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MISSIONAL LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF CONGREGATIONAL TRANSITION

by

TORMOD O. SVENSSON

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of

Luther Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment of

The Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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ABSTRACT

Missional Leadership in Times of Congregational Transition

by

Tormod O. Svensson

Congregational transitions are points of change, providing opportunities to introduce a missional understanding and direction of ministry. *Missional leadership in times of congregational transition* includes case studies of three ELCA congregations in transition, led by pastors who have a missional understanding of leadership, processed through the lenses of transformational pastoral leadership, congregational transitions, what it might mean to be sent by God, the Holy Spirit leading and empowering, missional ecclesiology, and congregational spiritual practices. It draws on resources by Allen Roxburgh, Patrick Keifert, Dwight Zscheile, Craig Van Gelder, Lee Bolman, Terrence Deal, Peter Northouse, William and Susan Bridges, and others.

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I am thankful for the congregations I have served who have helped contribute financially toward my DMin degree. I am thankful for the Reverend Doctor Gene Gall for his support, wisdom, and advice throughout the years on my journey as a pastor. I am thankful for the pastors, leaders, and congregations who allowed me to conduct this research in their settings.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DEM	Director of Evangelical Mission
ELCA	The Evangelical Church in America
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
RCL	Revised Common Lectionary

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction, Research Topic, and Question

Congregational transitions can be opportune times for change of direction. It can be a time to evaluate congregations' past ministries in their context as well as the present, but perhaps more importantly, it can be an opportune time to look for intentional direction for the future. Transitions always imply change, and most often, congregational change involves a change in pastoral leadership. Examples of such transitions in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) congregations would be congregational mergers, transition into redevelopment ministry, intentional interim ministry where the interim pastor would enter into an intentional process of transition, or simply interim ministry where a pastor will be in place to perform pastoral duties until a regularly called pastor will be in place, or for a defined term.

I served as redevelopment pastor in a congregation for three and a half years in my first call. This was an intentional process of moving into a more missional approach to ministry, where the starting point would be asking how we could most faithfully join God in God's mission for the sake of the world. It included an intentional focus on growing relationships with God, with people in the neighborhood, and with one another. I realized then the importance of missionally focused pastoral leadership during such a time of transition. The congregation had gone through the traumatic experience of a split, as the previous pastor had left with about half the membership. They were running out of

people and resources, but yet as a system, it was easy to just stick with the old, familiar way of being church, rather than venturing into unfamiliar territory.

I recently served as interim pastor in a congregation where the pastor retired after twenty-seven years of faithful ministry. I am currently serving a term call as mission developer and pastor in a different Synod within the same region. It has become obvious to me that transitional ministry practices do not necessarily include a missionally focused lens, and I was curious to research the practices currently in place in congregations in transition. This curiosity led to the following research question: *How might a missional understanding affect leadership of pastors in transitional ministry?*

This research project included exploratory case studies of three ministry settings in transition in a Synod of the ELCA. The primary independent variable is a missional understanding of the pastor, defined as how we join God in God's mission and work in the world. A primary dependent variable is the leadership of the pastor as a result of a missional understanding of ministry. Since this is exploratory research, more variables were discovered as the research progressed. Intervening variables were type of transition, size of the congregation, context, length of time in transitional ministry, tenure of previous pastoral leadership, and level of missional understanding of previous pastor(s).

I used a qualitative approach to this research. The process was as follows: I met with the pastors for individual interviews. I then conducted focus groups with lay leaders, primarily with church council members. The adult population of the congregations were then offered to be part of the research through census surveys. The pastors were asked to help with that process. These were distributed primarily through emails in the individual

congregations, but one pastor, Pastor K in setting two, also offered the questionnaires in written format. Lastly, I conducted a focus group with the three pastors.

Biblical, Theological, and Theoretical Lenses

One biblical lens focuses on the idea that *God sends us out*. A second lens focuses on *the leading of the Holy Spirit*. The Bible passages used to point to these claims are John 20:19-22, Luke 10:1-12, and Acts 8:26-40.¹ Being sent out, and spiritual discernment grounded in the leading of God's Holy Spirit are essential parts of a missional understanding of faithful ministry.

Missional ecclesiology and *congregational spiritual practices* were the theological lenses that were applied to this research project. When the church seeks to take on a missional identity, it seeks to join God in carrying out God's purpose for the sake of the world—*missio Dei*. The Holy Spirit leads us and guides us on our journey as people of God, and it is important for the church and its members to develop faithful practices in doing so.

The theoretical lenses applied were *transformative pastoral leadership* and *congregational transitions*. When thinking about transformative pastoral leadership, I was particularly interested in learning if there were certain traits that were prevalent in the leadership of pastors who tend to lead from a missional point of view. Congregational transitions can be complex in that they involve change, but also opportunities to do something different, and perhaps more life-giving and faithful. I was intentional in

¹ New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) is used for all Scripture passages.

seeking out congregations who were in different kinds of transitions for this research to learn if similarities or common traits could be found.

Definition of Terms

Interim ministry: A term often describing a transition in congregational settings between regularly called pastors. It involves change by its very nature. It can be part of an intentional process designed to help rediscover congregational identity, calling, and purpose. Sometimes interim ministry simply calls for the pastor to temporarily fulfill the duties assigned to the pastoral office while the congregation is preparing to call their next pastor. I argue that an intentional, missional focus during such a time of transition has the potential to create healthier, more faithful congregations for the future.

Missio Dei: It is a Latin term describing the sending nature of God. God has a mission. God is already present in the world, and God sends the church out to participate in God's mission, which is the healing and redemption of the entire world.

Missional ecclesiology: Understanding the identity and purpose of the church has great consequences for how congregations function. Many congregations have functioned as if the church building and institution is the main focus of their ministries. A missional ecclesiology calls for a different understanding in that joining God in God's mission in the world becomes its primary function.

Missional leadership: Leadership from a missional point of view is a form of leadership that is grounded in participating in God's mission for the sake of the world. In thinking about how leadership has often been exercised by pastors, it has often been seen as shepherd of the flock, which puts the main focus on catering to the members of the congregation. Missional leadership, on the other hand, puts the focus on God and, how

pastors can most faithfully accompany their congregations as they are equipped and sent out.

Narrative Lectionary: It is a calendar of readings from the Bible for use in worship. It focuses on one main reading for worship each Sunday, with the option of having one accompanying text. The focus is primarily on telling God's story, book by book, which sets it apart from the Revised Common Lectionary.

Revised Common Lectionary: It is a calendar of readings from the Bible for use in worship. It is based around Christian observances, festivals, and seasons and follows a three-year pattern of scheduled readings. It is used in the majority of Lutheran, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and some Methodist congregations, and most often contains a reading from the Old Testament, a psalm, a reading from the epistles, and a gospel reading.

Synod: The congregations in the ELCA are organized into sixty-five jurisdictions based largely upon geographical proximity. Each Synod has a bishop who together with synodical staff overlooks the life of the congregations on its territory. Among other things, the synodical office aids with congregational transitions and the call processes when a pastor seeks another call, or when the congregation has a vacancy and needs a pastor.

Term call: Sometimes an agreed upon time limit is set on a relationship between a pastor and a congregation. There can be different reasons for that, such as a certain task that needs to be carried out, before a congregation again is deemed to be in a position of entertaining calling a regularly called pastor. Most commonly, although there are

exceptions, a pastor serving a term call is there to carry out a specific task and is usually not eligible to accept a regular call in that congregation.

Questions Leading to This Research

What led to this research was a sense of curiosity surrounding transitional ministry and current practices. What practices do pastors with a missional understanding of ministry apply in transitional ministry settings? What is their understanding of missional leadership? Are there certain common traits among pastors who have a missional understanding of ministry? Are there unique challenges and opportunities applying a missional leadership approach in times of congregational transition?

Ethical Considerations

There was no special population that was part of this research project. All participants were over the age of eighteen. There were no direct benefits offered or implied to the subjects. There were no personal identifiers on written or electronic instruments. All raw data, electronic and written, will be properly disposed of by May 31, 2023. Electronic data are stored in password protected files on a laptop computer in my possession. Written data are stored in a lock box in my possession. I am the only person with access to that lock box.

Implied consent forms were submitted as the initial part of the distributed questionnaires, indicating that participation by turning in the survey is implied consent. Informed consent forms were distributed to participants of all interviews and focus groups before each event. Two copies were signed and dated by me and each participant before each event. One copy was given to the participant and one copy is stored securely in my possession. The informed consent forms explained the nature of the study, the

procedure, issues around confidentiality, the nature of the study, as well as contact information both for me and my advisors.

This chapter provided an overview of the research topic, the research question, lenses, definitions and ethical considerations. The following chapter provides history and background information for the congregational settings that were part of this study. I also explain in detail how the theoretical lenses *transformative pastoral leadership* and *congregational transitions* apply to this research project.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND THEORETICAL LENSES

Introduction

As stated in chapter one, the main focus of this research project is ministry in times of transition and how transitions can provide great opportunities for a new direction in ministry. I am interested in learning how the pastor's missional understanding in such settings makes a difference, particularly in staking out the direction for the future. I am doing case studies of three ELCA congregations/ministries that are in some sort of transition as the basis of my research. I applied two theoretical lenses for this project: transformative pastoral leadership and congregational transitions.

Historical Background

Setting One

The background and context of the three ministry settings researched is quite diverse. Setting one is the most complex of the three. It consists of three congregations that have been yoked together in some fashion for the last one hundred years, or so. The previous pastor of thirty-three years was, regrettably, known to work on isolating the congregations from the Synod as much as possible. His claim was that the Bishop and Synod staff did not like him, so he discouraged financial support as well as participation

in Synod events. The understanding of the current interim pastor is that the previous pastor had collected a rather large salary, while at the same time teaching part time at two universities. He had not shown much interest or effort in tending to the needs and well-being of the congregations and, as a result, one of the congregations in particular, Congregation A, was left in bad financial shape, with a parsonage that is falling apart, and most of their financial resources spent down. Congregation A is in a small-town setting and their average weekly worship attendance is twenty-four. One of the most successful ministries of Congregation A is a preschool that serves members from all three congregations in the parish. Another successful ministry this congregation utilizes is a ministry of space, which is used to provide meeting space for several groups in the area.

Congregation B is a small church in a rural setting. They are financially in good shape, but worship attendance is only about twenty-five people on a Sunday morning. This congregation, although a small country church, was the original mother church which birthed Congregation A. Their ministry is primarily one of history, where much of the focus is about preserving the building and the past.

Congregation C is in a rather isolated location in a small farming community. There is no cellphone service in their location. It is the largest of the three congregations with an average weekly worship attendance of about sixty-five people. They hope to call their own pastor within the next year, or so. The interim pastor described their congregation as being “a slice out of the 60s.” Everything at this congregation is done in old, traditional ways. Their ministry is mainly focused on serving the needs of the local farming community.

The three congregations have some traits in common. All three of the congregations value traditional worship. They are all using the “old green hymnal,” which was published in 1978 and preceded the current hymnal used in most ELCA congregations. They also only offer communion once a month, a practice that has changed in most ELCA congregations to include weekly communion.

