luther Seminary in 2002. I am a candidate for ordination in the PC(USA). My home congregation is (*Church Name*) in (*City*), Minnesota.

The title of my dissertation is *The Complexities of Pastoral Change and Transition in the Megachurches of the Baptist General Conference, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and Presbyterian Church (USA)*. My dissertation advisor is Rev. Dr. Richard Bliese. I am writing to inform you of my research and to request your participation.

When I began to study megachurches several years ago, I discovered that existing research on the pastors of megachurches is quite limited. The purpose of my dissertation is to describe the personal characteristics, skills, gifts, experiences, and contributions of these pastors so that others can learn about them and from them. In addition, I explore how, if at all, these congregations and leaders have addressed the complex issues of succession planning and leadership transition. The scope of this study is limited to the congregations in the Baptist General Conference, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, and the Presbyterian Church (USA) with an average worship attendance in excess of 2,200 for five years (2000-2004). (*Church Name*) is one of ## (*Denomination Name*) congregations included in the study.

(*Pastor name*), I would really appreciate your input and perspective. Would you be available to have a conversation with me by telephone? Please let me know if you would be interested. I may be reached via email at (*email address*.)

Blessings,

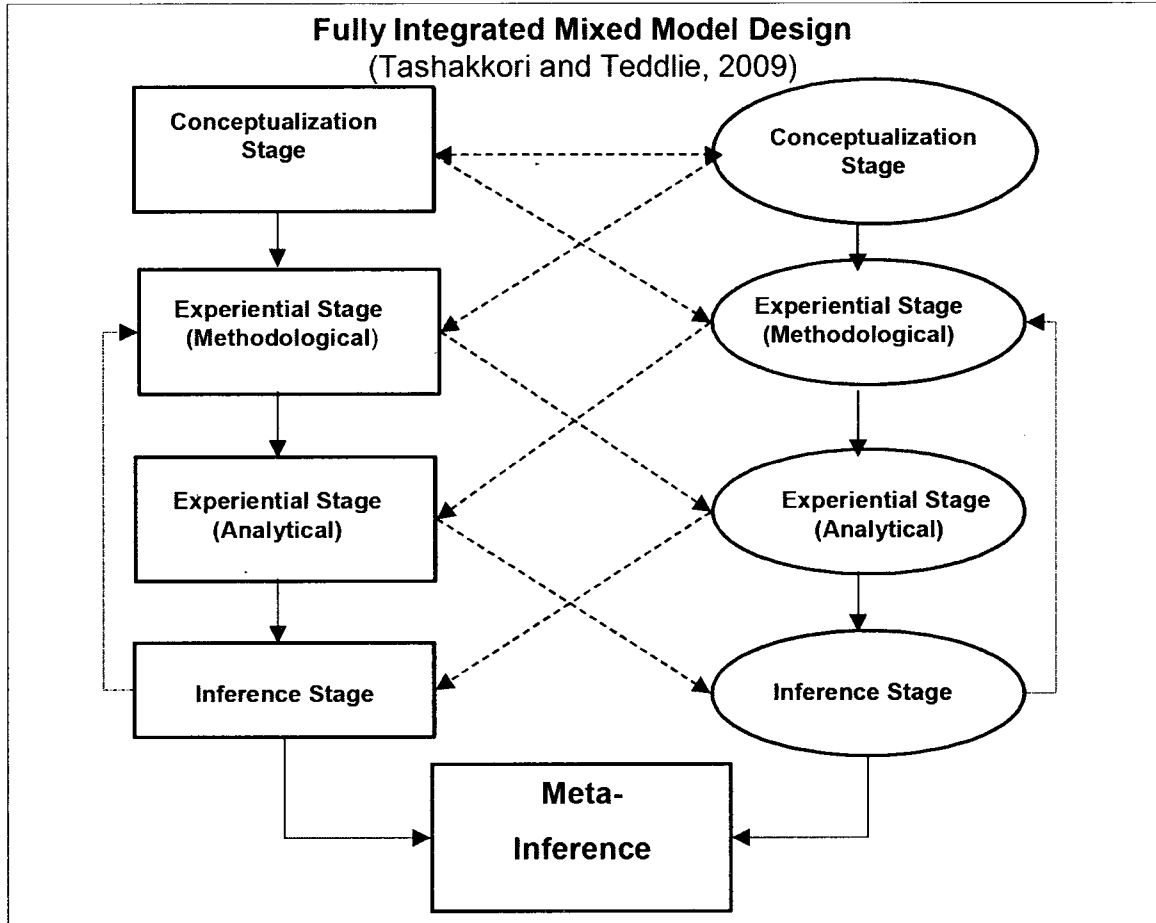
Sheila Strobel Smith  
(*Postal address*)