Setting Two

Ministry setting two is a consolidation of three struggling congregations in a suburb of a large city. The three congregations had, with the help of the Synod, formed a discernment team consisting of three members from each of the congregations. They worked together for eighteen months to finalize the details of the consolidation before the three congregations voted in favor of consolidation in May of 2016. The first worship together as one congregation took place in August of 2016. They currently worship in a building belonging to a congregation of a different denomination because it had been decided that it would not be a good idea to use any of the old church locations as a regular worship site for the new congregation. It would have created a power differential between the three congregations, something that would not have been beneficial entering this new journey together. They are getting ready to start building a new worship space of their own. Current weekly worship attendance is on average eighty-five people. They are financially stable. Much of their ministry thus far has been focused on healing, relationship-building, visioning, and finding their new identity.

Setting Three

Ministry setting three is in an inner-city setting in a medium sized city. It was traditionally in a predominantly white, upper middle-class neighborhood. The neighborhood has changed through the years, and now has a large percentage of African-Americans. This is not reflected in the makeup of the congregation, which is still predominantly white. It has a reputation of being a troubled congregation in many ways. It has had a large turnover of pastors and has a reputation for not treating their pastors well, hence the large turnover rate. The event which may be defined as the lowest point in the congregation's history was the suicide of their senior pastor in 2011. The congregation has struggled mightily to achieve a sense of stability since then. It has had seven pastors since that unfortunate event. Its current pastor is in a three-year term call which started in January 2018. The congregation is known for its community outreach; they are engaged in a wide variety of programs designed to help the needy. Weekly worship attendance is about 150. They are currently in good shape financially due to endowments from times past, but are quickly spending down savings, primarily due to a disproportionately large staff, having a total of nine people on the payroll, although not all full time.

Theoretical Lenses

I applied two theoretical lenses for this project. They are *transformative pastoral leadership*, and *congregational transitions*. In considering my research question, these two lenses seem vital in conducting this particular research, as they on one hand look at leadership from a specific angle, and on the other hand what that might mean for a congregation during a transitional phase of its ministry.

Transformative Pastoral Leadership

Pastoral leadership can mean a lot of things, but I was particularly interested in learning about how missionally focused leadership by the pastor can be transformative for the congregation during a time of transition, and what sets this kind of leadership apart from other approaches to pastoral leadership. I believe that such leadership will have several components, such as adaptive/technical, missional, self-awareness, communication, and personal style, just to mention a few. Ron Heifetz and Marty Linsky talk about the importance of recognizing the need for adaptive leadership in times of change, and how it involves experiments, new discoveries, and adjustments.¹ It is important for a leader to recognize the difference between technical and adaptive challenges, as they require very different forms of leadership. Technical challenges are those day-to-day operational challenges that simply require certain know-how and procedures. It is really more about maintenance and matching solutions to obvious challenges. Adaptive challenges, on the other hand, are not always clear. They involve change. They involve a willingness to dig deeper, to explore, to be willing to take risks. They involve emotions and often pushback. Adaptive leadership involves getting on “the balcony,” as in being intentional in stepping back to get a better view of the “bigger picture,” and remove oneself from the often emotionally charged environment of an anxious system.

Achieving a balcony perspective means taking yourself out of the dance, in your mind, even if only for a moment. The only way you can gain both a clearer view of reality and some perspective on the bigger picture is by distancing yourself from the fray. Otherwise, you are likely to misperceive the situation and make the wrong diagnosis, leading you to misguided decisions about whether and how to

¹ Ronald A. Heifetz and Martin Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2002).

intervene.²

Edwin Friedman, along the same lines, focuses on the importance of self-differentiated leadership. It is not about being an autocrat, ordering people around, but it is about having the ability to be connected yet be separate. It is about having clarity in personal goals, and thereby not being sucked into the anxious emotional process that often is part of transitions and change.³

Gilbert Rendle covers many aspects of leadership and congregational change, one of which is congregational leadership as a spiritual issue. He writes:

Congregations are faith communities. Their ongoing purpose is to introduce people to a relationship with God through the disciplines of their faith tradition, which can be life changing. Their corporate purpose is ultimately to be faithful to the call of God with the understanding of their faith tradition.⁴

A bit further in, he talks about how important it is for leaders to remember that “some of the most essential learning will come from their Bible study and not from their budget reports.”⁵ He furthermore claims that the spiritual nature of the work of leaders is perhaps the most critical. I believe Rendle is right. Too often the focus tends to be on management, programs, and processes, rather than inviting to build up and strengthen spiritual practices.

² Heifetz and Linsky, 53.

³ Edwin H. Friedman, Margaret M. Treadwell, and Edward W. Beal, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (New York, NY: Seabury Books, 2007).

⁴ Gilbert R. Rendle, *Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1998), 22

⁵ Rendle, 22.

In Peter Northouse's book *Leadership Theory and Practice*,⁶ he addresses a wide variety of leadership styles in depth. He brings up strengths and weaknesses, and also provides helpful tools for identification of who we are as leaders. It is important to recognize his definition on leadership "Leadership, is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal."⁷ So often leadership in the church has been, and on some level continues to be mistaken, for individual power or authority, whether it is connected to the pastor, or other powerful people in the congregation. I think what is often missing is the idea of a common goal, which in many ways has to do with identity and purpose. This is an important part of missional leadership, to help the congregation to re-define and live into its God-given identity and purpose. Although there is no leadership approach that will be the perfect way of leadership in every setting, transformational leadership is an essential part of missional leadership in most cases. Northouse describes transformational leadership in this way:

As its name implies, transformational leadership is a process that changes and transforms people. It is concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals and includes assessing followers' motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings.⁸

What makes transformational leadership missional, however, is that the driving force is not the leaders' agenda or vision, but rather it needs to be grounded in a Spirit led

⁶ Peter Guy Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*. 4th edition (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2007).

⁷ Northouse, 3

⁸ Northouse, 175

vision grounded in *missio Dei*, which leads me to Patrick Keifert and Nigel Rooms' book, *Forming the Missional Church*.⁹ They write:

In our current age, the main skill individuals and Christian communities require to lift anchor faithfully and sail into the unknown, adaptive, exciting, challenging journey of the *missio Dei* is discernment. Put simply, this involves asking and finding answers to the question, "What is God up to."¹⁰

There seems to be no standardized approach to pastoral leadership during times of transitional ministry in the ELCA, whether we are talking about interim ministry, re-development ministry, or congregational mergers/co-operative ministry situations. As I did my research in three ELCA ministry settings in the Synod in which I have spent the majority of my time in ministry, I was curious to find out what components of pastoral leadership would have a transformative effect on the congregation's ministry during times of transition.

Congregational Transitions

Congregational transitions present certain challenges, but also opportunities to do something new. By the virtue of being in a transition of some sort, some kind of change is implied, but the reality is that congregational systems by design tend to seek stability rather than change. Times of transition often create anxiety within the system, something that in turn can create conflict. I was curious as to what effect missionally minded pastoral leadership might have on the congregation in transition, and what obstacles as well as opportunities might present themselves during such a time. I was also curious to

⁹ Patrick R. Keifert. and Nigel Rooms, *Forming the Missional Church*. (St. Paul, MN: Church Innovations, 2014).

¹⁰ Keifert and Rooms, 11

learn what forces might be at work during such a time, and if certain kinds of transitions might present better opportunities for transformation into a more missional approach to ministry.

Temporary Shepherds, edited by Roger Nicholson is one of the most widely used resources for leaders in interim ministry.¹¹ It looks at what makes interim ministry unique, and lays out a suggested path for the journey. Although he recognizes and processes many of the challenges of transitional ministry, the starting point is not missional. I do however find this resource useful since it helps to define the interim process as it is currently carried out in many congregations. *Managing Transitions*, by William and Susan Bridges is a resource that looks at how systemic transitions affect people psychologically, and how to better deal with the human side during such times.¹²

They describe three phases of transition:

1. Letting go of the old ways and old identity people had. This first phase of transition is an ending and the time when you need to help people to deal with their losses.
2. Going through an in-between time when the old is gone but the new isn't fully operational. We call this time the "neutral zone": it's when the critical psychological realignments and re-patterning take place.
3. Coming out of the transition and making a new beginning. This is when people develop the new identity, experiencing the new energy, and discover the new sense of purpose that makes the change begin to work.¹³

Although this book was written for the business world, I do believe that much of this also applies to transitions in faith communities, and I argue that these three phases

¹¹Roger S. Nicholson, editor, *Temporary Shepherds: A Congregational Handbook for Interim Ministry* (Bethesda, MD: Alban Institute, 1998).

¹² William, and Susan Mitchell Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*, 4th edition, (Boston, MA: Da Capo Lifelong Books, A Member of the Perseus Books Group, 2016).

¹³ Bridges and Bridges, 5

should be addressed intentionally. If people are not able to name and process perceived and real losses of the past, it is very difficult to move forward in effective ways. There are no firm boundaries between these three different phases. Members of an organization will find themselves spread out, perhaps even across all three phases during times of transition, depending on losses, personalities, and the ability to deal with change, and envision a new and different future.

Lee Bolman and Terrence Deal look at organizational transitions and change through the lens of reframing, in their book *Reframing Organizations*.¹⁴ It is a lot about being able to broaden our approach and bring a variety of lenses to the situation so we can get a fuller picture of what is going on, and be more successful in leading through change. They bring four frames to the table—structural, human resource, political, and symbolic.

The structural frame looks at the various parts of the organization, their roles and how they relate to one another. Who is responsible for what? What are the roles of the individuals and groups making up the organization? What role does the environment play? What policies are in place, and what part of the organization's work do they apply to? In a congregational environment this will often include such parts as the pastor (s), the congregational council, committees and teams, buildings and facilities, written documents, and policies.

The human resource frame, deals with relationships within the organization. It looks at needs and skills. It looks at the ways the organization and human needs are

¹⁴ Lee G. Bolman, and Terrence E. Deal, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*. 5th edition (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, a Wiley brand, 2013).

aligned. How people are empowered also falls under this category. In church settings we can use this frame in thinking about how the various gifts and talents are used for the greater good.

The political frame looks at the power dynamics, interest groups, and coalitions within the organization. In congregations, as well as in most other organizations, there are often individuals or groups that may have certain ideas of what is important to them in the life of the church. Their ability to influence the system may depend on a variety of factors, such as trust, financial contributions, personality, and position within the church, just to mention a few.

The symbolic frame looks at the things which create meaning in an organization. Images are important. Traditions and rituals are important. In looking at how the symbolic frame applies to a context, It is important to consider what is important and why. In established churches, this can often be the very church building itself, as well as important parts of the worship space, such as certain images found in stained glass windows, or the altar or a cross. Worship traditions are important in this, even to the point of which hymnal is being used, and what pattern is used for worship.

Congregations in Transitions, by Carl Dudley and Nancy Ammerman is written specifically to address congregational transitions, and provides yet another angle for looking at such events.¹⁵ The book frames congregational change as a journey with specific segments to it. The authors point out the importance of working with a team

¹⁵ Carl S. Dudley and Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Congregations in Transition: A Guide for Analyzing, Assessing, and Adapting in Changing Communities*, 1st edition (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002).

when implementing change, and how it is good to have a well-organized step-by-step plan. The book provides a good framework to help with that part of such a journey.

This chapter provided history and background information for the congregational settings that were part of this study. I also explained in detail how the theoretical lenses *transformative pastoral leadership* and *congregational transitions* might apply to this research project. I argue that there is a need for an intentionally missional process in congregational transitions, and that we can learn from leaders who are currently applying missional principles successfully in various congregational transitions. In the next chapter, I identify and develop biblical and theological lenses as they apply to the research question.

CHAPTER 3

BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL LENSES

In the previous chapter, I presented the historical background information and context of the various settings that were part of this research project. I also identified two theoretical lenses, transformative pastoral leadership, and congregational transitions, which were used to process the findings. In this chapter, I am identifying biblical and theological lenses, and developing a biblical and theological argument for addressing my research question.

Biblical Lenses

I am using three Scripture passages to define my biblical lenses. John 20:19-22:

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.” ²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit.”¹

Luke 10:1-12:

10 After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. ² He said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. ³ Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. ⁴ Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. ⁵ Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this

¹<https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-Revised-Standard-Version-NRSV-Bible/>

house!’⁶ And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you.⁷ Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house.⁸ Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you;⁹ cure the sick who are there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’¹⁰ But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say,¹¹ ‘Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.’¹² I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town.²

Acts 8:26-40:

²⁶ Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a wilderness road.)²⁷ So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship²⁸ and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah.²⁹ Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to this chariot and join it.”³⁰ So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?”³¹ He replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him.³² Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,
so he does not open his mouth.

³³ In his humiliation justice was denied him.

Who can describe his generation?

For his life is taken away from the earth.”

³⁴ The eunuch asked Philip, “About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?”³⁵ Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus.³⁶ As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?”³⁸ He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.⁴⁰ But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.³

² <https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-Revised-Standard-Version-NRSV-Bible/>

³ <https://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-Revised-Standard-Version-NRSV-Bible/>

There are some commonalities in these stories which I believe are important factors when thinking about a missional understanding of leadership. One of my lenses is defined by *God sending us out* and the second lens is the role of *the Holy Spirit in leading and empowering* us to join God in carrying out God's work.

God Sends Us Out

In John 20, Jesus appears to the disciples shortly after the resurrection. He greets them with peace, not only once, but twice. Jesus tells the disciples that just as the Father has sent him, now he sends the disciples out, and he breathes on them telling them to receive the Holy Spirit.

In Luke 10, seventy disciples are appointed by Jesus and sent out in pairs ahead of him. Jesus is telling them that he is sending them out like lambs into the midst of wolves. The message is that this is not always going to be an easy task. There will sometimes be dangers and there will sometimes be rejection. They are sent out with only the basics, being told to receive hospitality as they go ahead of the Lord. It is also noteworthy that they are called to extend a greeting of peace as they enter a town, yet if the peace is not returned, to go out in the streets and shake the dust off their sandals in protest, still proclaiming that the kingdom of God has come near. It is obvious from this passage, as well as the one from John 20 that peace is an important part of the kingdom of God, and as we have received God's peace through the Holy Spirit, are we to extend that peace to the world, wherever God leads us.

In Acts 8:26-40, we read the story which is often referred to as the story of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch. Philip is being sent by an angel of the Lord, first on a very

specific task of interacting with and baptizing the Ethiopian eunuch, but later the Spirit snatches him away to proclaim the Good News in the region between Azotus and Caesarea. Besides the aspect of God sending, there is also the aspect of God choosing to reach those who are different than us. The man was from Ethiopia, so he would have been black and from a very different culture than Philip. Philip was one of the seven appointed by the apostles, who had been chosen to serve in the capacity of deacon in the early church. It is interesting to note that, although having been set aside for such a purpose, the Ethiopian man was also bringing the Good News to the people of Samaria, and now also being sent out to baptize an Ethiopian man whose sexuality had been physically altered through castration. As such, he would have been denied access to certain parts of the temple in Jerusalem. It begs the question as to how we as followers of Jesus are called to also welcome with open arms those of different gender roles than what traditions and norms might point to.

The idea that God is sending us out is foundational as we think about missional leadership. My experience is that there are differing opinions among bishops as well as pastors regarding interim ministry. Some look at interim ministry as a holding pattern of sorts, without being willing to make any significant changes. I claim that times of interim ministry and ministry transitions provide great opportunities to do something different, and to look to the Holy Spirit for direction. If the faith community has not been overly focused on joining God in the world outside the church doors, then this would be a perfect time to refocus and redirect.

The Holy Spirit Leading and Empowering

In John 20, Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit into the disciples, as Jesus tells them that he is sending them out. In the Acts 8 story, the Spirit tells Philip to go up to the chariot with the Ethiopian eunuch and join him. We hear that Phillip's response is to run up to the chariot. Later in the story we hear how Philip is snatched up by the Spirit and moved to a different location after he has completed the work God wanted him to do with the eunuch. The Spirit leads and guides in powerful ways. There is a plethora of powerful examples of the work of the Holy Spirit throughout Scripture. My experience is that many ELCA pastors and congregations are traditionally not adequately focused on the leading of the Holy Spirit. We are part of a denomination which tends to focus more on tradition and our ability to use logic in how we live our lives and how we function as faith communities, yet when we look to Scripture, the importance of the work of the Spirit is clear, on a personal as well as communal level. Leadership grounded in spiritual discernment looks very different than leadership that is grounded in tradition and personal opinions. Spiritual discernment is crucial in faithful missional leadership, and it is also a part of one of my theological lenses. Lois Malcolm talks about the work of the Spirit in *Holy Spirit, Creative Power in our Lives*.⁴ Some of the most applicable chapters points to the work of the Spirit within the Christian community, and also how the Spirit creates faith, love, and hope. These are important qualities of faithful congregations. How leaders and faith communities discern and carry out their ministries together, listening for the voice of the Holy Spirit, will be an important factor in the health of their ministry.

⁴Lois Malcolm, *Holy Spirit: Creative Power in Our Lives*, (Lutheran Voices Series. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2009).

Another rich resource in this is *God the Spirit*, by Michael Welker.⁵ He talks about how the church is always in need of discernment.

It is always in need of the discernment of spirits: that is, it is always corrupted by other spirits, powers, and morals, by cultural, political, economic, national, and other interests and ideologies. Yet in the midst of seeming insignificance and de facto corruption, the Spirit of God joins together people called to communion with Christ from among Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, men and women, old and young, out of many times and many countries of the world.⁶

This is always a difficult task, but it is a primary task of a faithful missional leader to keep spiritual discernment in the forefront, both on a personal and communal level. We live in a world filled with many voices, and as Welker points out, spirits that seek to corrupt are present in many different ways, both within the church community and in the world, hence the importance of staying connected with God's Holy Spirit.

Theological Lenses

I have chosen to apply two theological lenses: *missional ecclesiology* and *congregational spiritual practices*, as they both are important components of what it might mean for the church in context to carry out God's mission for the sake of the world. As I have previously pointed out, these are areas that often seem to be lacking necessary focus in many ELCA congregations.

Missional Ecclesiology

As we think about what it might mean to be the church, from a missional point of view, it is much about identity and purpose. How the church sees itself also has a lot to

⁵ Welker, Michael, and Hoffmeyer *John F. God the Spirit*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994).

⁶ Welker, 309

do with how it carries out its ministries. When the church takes on a missional identity, it seeks to join God in carrying out God's purpose—*missio Dei*. A missional view of the church is more than just an individual part of its ministry, but is at the very core of who the church is called to be. In my experience, such an identity often takes a back seat to a greater focus on the assembly itself and its needs—something that often gets in the way of a willingness to explore where God might already be at work in the community outside the church doors. As I sought to gain a deeper understanding of how true this is in the congregations that I studied, I also sought to understand the importance of pastoral leadership in this process.

Cheryl Peterson looks at important aspects of what a faithful ecclesiology might look like in the twenty-first century in her book *Who is the Church?*⁷ She talks about a narrative method as being a powerful method of relating to the Spirit in chapter 5. We relate well to stories, and they are powerful instruments in ministry.

Patrick Keifert also focuses much on the guidance of the Spirit in *We Are Here Now*.⁸ One of his main points is that, first and foremost, we must identify where we are in the history of Christianity, and use that as a starting point, rather than where we wish to be, or where we think we should be, and allow the Spirit to lead us into a missional future from that point of reality.

I found a chapter on leadership in Anthony B. Robinson's book *Changing the Conversation* particularly helpful, as it talks about leadership in terms of building

⁷ Cheryl Peterson, *Who Is the Church? An Ecclesiology for the Twenty-First Century* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013).

⁸ Patrick R. Keifert, *We Are Here Now: A New Missional Era, a Missional Journey of Spiritual Discovery* (Eagle, ID: Allelon Publishing, 2006).

leadership capacity within the congregation, and also how important it is for congregations to look to a missional future when calling a new pastor. A missional, future oriented approach to pastoral leadership looks very different today than what pastoral leadership commonly looked like just a few decades ago.⁹

In *Joining God, Remaking the Church, Changing the World*, Alan Roxburgh points out five important elements that helps us to understand that God is both a sending and participating God:

1. The missionary God who sends and participates in the world also sends the church into the world. The church is a living embodiment of this missionary God's identity and intention. This means everything the congregation does is shaped by a missionary commitment to the local context.
2. In our North American setting, the church is sent to engage and participate in our postmodern, post-Christendom, globalized context.
3. The church's internal life focuses on every believer living as a disciple engaging in mission. Worship, teaching, spiritual practice, fellowship—all are to prepare and send people to participate fully in God's mission.
4. If the church is not the primary actor, but God is, then we have to assume God is ahead of us. The church embodies and participates in what God is already doing. The questions, "What is God doing?" and "Where is God doing it?" now have to form the practices of the church. The church cannot know how to embody the life of God unless it is alert to what God is already up to and participating with God in the specificity of its context.
5. The church's primary work is to listen for what God is already up to. Its life should be marked by listening, watching, entering, and participating in the life of the neighborhoods where God's people live in ordinary and everyday, rather as Jesus did.¹⁰

In his book *Missional, Joining God in the Neighborhood*, also by Alan Roxburgh, the author points out how disconnected the church is from its reality, how it is so often is stuck in a mindset of entitlement and a central position in the community. Roxburgh

⁹Anthony B. Robinson, *Changing the Conversation: A Third Way for Congregations* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2008).

¹⁰ Alan J. Roxburgh, *Joining God, Remaking Church, Changing the World: The New Shape of the Church in Our Time* (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2015), 43-44

brings the text from Luke 10:1-12 into the conversation. One of his points of focus from the text is how important it is to leave baggage behind to be able to live faithfully into a new, Spirit led reality.¹¹ We need to become open and vulnerable to more fully connect with our neighbors. If we already come with everything we think we need for the journey, it becomes a one-way approach, which makes it hard to discover what God is really up to in the neighborhood. We often see this kind of approach where the baggage called evangelism is still at the forefront, where the task is to convince people that they need to come to church, because that is where they will meet God. This simply does not work, nor is it faithful from a missional point of view. This is the kind of baggage which is hard to get rid of, the idea that we are the ones who need to be open to meet God in the unexpected, that we are the ones charged with first of all building loving relationships, not to bring members into our dying churches simply to keep the doors open.