APPENDIX W  
SPEAKERS AND SESSION TITLES AT AMERICAN CONVOCATION  
FOR CHURCH GROWTH

Author or Speaker	Session Title
Arn Win; Schuller Robert H; Ogilvie Lloyd John	How to Grow a Church
Bailey David	How to Build a Dynamic Parish Life
Beckerling Raymond	How to Keep In Touch with Your Church Congregation
Belew M. Wendell	Multiplying Churches for Growth
Brown Lowell E.	How to Build a Great Sunday School without Buttons, Buses or Balloons
Criswell Wallie A.	Big Ideas from a Big Church
Fontana Donald	How to Build Your Church with Good Music
Fontana Donald	How to Organize Your Neighborhood for Evangelism
Hill Edward	The Power of God
Kennedy D. James	The Coral Ridge Story
Kennedy D. James	Evangelism Explosion
Leestma Harold F.	When, Where and How to Start a New Church
McGavran Donald A	Church Growth Principles and Practices, Part I
McGavran Donald A	God's Unswerving - Church Growth
McGavran Donald A; Arn	Reach Out and Grow
McNair Donald	Establishing New Churches
Ogilvie Lloyd John	Church Growth People to People
Ogilvie Lloyd John	Small Groups - A Big Answer
Schuller Arvella	Exciting New Programs for Today's Church Women
Schuller Robert H	Building a Staff to be a Winning Team
Staack Hagen A. K.	Biblical Insights on Church Growth
Wagner C. Peter	Church Growth Principles and Practices, Part II
Werning Waldo	How to Raise Money For [In?] Your Church
Werning Waldo	How to Raise Money For [In?] Your Church (I-III)
Williams John W.	Ideas for Church Growth
Wirt Sherwood Eliot	Discover and Develop Your Writing Talents
Unknown	Special Ministries to Meet Special Needs of Youth, Singles, etc
Unknown	The Why, When and Where of Radio



APPENDIX X  
A FULLY INTEGRATED MIXED MODEL DESIGN



APPENDIX Y  
LIBRARIES

Institution	LibraryName	City	State
Asbury Theological Seminary	Information Commons	Wilmore	KY
Bethel Theological Seminary	Bethel Theological Seminary Library	St. Paul	MN
Bethel University	Bethel University Library	St. Paul	MN
Duke Divinity School	Duke Divinity School Library	Durham	NC
Fuller Theological Seminary	David Allan Hubbard Library	Pasadena	CA
Louisville Theological Seminary	Ernest Miller White Library	Louisville	KY
Luther Seminary	Luther Seminary Library	St. Paul	MN
Macalester College	DeWitt Wallace Library	St. Paul	MN
Metropolitan State University	Metropolitan State University Library	St. Paul	MN
Minnesota Historical Society	Minnesota Historical Society Library	St. Paul	MN
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary	James P. Boyce Centennial Library	Louisville	KY
St. Catherine University	St. Catherine University Library	St. Paul	MN
St. Paul Seminary School of Divinity	Archbishop John Ireland Library	St. Paul	MN
Trinity International University	Rolfing Library	Deerfield	IL
United Theological Seminary	Spencer Library	New Brighton	MN
University of Minnesota	Wilson Library	Minneapolis	MN
University of St. Thomas	Charles J. Keffer Library	Minneapolis	MN
University of St. Thomas	O'Shaughnessy-Frey Library	St. Paul	MN
Western Seminary	Cline-Tunnell Library	Portland	OR
Wheaton College	Billy Graham Center Archives	Wheaton	IL
Special Thanks to			
ELCA Region 3 Archives		St. Paul	MN
Loomes Theological Bookstore		Stillwater	MN

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