Congregational Spiritual Practices

As I considered spiritual formation in congregations, I sought to understand what emphasis the congregation puts on the work of the Holy Spirit in its life together in community. I sought to look at such practices as they relate to spiritual formation, discernment, and processes of carrying out such practices in the ministries of the congregation. I was also curious to learn how the pastoral leader's personal focus on spirituality affects the congregation's spiritual focus. One of the spiritual practice tools I have found to be most helpful has been *Dwelling in the Word*.¹² It is an interactive way of

¹¹Alan J. Roxburgh, *Missional: Joining God in the Neighborhood* (Allelon Missional Series. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 123-127

¹²Pat Taylor Ellison, and Patrick Keifert, *Dwelling in the Word: A Pocket Handbook* (St. Paul, MN: Church innovations, 2011).

processing Scripture. The Scripture passage is read twice by two different people, with a bit of silence for reflection after each time the passage is read. Those present, then pair up with a partner to process, taking turns to share how they might have sensed the Spirit at work. There could have been a certain word or phrase that caught their attention. Perhaps it raised a question, or a sense of wondering about something in the text. After everyone has had time to process, the facilitator will ask people to share in the larger group what their partner shared. It can be helpful for the facilitator to take notes on a white-board or newsprint during that part of the process, then invite the group to see if there is a common thread in what was shared.

I often use this process to open church council or committee meetings, and have often received positive feedback from those introduced to the process. I often find the voice of the Spirit to be present in very real, and sometimes surprising, ways when encountering this process. It invites to important practices such as deep listening, contemplation, and personal and communal discernment.

Craig Van Gelder focuses on several aspects of Spirit-led ministry in the book *The Ministry of the Missional Church*.¹³ Of special interest is the chapter on Spirit-led leadership and organization¹⁴ as it deals directly with this lens in relationship to pastoral leadership. Van Gelder describes that congregations, in addition to on one level being humanly operated systems, are also holy. He points out three important dimensions of being Spirit-led congregations—purpose (mission), core missional practices, and vision.

¹³ Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007).

¹⁴ Van Gelder, 121-152

Purpose or mission is to answer the question why the church exists. In relationship to purpose, Van Gelder points out the importance of the congregation understanding its purpose and identity in relation to God and God's activity in the world through the ministry of the Spirit. In looking at core missional practices, he lists worship, education/discipleship, care/fellowship, service, and witness as being practices to consider. Vision has to do with the future. Where is the Spirit leading? The author describes it this way: "Vision in a congregation is a Spirit-led discernment process of coming to a shared understanding of what God is doing and what God intends to do in its particular context."¹⁵ This is also where the role of visionary leadership is so important.

Van Gelder puts it this way:

What is important to note here is the essential role that Spirit-led leadership plays in developing, forming, and guiding congregational life and ministry. The emphasis here is on *leadership*, rather than *leader*. Visionary leadership involves a large number of persons in both formal and informal roles who help shape a congregation's ministry.¹⁶

This is one of the most significant parts of leadership in faith communities.

Without spirit-led vision, how can a congregation be faithful? It is also important to note that this goes beyond the leadership of the pastor. A significant role of the pastor is to help equip the congregation and its leaders in this important task. I believe lack of Spirit-led vision to be one of the greatest shortcomings in many congregations, and a major factor in congregational decline.

¹⁵ Van Gelder, 147

¹⁶ Van Gelder, 148

In his book *The Agile Church, Spirit-Led Innovation in an Uncertain Age*, Dwight J. Zscheile calls for an attitude of agility and innovation in the church.¹⁷ He argues that we live in an insecure age, not knowing what the future will look like for Christianity in America. In light of that, there is need for the church to engage in spiritual discernment and innovation. We have a lot to learn from Silicon Valley, in that failure is something to be learned from, and that from such learning one can achieve success. He uses the example of James Dyson, who invented the Dyson Vacuum. He made over 5000 prototypes before he got one that worked right. In light of this, the church also needs to adopt an attitude of innovation and become a learning church where failure is not be shamed, but rather be seen as part of a Spirit-led journey. He brings the book of Acts into the conversation, how the gift of the Holy Spirit came upon the believers and how the Spirit led them to communal lives of sharing, generosity, and praise, yet also recognizing that there was also conflict and confusion in the early church. He writes:

It is a journey of learning, new creation, changed imagination, trial and failure. It is shaped by practices of prayer, discernment, storytelling and witness in relationship. In some respects it is simple but never easy.¹⁸

These are also the challenges of the church in the twenty-first century. We are again at a point in history of great transition in the church. The question is if congregations are willing to rediscover God's purpose for them in their contexts, by adapting and taking on an attitude of listening and questioning, or if they choose to

¹⁷ Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Agile Church: Spirit-Led Innovation in an Uncertain Age*, (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2014).

¹⁸ Zscheile, 50

maintain an attitude of already having all the answers, in which case, they will eventually cease to exist.

Many ELCA Lutheran congregations seem stuck in tradition and culture of times past. Many remember a time when church was at the center of the society, and many long for such a time to return. Congregations can get protective of their traditions and way of life, to the point where they become exclusive communities of like-minded people, often disconnected from their neighborhoods. The makeup of the surrounding community may have changed through the years. The culture may have changed. As a result of all this, the congregation may no longer be relevant in its context, and for such a reason may experience decline, and even close its doors. The way many congregations deal with this, is to try to reason their way out of this state of decline, and in doing so, will apply marketing strategies to “fix” their church, only to find that it will still continue its downward spiral.

I argue that a more scripturally faithful approach is one that is Spirit-led, rather than focused on just reason and tradition. Such an approach will involve a focus on God sending us out into the world. A faithful approach is one where the primary focus is on God and for the faith community and its leaders to discern what God’s purpose and vision is for them in their context. This involves engaging the community in certain spiritual practices as well as processes of spiritual discernment. During times of transition, a missional understanding of leadership, embracing such practices, will make a difference in how faithfully the congregation may live into a new understanding of who God calls them to be in their context.

In this chapter, I am identified biblical and theological lenses, and developed a biblical and theological argument for addressing my research question. The following chapter reviews my research question. It explains the methodology of this research project and research design. It describes the research instruments, how they were field tested, and how the research process was carried out.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The previous chapter described the biblical resources that informed my research, and in what ways they connect with my research question. I also named and explained my theological lenses, as well as developed an argument for how my lenses relate to my research question.

My research question is *How might a missional understanding affect leadership of pastors in transitional ministry?* The approach to this research project was to conduct exploratory case studies in three parish settings utilizing a qualitative method. John and David Creswell define case studies this way in their book *Research Design*:

Case studies are a design of inquiry found in many fields, especially evaluation, in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Cases are bound by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection over a sustained period of time.¹

The research has been exploratory since the aim was to seek a greater understanding of how a missional understanding of leadership makes a difference in the life of congregations in transition. The instruments used were all treated as part of a qualitative approach. The first step of the research process was interviews with the three pastors. The protocol is found in appendix F. The second step was focus groups with the

¹ John W. Creswell, and J. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, Fifth edition, (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2018), 14

congregational councils. The protocol is found in appendix G. The third instrument was distribution of questionnaires made available to congregational members over the age of 18 in the congregations who were part of my research. The questionnaire is found in appendix I. The final instrument was a focus group with the three pastors. The protocol is found in appendix H. All protocols were field tested with members of the congregation I was serving at the time. The questionnaires were field tested by four members of the congregation I was serving at the time. Minor adjustments were made to the interview protocols as well as the questionnaire as a result of the field testing.

Biblical and Theological Perspective of Design

I am framing my research in terms of leadership during times of transition. The Bible is full of such transitions—Moses leading the people of Israel out of Egypt, Jesus leading his disciples to a new understanding of what it means to be people of God, and certainly Paul, and his leadership in faithfully following the leading of the Holy Spirit as he founded several Christian faith communities in Asia Minor and Europe. Another aspect that comes to mind with Paul is also that there was follow-up. We learn this from his many letters. When there was a need to intervene, Paul would write a letter and address whatever needed to be addressed in the various faith communities. We can only speculate how exactly Paul would stay informed, but the important part is that he did call for change of direction when such change was needed.

Martin Luther certainly comes to mind. When the church needed a change of direction to again become faithful in its context, Luther challenged the church to look at its values and practices—was it faithful to its God-given identity? Was there a need for a change of direction, and what would that look like? As we look at leadership in times of

transition for the people of God in our time and context, is it again time to ask the same questions? Are leaders called to question the status quo, and discern how the Holy Spirit might call faith communities to a different future? How can leaders help congregations envision and live into more faithful ways of being church in their context?

Research Design

I selected three parish settings within the Synod where I was serving at the time, to be part of this research. The following criteria were used: The congregations had to be in some kind of transition, whether interim, merger, or re-development. The congregations would have the same pastoral leadership during the time of research, which was November 1, 2018-June 1, 2019.

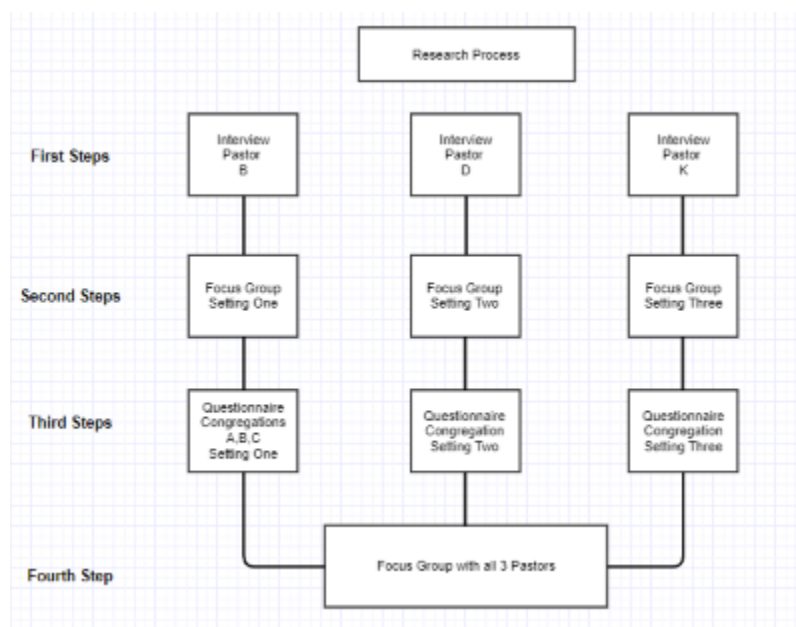


Figure 1. Research Design

The first steps were to conduct individual interviews with pastors during the period of January through March of 2019. These interviews were conducted in the

pastors' offices and were limited to 90 minutes or less. The questions were formulated to get a sense of the pastors' leadership styles, vision for leading the congregations in time of transition, what scripture passages might inform their theology, how they see the role of the Holy Spirit in their own lives as well as the ministry of the congregations, and finally—if they have a missional understanding of ministry; what that might look like.

The next step was to use the church councils as focus groups. These focus groups were conducted at the time and location of their regularly scheduled council meetings, and were 90 minutes or less in length. I wanted to learn if the church councils and the pastors were in agreement concerning the direction of ministry in this time of transition, and if not, how might they differ. I also wanted to gain a deeper understanding of similarities and differences between the different settings, as well as searching for common traits, and how they might connect with my lenses. These took place during the months of April and May of 2019.

The third step was to distribute questionnaires to the adults over eighteen years of age in the congregations. The surveys were conducted electronically, and they were made available through mid-May, 2019, with paper copies being made available as well, at the pastor's discretion. I was curious to learn basic demographic information, how they see the role of the pastor during this time of transition, how they understand the role of the church, favorite Scripture passages, how they understand the role of the Holy Spirit in their own lives as well as in the ministry of the congregation, and also if they have a missional understanding of the church, and what that might look like.

The fourth, and final step of the research process was a focus group involving the three pastors. This focus group was not conducted in person, but online using Zoom.² The focus group conversation was less than 90 minutes. The pastors had received and reviewed the compiled information derived from the questionnaires in their individual congregations before the focus group meeting. This happened at the end of May 2019. I was interested in learning if they found any of the results surprising, and if so, would anything change in the way they carry out their continued leadership during this transition.

The data from the congregational questionnaires were compiled using SurveyMonkey.³ The data from the interviews and focus groups were audio recorded by me and transcribed using an online transcription service.⁴ Much of the written text received from the transcription service was not very accurate, so I reviewed the audio files several times, making additional notes.

The data were processed creating summaries of information received from each interview and focus group. The closed question data from the questionnaires were processed using descriptive statistics already built into the SurveyMonkey software, separated out for each congregation. The open question data were separated out according to congregation, and summaries were created for the answers to each question. The information from the summaries was furthermore processed in comparing and contrasting the findings in each congregation, as well as comparing and contrasting the

² <https://zoom.us/> Zoom is an online video-conferencing tool.

³ <https://www.surveymonkey.com/> SurveyMonkey is a web-based research tool. It was used to create the congregational questionnaire, as well as collect and compile the data.

⁴ <https://transcribe.wreally.com/>

findings between different congregations, and finally comparing and contrasting the findings from the conversations involving the pastors. The focus throughout this process was to look for similarities and differences, trying to discern patterns related to the missional leadership of pastors in a variety of settings involving congregational transitions.

This chapter described research methodology and design. The following chapter first reviews the research process. I then report and interpret the results of my research. Following is a description of the participants, presentation of the data, and interpretation of the findings. The findings are then put into conversation with leadership traits and values exhibited by the pastors.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

As reported in chapter four, the research was conducted as case studies of three ministry settings in some kind of transition, utilizing a qualitative research method. Data were collected through census questionnaires distributed electronically in all congregations. In addition, paper copies were made available in one of the congregations. Data were also collected through individual interviews of the pastors, as well as focus groups in each ministry setting consisting of council members. One final focus group consisting of the three pastors was conducted in the end. The purpose of this research was to answer the following question: *How might a missional understanding affect leadership of pastors in transitional ministry?*

Research Process

The pastors of the three ministry settings were interviewed individually as the first step of the research process. I was interested in learning about their backgrounds as well as their views of the ministry settings they are in. I wanted to learn about their hopes, dreams, and challenges. I wanted to learn how they saw their role as missional leaders in their settings. I also wanted to learn how they perceived their leadership might shape the future of the congregations they were walking with and what purpose God might have for their congregations in their settings. I wanted to learn how Scripture informs their

ministry, as well as their congregations. I desired to learn how the Holy Spirit guides and informs them on a personal level, as well as on a congregational level. I also wanted to learn what they believe might be unique in their ministry.

The second part of the research consisted of focus groups involving church council members from the individual congregations. The focus groups were simply assembled by the pastor and I setting a time for the conversation and those who would be available to be there would show up. The one exception was the three-point parish, where the council president from each of the congregations, as well as the pastor made up the group. The data from one of the focus groups were lost before transcription, so to recapture some of that information, I conducted a phone interview with one of the leaders who was part of the original focus group. The initial questions were aimed at getting to know the participants a bit, as well as their history with the congregation and their role in leadership. The questions following were almost identical to the questions I had asked their pastors. I wanted to learn about their hopes, dreams, and challenges. I wanted to learn how they saw their role as leaders in their settings. I wanted to learn how they perceived their leadership might shape the future of their congregations and what purpose God might have for their congregations in their settings. I wanted to learn how Scripture informs their leadership. I aimed to learn how the Holy Spirit guides and informs on a personal level, as well as in their life together as a congregation. I wanted to learn perceived challenges in their ministry together.

The third part of the research process was to ask for volunteers over the age of eighteen among the members of all the congregations to respond to a SurveyMonkey questionnaire. It was distributed electronically in all congregations. One pastor also

offered paper copies, which yielded nine additional responses, which were entered into SurveyMonkey manually by me. The questionnaire consisted of twenty-five questions. Six of the questions were of demographic nature, ten questions were multiple choice, designed to give me information about frequency of involvement in various areas of ministry, and four of the questions were aimed at helping me to gain insight of their understanding of church, the Holy Spirit, and a pastor's role in times of transition. The following questions were open ended, and the information was treated as qualitative data: What is your favorite Bible passage and why? What are you most afraid of losing during this time of transition? What are your greatest joys in this congregation? What is your hope for the future of this congregation? Where do you see this congregation in five years?

The final step consisted of a focus group with the three pastors. Due to difficulty getting together in person, we decided to meet online via Zoom conference. Prior to the conversation, they had all been presented with the compiled data from the SurveyMonkey questionnaires for their respective ministry settings. I wanted to learn if anything had changed in their respective ministry settings since our initial interview. I also wanted to learn if there were any surprises in reviewing the survey results from their respective ministry settings. I wanted to know if and how their hopes and dreams for their congregations had been realized thus far and also what resources or forms of support might be helpful looking ahead.

Research results

Introductory Narrative

The data were collected on three different levels in each ministry setting: pastor, lay leaders, and congregation. I will first describe the participants from each setting. I will then present the data and my interpretation of the data from each setting, before finally comparing and contrasting the various findings.

Description of Participants

Setting one is a 3-point rural parish, consisting of congregations A, B, and C, with Pastor B as their Interim Pastor. Pastor B is a white male in his 60s. He was ordained in the early 1980s and served his first call in a very difficult setting with a history of conflict. He received his Doctor of Ministry from a renowned Presbyterian institution focusing on transformational ministry and conflict resolution. Several key people in the program were spiritual directors. He worked for the church-wide organization of the ELCA for a while, before returning to parish ministry where he helped to move a congregation from 500 to 800 members over two years. The congregation is still flourishing today. After moving to the East Coast, he served for a short period of time in a congregation challenged by political divisions before moving on to a declining congregation with a long history of abuse of their pastors. The congregation showed substantial growth during his time with them, but he experienced a lot of resistance in the process of implementing needed change. He has worked extensively in church consulting. The most recent focus in that area has been on energizing people by helping them to realize their gifts and talents, and putting them to use through a lens of discipleship. His last call before the current setting was following a pastor who had left

after things blew up when the congregation's financial practices were investigated by the IRS. Pastor B had been there 3 1/2 years. Things within the congregation are stabilized and they are doing well.

The Council President of Congregation A is a man in his 60s who has been a member of that congregation since 1999. He is a software engineer by occupation. He has been on Council a couple of times and has been Council President since 2007. He was raised in the Catholic Church. He and his family initially came to congregation A because of their preschool program.

The Council President of Congregation B is a woman in her 60s who has been a member of that congregation since 2002. She is a physical therapist by occupation. She and her family are originally from upstate New York. She has been in leadership for the last 10 years or so.

The Council President of Congregation C is a man in his 30s. He grew up in the congregation and the family has a rich history with and deep ties to the community. He works with computer software. He has been Council President for about six years.

Ministry setting two is a consolidation of three congregations. Pastor K is a female in her 60s. She was ordained as pastor in 2010. Before that, she was in diaconal ministry since 2002. She was Director of Evangelical Mission in the Synod for six years before accepting a three-year call to this ministry. Directors of Evangelical Mission are leadership positions within the ELCA which seek to primarily oversee and coordinate the work related to new mission starts, congregational renewal, mission support, and stewardship. As Director of Evangelical Mission, she had helped facilitate the consolidation, so she had a lot of background knowledge before taking this call. Having

worked with the three congregations in such a role, as well as their knowledge of her credentials, also helped to create a level of trust. Pastor K did not spend a lot of time discussing herself or her own emotions regarding her experiences during the interview.

The church council in setting two consists of a total of twelve members, four from each of the congregations who formed the merger. It is noteworthy that all but one of the council members are female. This is a very different dynamic than they were used to in the previous congregations, which were primarily led by men. These leaders worked together on a transition team for eighteen months before they became the council of the new congregation. Most of the women had some level of leadership role in their previous congregations as well. Most of the women had been part of their previous congregations for substantial periods of time. They are all considered middle-aged or older.

Ministry setting three is led, in part, by Pastor D who is a man in his 60s. He has come out as gay in recent years. He has a background in the Episcopal Church. He has been an ordained minister since 1981. His first call was to a church in a small town. The church actually boasted a 400-member count despite being in such a setting. He was there for six years before moving on to a church in a suburban metropolitan area. This was a difficult call for him because of the “club-like” atmosphere. It was an experience that was filled with a lot of conflict. He wanted to leave ministry after that experience, but his bishop identified him as a pastor with gifts for transitional ministry and encouraged him to stick it out. He then took a call to a congregation that was 40% African American. It was a congregation in decline. They eventually entered into a process of discernment, which led them to joining forces with an Episcopal church. He stayed there for seventeen years before taking a term call to the current congregation.

Within ministry setting three, there is also Pastor T who is a retired pastor in his late 60s He had served as Interim Pastor for the congregation 9-10 years ago. He returned to become a member of the congregation about 5 years ago. He is often referred to as a “Pastor-in-Residence” and although not being the official pastor at this time, he is looked upon as part of the pastoral leadership. He is respected and well liked.

The audio file containing the interview with the church council was accidentally lost. Some information was recovered from notes and memory. A phone interview with Pastor T was conducted to recover additional information. Pastor T was present at the focus group meeting. The council consists of primarily middle-aged and older women who have been members of this congregation for a long time. There has been some turnover on council since Pastor D arrived, and there are now a few younger members becoming more involved in leadership. One of the council members is a female in her thirties who seemed energetic and much more progressive than her peers.

Data from Setting One

Interview with Pastor B

Setting one consist of three churches that have worked together for about 100 years. The previous pastor was there for thirty-three years and, over time, his misguided leadership caused these congregations to become isolated from the Synod and the conference. This pastor’s reasoning for isolating his ministry was that the bishop did not seem to like him, and as a result, he would oppose any attempts of relationship building with the larger church. Due to that pastor’s isolation tactics and eventual disinvolvement with the larger church, Pastor B has felt a strong need to help reconcile the differences that had resulted from the divide. His opinion is that all three congregations were in a lot

better shape thirty-some years ago, than after the previous pastor left. Some of that can clearly be traced back to shortcomings in pastoral leadership and sense of responsibility, but it would be difficult to measure that against other reasons of congregational decline.

Congregation A has suffered some of the effects of this. The parsonage was so poorly maintained, that the building may end up being condemned. This congregation is struggling financially, in addition to dwindling membership, so the prognosis for the future is not looking great. An important part of Congregation A's ministry is a preschool serving the community. The church facility also functions as a community center in town, a place where meetings and community functions are often held.

Congregation B was the original Mother Church from which congregation A was birthed. It was founded about 200 years ago. It is a small country church which has no facilities beyond a very simple church building and an outhouse. It does have some assets in form of land-wealth and bank-wealth totaling about half a million dollars. Their worship attendance is less than twenty-five people on a given Sunday.

Congregation C is located in an isolated farming area. There is no cell phone service. Their worship attendance is between sixty and seventy on a Sunday morning. They have a good music program, but nothing has changed much in the last few decades. This congregation wishes to split off from the parish and call their own pastor in the near future.

All three congregations within setting one, seem to lack leadership that is willing to lead them into the 21st century. All three have been suffering because of being stuck in the past. Part of Pastor B's agenda is to help build up the leadership in order to create new visions for the future. An important part is also rebuilding relationships with the

Synod and the local conference of Lutheran pastors. Part of Pastor B's journey with these congregations has been to lead a three-month series on Exodus in order to help the people identify with the journey of the people of Israel, how God stayed with them, even during their long and difficult journey through the wilderness. Pastor B finds it helpful to use scripture to help members find ways to connect with their situation through their own transition as a congregation.

He shared how the three congregations work together. Each congregation has their own church councils and budgets. The council presidents from each congregation meet together with the pastor as needed. They have a common budget that pays the pastor whom is shared among the three churches. Additionally, Congregation C has a retired pastor who is in his 80s, originally from Germany, who helps with pulpit supply. Pastor B has also led a retreat with the various councils as well as any of the members of the congregations who wanted to attend. Some parts of the retreat were organized to discern how biblical teachings could be connected and looked upon as a transformative event. Part of the retreat was also about discerning where God is leading.

Pastor B's main agenda is to prepare for the next pastor coming in and to clean up things within the congregations that are unhealthy. That can also mean being a lightning rod at times. By the nature, a missional approach is about change, which can be difficult for people to undergo, and the pastor is often the one who people will blame when anxiety runs high. He also made sure to communicate that what came out of the retreat made it to the larger congregation. He did so by using posters that would allow people to add information whenever they see fit to do so.

Pastor B shared the various aspects of ministry for the different congregations. Congregation A is a ministry of space. It has a preschool with a great reputation and attracts kids from all three churches. The congregation has a great Christmas program. It also has well attended community groups.

Congregation B primarily has a ministry of history. Pastor B describes it as being in many ways a museum with its historic building. Congregation C has ministry that fulfills community needs, especially in supporting local farmers. To the question, “How will his future leadership help form their ministries and practices?”, Pastor B answered by saying he wants to help people recognize their gifts and talents, and to help energize people through training and mentoring and empowering. To another question that was asked, “What are the challenges he sees?”, Pastor B answered that one of the challenges is that the previous pastor is still intervening within the ministries behind the scenes. To the question, “How does Scripture inform your ministry?”, he replied by mentioning his favorite scripture passage, John 3:15-17, which talks about abundant life in the here and now. He also mentioned Psalm 23 and the book of Acts. I also asked him about spiritual practices and he responded by saying he delves into Scripture all the time and that he reads about 50-60 books a year. He also mentioned that his favorite personal biblical model is Peter, who he described as flawed but still transformed by Christ.

Data from the Focus Group Setting One

Congregation A leaders invest a lot of time in the ministry of their congregation as it relates to the building, their worship, and the community. The leaders of congregation A would like to see a more missional approach to ministry, but they are currently more business focused in their leadership model. They struggle with finances

and their worship numbers are low. Their financial difficulties are in part due to their parsonage being in poor repair.

The leaders of Congregation B struggle with a lack of energy from the members of the congregation. They tend to support community ministries with money rather than with time or other services. Also, part of their challenges result from a decline in membership and a lack of income as well as building upkeep. They are looking for a pastor who is willing to walk with them and help them build trust within the congregation.

Congregation C leaders have a lot of ideas; however, the members of the congregation seem to give a lot of pushback on these creative ideas. There is also a lack of energy and motivation from the members to make positive changes. This congregation is also very supportive of local community ministries, but these ministries seem to be narrowly focused on just the local ministries. One of their recurring problems is encouraging young members to step up. This might also be rooted in the fact that when the younger members do attempt to make positive changes, the older members are often unsupportive of their ideas.

Data from the Questionnaires Setting One

There were relatively few responses to the questionnaires from the three congregations in setting one. Congregation A yielded seven responses. Appendix A shows compiled information from the responses in congregation A. Congregation B yielded seven responses. Appendix B shows compiled information from the responses in congregation B. Congregation C yielded six responses. Appendix C shows compiled information from the responses in congregation C. In light of being relatively small

numbers, the responses may not accurately reflect the common views of these congregations, so I took that into consideration as I worked through the data, reporting more general trends, especially as they relate to missional understanding and trends in the answers to the open-ended questions.

In congregation A, the responses to what it means to be a missional church, were quite diverse. Of the responses, 43% answered that they understand it to be a church sent out to join God's mission in the world, 28% answered that it is about getting people to join their congregation, and 28% answered that they did not know. In congregation B, 57% answered being sent out, 29% getting members, but then 14% answered that it is helping people in countries overseas. In congregation C, the responses were 67% being sent out, and 33% bringing in members. My conclusion from this is that there is no uniform understanding in these congregations of what it means to be a missional church. There seems to be a clear understanding across the board, however, that the pastor's role in this time of transition is to help them to look to the future to see how they can do ministry most faithfully in their context.

The most common, favorite Scripture passage across the board was John 3:16. There were also two people who responded with Psalm 23. In looking at the responses to the question: "What are you most afraid of losing during this time of transition?" there was no consistent answer; however, people/members showed up three times.

It was noteworthy to learn that a sense of community was the most common answer to what people find to be the greatest joy in all three congregations. Twelve of the twenty responses answered "growth" as the main hope for their congregations. In discerning where the congregation might be in five years, the majority responded with

growth, although there were also some who answered "struggling". There did not seem to be many differences between the responses from the three congregations. There seems to be an overall healthy, basic understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit, as well as who the church is to be from a missional point of view.

Data from Setting Two

Interview with Pastor K

Setting two is a consolidation of three pastoral-sized congregations into one program-sized congregation. There are still often three different voices, which creates some friction within the congregation. People were used to making individual decisions rather than working in teams. Now, most of the decisions are made in teams. There are some struggles with triangulation and some struggles in becoming a "like-minded" community. There are some struggles in building trust. Additionally, the congregation faces some financial difficulties, especially as it is looking to build a new church building.

There was a history of pastoral conflict in all three congregations within the last five years prior to the consolidation. There was a change in leadership as part of the consolidation. During the eighteen months prior to the consolidation, a discernment team was created including three people from each congregation. This team became the new church council that is currently in place. The current church council is predominantly made up of women, with only one man as part of the council. There was no mechanism in place to build community relationships. To help this, a community service team was created. Part of their outreach thus far, has involved connecting with some local schools, not to proselytize, but rather to build relationships. Part of the problem is that the

neighborhoods around the church are vastly diverse. Connecting with the differing neighborhoods is still a work in progress.

Pastor K likens her role as pastor to planting seeds, and she focuses heavily on relationship building on all levels. There is a great focus on growth and discipleship building as well. She sees Jesus as a model for relationship building rooted in a sense of community, which is another strong value proclaimed in this congregation. Part of their journey has been to build a strong communal prayer life and spiritual discernment, helping people identify their gifts and talents and to use them for the greater good. The decision was made early on to not worship in any of the three individual church buildings. Rather, they decided to worship in a different location during the transition period. The congregation is now in the process of building a new worship space, which is something that has created excitement but also some anxiety in regards to finances.

Data from the Focus Group Setting Two

The focus group from setting two consisted of five members from the congregational council, including the president, secretary, and treasurer. The participants were all women, ranging in age from about 45 to 70. They are all either currently working in, or retired from, what would traditionally be considered white-collar professions. The overall impression of the consolidation is positive, exciting, and uplifting, although there are some concerns about being an aging congregation with few young people. There is an overall healthy understanding of what it might mean to be a missional church in this time and place. The call to move out the doors into the community is a driving force, as well as hospitality, relationship building, and service.

The leadership structure is one where there are a variety of teams who are empowered by the mission of the church and how the Spirit leads. The teams, in turn report to the church council, who in turn communicate with the larger congregation. Decisions that involve funding beyond budgeted expenses, as well as those involving ministry outside the scope of the teams, are brought to council for processing. The pastor overlooks the bigger picture, and keeps a focus on the mission and vision.

There is strong female leadership in this congregation, both on pastoral leadership and council level. The three congregations had predominantly male leadership before the merger. Two of the three congregations, beside interim pastors, had male pastors exclusively throughout their history. The third congregation, had two female pastors in the past. Much of the congregational lay leadership in all three congregations, had also been men in the past. There has been a big change in this dynamic during the process of the merger. Many of the men who used to be in leadership are no longer involved in such a way. Several of the council members voiced that this could possibly be attributed to Pastor K's strong leadership. This is still not necessarily the norm in other Lutheran congregations, as several shared that they are often the only female leaders in settings involving leadership from other Lutheran congregations.

Scripture plays an important role in the life of the congregation in preaching, Bible studies, and discussion groups, as does the Holy Spirit. There has been a strong sense that the Holy Spirit has been part of the entire consolidation process, opening doors, giving energy, and leading the way, ensuring that everything that needed to happen, happened at the right time. Prayer life, both on personal and, communal levels

has grown strong. This is attributed to Pastor K's strong focus on prayer. Weekly communion is also seen as one of the most important communal, spiritual practices.

In looking at challenges, there is still the sense that some people are grieving the loss of some practices unique to their old faith communities. There are some who struggle with team leadership as opposed to powerful individuals making decisions, causing some to try to get their way through influence and conversations outside of the official structure. Another challenge is people's practices as they relate to modern ways of communication. Being an older congregation, not everyone is using email regularly.

During these early years of this new ministry, some main focus areas have been to create a healthy working structure as well as finding a worship model that works for them. There is a sense of excitement about the future as they are planning to build a new church building. Two additional, important focus areas are to get more members involved in the various ministries, as well as becoming more active in the community outside of the congregation.

Results from the Questionnaires Setting Two

There were 16 responses to the questionnaire. The consolidated data are found in appendix D. Almost 90% of the respondents were females, something that connects well with results from the focus group, indicating that this is a congregation with strong, female involvement. About 95% had some level of college education. Every respondent reported that they attended weekly worship. Average age of the respondents is seventy. Bible studies are attended regularly by 60% of the respondents. Almost 90% reported that they pray regularly. Everyone contributes financially on a regular basis. Over 80% take part in leadership regularly or sometimes. It was interesting to learn that although 56%

replied that their understanding of what it means to be a missional church is to be sent out, seeking to join God's work in the world, almost half the respondents had different views. Everyone was on the same page in their understanding of the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity, the one who leads and guides us. It was also interesting to note that although there were differing views on what it might mean to be a missional church, when asked about their understanding of the church, all but one marked the statement describing the church as a community led by the Holy Spirit sent out to join God's work in the world. In looking at their understanding of the primary role of the pastor during this time of transition, all but one marked the response showing that they want a pastor who can help them look to the future to help them to see how they can do ministry most faithfully in their context.

Four of the responses pointed to John 3:16 as their favorite Bible passage. There was no consistency among the other responses. Seven people answered that they are not afraid of losing anything during this time of transition. A few mentioned traditions. When considering the greatest joy in this congregation, the two things that stood out were people and a sense of community. Ten of the sixteen respondents answered "growth," when naming their hope for the future of this congregation. When asked where they see the congregation in five years, the following themes were obvious: a new building, growth, community, and service.

Presentation of Data from Setting Three

Interview with Pastor D

Setting three is a 150-year-old congregation located in a city of about 40,000 people. It is a congregation that has been known as "the rich church on the hill." It is a

predominantly white church which does not at all reflect its predominantly black neighborhood. It has a huge facility, which is reflective of a booming past. Current Sunday worship attendance is about 150.

It is a congregation that has had a reputation of being a difficult congregation filled with conflict. One of the most difficult events in recent history was the suicide of a pastor in 2011. It has seen a lot of turmoil since, with little stability. There have been several pastors since then, but only short term. The last pastor before pastor D arrived, a female pastor, had left after having been threatened by one of the parishioners. When Pastor D had arrived about fourteen months before the interview to serve a three-year call, he made a point of doing a lot of home visits to learn more about what had transpired surrounding the suicide. He did seventy home visits during his first year with them, and learned a lot from those conversations. It had been the assumption of many that being a difficult congregation had been much to blame in the suicide. It turned out that the pastor had some serious mental health struggles that had affected his ministry as well as his personal life. Many also felt that there had not been enough support from synodical leadership, both prior to the suicide as well as in the aftermath.

Pastor D finds great value in building close, loving relationships with the parishioners, and feels that he has been able to develop such. He feels that he is well loved, even to the point where he has been asked to stay longer than the three-year term, something that he, with the Bishop's approval, is considering. He sees his role to be one of creating a sense of stability, especially in light of the difficult times the congregation has experienced in the aftermath of the suicide. He is also working on helping the congregation develop an attitude of agility, emphasizing the importance of being willing

to try new things. Reality is that such attempts will often fail, but unless one is willing to change in a changing context, failure is almost guaranteed. He puts a high emphasis on the work of the Spirit, and a willingness to embrace elements of surprise. The Pentecost story along with Paul's conversion story are among his favorite Bible stories. He loves the gospel of John with its mysticism and emphasis on signs.

There are several other Lutheran churches within just a few miles. Pastor D has been trying to find ways to do some cooperative ministry, but has not been very successful in doing so. He feels it is important for his congregation to define what sets them apart from other churches in the area, and find better ways to market themselves. They have hired a marketing consultant to help them with that.

The congregation has a long history of serving in the community; especially the less fortunate. They do so through their food pantry, a backpack ministry, supporting a veteran's shelter as well as working together with other congregations to help provide cold-weather shelter for the homeless in the wintertime. Pastor D finds the congregation to be incredibly welcoming to whoever comes in the door. He shared a story about how a homeless man with a serious alcohol problem used to come on occasion, usually covered in filth and not smelling very good. Instead of turning him away, they would simply cover a chair with plastic and welcome him to join them. It shows a spirit of radical hospitality and openness, as well as values deeply rooted in the call to serve "the least of these."

In looking at challenges, there are a few. One of the greatest challenges is in the area of staffing. One of the greatest points of contention seems to be a staff person "G" who is an ordained minister in another denomination. He has been on staff for about ten

years, and is primarily working in the areas of music and visitation. The common view is that G is not doing his job, especially in the area of visitation. This has created some tension. Pastor D is of the opinion the G has enough support in the congregation that if he would try to have him removed from the staff, it would likely also be the end of his own ministry with them.

There is a total of nine people on paid staff in this congregation. Being overstaffed, in addition to maintaining a large, aging building, is also putting a strain on finances. In addition to member giving, half of the budget is currently supported by drawing down a large endowment. At that rate, the congregation would run out of money in about ten years.

Data from Focus Group Setting Three

The recorded data from the focus group in setting three were as previously mentioned, accidentally erased. The focus group consisted of six council members, and retired Pastor T in addition to Pastor D. In an attempt to bring back some of the data, a phone interview was conducted with Pastor T, who is quite invested and involved with the ministries in this setting. He is retired and had served the congregation as interim pastor for about a year, ten years ago.

He sees the congregation as resourceful and well educated. He also sees service as a big part of their ministry, but mostly on a local level. He feels the congregation is not well connected with the larger church, and not being very involved with ministries outside the local area.

He is also critical of some issues involving staff member G. He feels that he is not working very well with children, which is part of what he is charged with through the

congregation's music ministry. He also shares the opinion that G is not putting in the time and effort he is being paid to do. G is ordained clergy in a denomination which is not recognized as a full communion partner with the ELCA, yet he still dresses in clerical garb and is seeking to be recognized as one of the congregation's pastors. Pastor T finds this highly inappropriate, yet he shares Pastor D's view that any organized effort to remove G from this ministry would create a conflict situation that would not benefit the congregation at this time.

We talked about the role of Scripture as well as the role of the Holy Spirit in this ministry setting. Pastor T feels that they are well covered with a variety of Bible studies, yet he believes that many are struggling with how to apply Jesus' calling to love your neighbor, beyond serving their basic needs. He feels Lutheran clergy in general have not done a very good job in how we talk about the Spirit. He feels that the work of the Spirit is much about creating unity, harmony, and community, yet we as a denomination, clergy, and congregations have been lacking such a focus.

In trying to recall information shared during the focus group meeting, there did not seem to be much new information beyond what had already been shared by pastors D and T. One thing that was obvious was that there was not a whole lot of willingness to talk about the circumstances around the suicide. My impression was that there was a sense of energy and hope for the future, much of which seemed to be grounded in a sense of stability caused by Pastor D's presence.

Results from Questionnaires Setting Three

There were twenty-two responses to the questionnaires from setting three. The consolidated data are found in appendix E. About 68% of the responses were female, the

rest men. Almost 90% had some form of higher education beyond high school. Over 85% reported attending worship weekly or several times a month. It was interesting to note that about 50% reported having been part of another congregation before becoming members of setting three. Only 10% reported having been lifelong members of this congregation. The average age of the respondents is 63 years old. Bible studies are attended regularly by 52% of the respondents. In looking at prayer life, 76% responded that they pray regularly. As many as 95% reported being involved in social ministry regularly or sometimes, something that matches well with the understanding of this being a congregation who values serving in the community. Over 80% support the congregation financially. A bit over 52% reported serving regularly in leadership. Understanding a missional church to be one that is sent out to join God's work in the world was marked by 80% of the respondents. I found some insight in, however, that 15% answered that their understanding of a missional church is one that seeks to find effective ways for people to join their congregation. There seems to be a strong understanding of the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity, the one who guides us. The vast majority, 90%, understand the church to be a community led by the Holy Spirit sent out to join God's work in the world. It was, however, interesting to note that 10% answered that it is a community of believers coming together for their own benefit. The vast majority, 90%, have an understanding of the role of the pastor during this time of transition to be to help the congregation look to the future to see how they can do ministry most faithfully in their context.

Seven people skipped answering the open-ended questions. Of those who did answer, as we look at favorite Bible passages, several picked John 3:16, but there were

also several people who picked Philippians 4, but different verses. Two people picked verses 6-8, one verse 11, one verse 13, and one verse 16.

In looking at what people are most afraid of losing during this time of transition, the most prevalent answer was losing members. In looking at greatest joys, a sense of community and being together ranked highly. In looking at hopes and dreams, growth was a strong response, as well as service in the community. There was no consistency in the responses to the question asking where they see the congregation in five years.

Data from Final Focus Group with the Three Pastors

This focus group was conducted using Zoom video conferencing, due to the distance between the different ministry settings. The focus group was conducted 2-3 months after the initial one-on-one interviews. The pastors had received the compiled information from the responses to the questionnaires from their respective settings.

In response to my question if anything had changed since our first interview, Pastor D responded that a lot of conflict had developed within the congregation as a result of changes. He feels that it is important to note that when things seem to be going well, the forces of evil tend to become stronger to prevent progress.

Pastor K reported that she and the congregation agreed to extend their relationship by entering another 3-year term contract as their pastor. Entering the process of building a new church building is now a major focus, and takes a lot of time and energy.

Pastor B reported that it is becoming clear that congregation A is virtually bankrupt both in terms of finances and other resources. He is unsure of their future. He expressed great anger over the irresponsible conduct by the previous long-term pastor who had allowed things to fall into such disarray. He feels congregation B has some

energy and sense of mission, but they are in need of a viable partner church to be able to move forward. Congregation C is doing well and is getting ready to enter the process to call their own pastor.

When asked if there were any surprises as they processed the information from the questionnaires, none of the pastors reported that to be the case. As I inquired about hopes and dreams for the various settings, Pastor B again voiced his frustration over the lack of responsible leadership from the previous pastor, and the damage it had caused. He hopes for a better future for each one of the settings, one step at a time. Pastor K mentioned that there is a sense of joy, and they continue to discern what it means to share the good news of Jesus Christ in relevant ways. Pastor D mentioned that they are processing the book *Canoeing the Mountains*¹ together as a congregation, which he feels is a great tool helping them to understand the need for change.

My next question was if original hopes and dreams for their settings have been realized, and if not, what needs to change. Pastor D keeps pushing forward, expecting pushback. Pastor K says they are “on the way.” She has not seen the kind of numbers growth she had been hoping for, but she is also happy with no decline. Everyone is excited about the new building, not just for their own sake, but for the sake of being able to offer better space for community organizations to enjoy. Pastor B hopes to continue to help the parishioners grow in discipleship by helping them to identify and use their gifts and talents in ministry.

¹ Tod Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains: Christian Leadership in Uncharted Territory*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018).

In asking about what resources or support might be helpful in moving forward, Pastor K finds great support in spiritual direction as well as colleagues. She also believes that forces of evil are very much at work in the world, especially when things are going well, and that the best defense is an intentional support system. Pastor D feels that it is important to find and engage support from outside the congregation.

In asking for last comments, Pastor K mentioned that she thinks people have forgotten the purpose of the church, that there is a big difference between going to church and following Jesus, that it is not about us, but rather to live our lives being willing to sacrifice something for the sake of our neighbor. Pastor D pointed out the importance of doing ministry together, that it is not about the pastor, but rather community effort. Pastor B mentioned the importance of outside influence, and how he had noticed that my meeting with the leadership as a focus group, asking pointed questions related to mission, helped the leaders to consider a missional approach to ministry in their respective congregations.

Interpretation and Triangulation of Data

There were common themes that I believe to be of great importance, as my research question is primarily looking at the leadership of pastors during times of transition, and if there are certain commonalities that might be evident, especially as it ties in with a missional understanding of leadership. The following information came as a result of looking for themes evident within each ministry setting, either introduced or strengthened through the leadership of the pastor.

There was an intentional focus on Scripture in each setting. Every setting had Bible studies in place; many of them had several. Scripture was also applied intentionally

in several settings, either through a personal focus on certain Scripture passages, or, such as in Pastor B's case, leading a study on Exodus, helping the people to connect the journey of the people of Israel with their own journey. Another example came out of setting two, where several of the council members pointed out how Pastor K does such a fine job in connecting the message of Scripture with real life. It was also noteworthy how each pastor would not necessarily follow the Revised Standard Lectionary in choosing texts to preach from. Pastor B would often deviate from it, noting that the lectionary only covers parts of Scripture. Pastor K uses the Narrative Lectionary which tells more of the continuous stories than snippets from four different parts of Scripture each Sunday. Pastor D shared that they use the Revised Standard Lectionary, but that he is free to deviate from it, something he sometimes does.

There was a common understanding that faithful ministry cannot happen in a vacuum. Everything is connected, and when leaders do not value and promote that, it can limit how they see themselves and how faithful they are in joining God in doing God's work for the sake of the world. Setting one had experienced long-term leadership of a pastor who intentionally kept the congregations from having relationships with the larger church. This, in many ways, had kept them from following up with the times, as well as looking at the bigger picture of how the different parts of the body of Christ is connected, both within the ELCA and the world. This may also have been one of the reasons why there was very little interest in supporting missions outside the local area.

All three pastors, value outside relationships on a variety of levels. Pastor B sees great value in not only connecting the congregations to the larger church, but also through being a coach and workshop leader for pastors and congregational leaders

nationwide. Pastor K greatly values relationships with colleagues and peers, as we all need support systems and people to bounce ideas off of. Pastor D continues to seek out ways through which the Lutheran churches in the area can work more closely together. He is also being very intentional in re-building the relationship between the congregation and the Synod.

It became obvious from the interviews that both Pastor B and Pastor D had experienced a lot of conflict on their journeys as pastors. Both had served in settings where at some point the level of conflict had become severe enough that they no longer were able or willing to serve in that particular setting. Pastor D was, in the wake of congregational conflict, ready to give up serving as an ordained minister, but decided to stick with it after being encouraged by his bishop. Although not evident from the research, I also know from personal experience that Pastor K had experienced a lot of conflict, especially from her time as Director of Evangelical mission in her Synod. The ability to overcome conflict creates resilience, an important leadership quality during times of congregational transition.

Two of the three pastors have an ecumenical background. Pastor B received his Doctor of Ministry degree from a Presbyterian Seminary where he experienced a highly ecumenical environment. He also continues to work in an ecumenical environment through his congregational consulting work. Pastor D was raised as a Congregationalist, but started playing the organ at an Episcopal church as a young man, and joined the Episcopal church. After college he attended a Lutheran seminary, which eventually led him to become a Lutheran pastor.

All three of the pastors have experienced a lot of transitions and change in their lives. Pastor B has transitioned, and continues to transition, from ministry setting to ministry setting. He has also transitioned several times in the way he carries out his consultation work. He has also experienced physical moves from one part of the country to another. Pastor D has experienced transitions between congregations as well as on a personal level in recent years, coming out as an openly gay man after more than twenty years of marriage to a woman. Pastor K has had several career changes from nurse to deaconess to ordained ministry. As an ordained pastor, she has also experienced a lot of transitions from parish pastor to being on Synod staff to now again being parish pastor in a different environment. She has also experienced several long-distance moves in her life.

Empowering lay people and building leadership are also common traits. This is also part of getting the big picture. It has to do with understanding that pastors come and go, so the strength in congregations lie within how lay leaders are trained and how people are empowered to use their God-given gifts and talents. Pastor B works intentionally with the leaders through workshops, but also making sure that members are invited and encouraged to participate. A big part of his focus is helping the members recognize and further develop their God-given gifts to be used for mission and ministry. Pastor D's approach to this has been grounded in one-on-one conversations, to get to know people on a personal level. He is known to recognize gifts for leadership in people who might not traditionally see themselves as leaders, and help them to rise to leadership positions in the congregation. Pastor B has a great focus on spiritual discernment and creating opportunities for people to use their gifts for the good of the larger community.

All three pastor have a great focus on discipleship components. Discipleship often looks different than membership. Although the term discipleship covers a lot of different areas in what it means to be followers of Christ, the three pastors had certain areas on which they put a greater focus in their leadership. Pastor B has a particular focus on what it means for a disciple to use their God-given gifts and talents for the good of the community. Pastor D has a particular focus on the relational aspect of discipleship, as well as the transformational aspect of being church. He focuses on the importance of agility in a changing world, and how the church needs to be able to change with the times accordingly. Pastor K sees discipleship as an overall focus with all its components. She has been leading the congregation through a book study of Michal Foss's book *Power Surge, Six Marks of Discipleship for a Changing Church*.² The author talks about daily prayer, weekly worship, daily Scripture reading, serving the church and beyond, relating with others for spiritual growth and giving a tithe and beyond as being six vital marks of discipleship.

All three pastors are seeking an outward focus. This is lived out differently in each context. Pastor B has made an intentional focus for the three congregations to reconnect with the larger church after decades of being disconnected. Pastor D is seeking ways to build relationships with other churches in the community, as well as marketing and creating events that will connect with the un-churched. The congregation is already involved in a variety of ways of serving the local community. Pastor K has helped put

² Michael Foss, *Power Surge: Six Marks of Discipleship for a Changing Church*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000).

together a community service team, as well as working on building relationships with the local schools.

All three pastors are people who are willing to take risks, rather than always sticking with the tried and true. There is a mindset grounded in a hope of resurrection and new life for these congregations, yet the realization that for that to be possible, the future will have to look different than the past, yet knowing that there is most often no road map to get there, so a willingness to boldly take risks is necessary. Pastor B is inviting the people to travel with the people of Israel through the wilderness in the Exodus story, a journey filled with constant unforeseen twists and turns. This, to help the people realize that being faithful in living into being people of God, often involves taking risks. Pastor D has built enough trust that they approved \$25,000 to pay for a marketing company to help them on their journey, not knowing what that journey looks like. Pastor D's point is that churches do not do marketing well, and that congregations are better off hiring professionals to help reaching the community. Pastor K said during the interview: "We are jumping off the cliff together, having no idea of the outcome. We just need to be bold and trust the Holy Spirit in this."

Another quality that the three pastors have in common is the ability to look for possibilities rather than remaining stuck in the past. Envisioning a different future, and finding ways to live into that future, is an important part of transformational ministry, yet realizing that sometimes that also might mean closing the doors for some congregations. Pastor B has had to point out that very real possibility for congregation A. But he has also been able to help people to think about some creative options for congregation B as congregation C is moving on to call their own pastor. Pastor D realized that one of the

greatest needs for his setting right now is a sense of stability, so he continues to provide that by committing to be their pastor for a longer period of time. Yet, stability does not equal remaining in the status quo. The congregation has some reserve funds, and through his leadership, these funds are being used to explore possibilities rather than remaining in a bank account. Pastor K has throughout her work with the transition team and now as the pastor of this consolidation, shown her commitment to possibilities and hope, rather than simply letting three unsustainable congregations die.

Another common trait is putting in the time to research and dig deeper to be well informed about issues and problems. Pastor B has spent much time in conversations with members, and especially leadership to be well informed about relationships, power structures, anxieties, and struggles. Pastor D did over seventy home visits during his first year as their pastor, especially focusing on the circumstances around the suicide of a previous pastor, an event that had proven to have serious detrimental effect on the congregation in the aftermath. Pastor K had done extensive research of the history and demographics of each congregational setting, as well as providing many opportunities for people to share their stories, especially during her time as Director of Evangelical Mission working with the transition team.

Another common trait is to use a cooperative, or team approach to finding answers and solutions to difficult problems. This also ties in with empowering lay people, and helping people to take ownership of the ministry. There will always be varying degrees of direction from clergy based upon personality and leadership style, yet none of the three pastors seem to subscribe to an approach that can best be described as micro

management. Instead, there seems to be a common understanding that involving other voices is welcome and even necessary in finding appropriate solutions.

All three pastors realize that being agents of change also make them targets of criticism. Pastor B named that specifically during the interview, realizing that it is most often not personal, but rather a reaction to change, especially during times of congregational transition. Pastor D is experiencing a lot of conflict within the congregation, which he also realizes that it is mainly caused by systemic change, but also might carry over from some of the anxiety in the aftermath of the suicide. Pastor K has realized that being in a position of leadership, and especially so as a female, puts her in a position of even greater scrutiny and criticism. She experienced that both as a DEM, as well as in her current setting.

Two of the three pastors reported an intentional focus on prayer. Pastor D reported that his congregation is not what he would consider a praying congregation. This has, however, changed since one of the deacons has helped reorganize the congregation's prayer ministry. The prayer group is now revitalized. Among other things, they meet for a half hour every Tuesday morning to pray for five different Synods and their bishops every week, as well as five different churches in the Synod. They then send out cards letting them know they have been prayed for. One interesting part is that many of those who receive the cards, write back, and new relationships are created. Pastor K has found that a greater focus on discipleship has also helped people in their personal prayer lives. People are taking this to heart. One indication is that the devotional booklets offered by the church disappear quickly, as people use these to enhance their prayer lives. She has also challenged lay leaders to start every meeting with prayer, and she has made it clear

that she will not be the one to do so. Leaders are now much more comfortable doing so two years into their ministry together.

All three pastors have a focus on what healthy structures look like. A big part of this is also how decisions are made. In Pastor B's setting there was already a structure in place. The three congregations function independently with their local council leadership, but there is also a common structure, which primarily deals with shared cost of the pastor. This has traditionally been done by providing a certain percentage of congregational giving. This, however, created some disunity, as congregation C, being the largest congregation, would often carry close to 70% of the load, yet only receive one third of the pastor's time and efforts. This might have been a deciding factor in why they decided to move forward calling their own pastor. Another problem across all three congregations is seemingly lack of leadership. Pastor B believes this is a result of the previous pastor's leadership. Pastor D also inherited a structure that was already in place, but questions a few things. He recognizes that there are certain staff and people who carry more decision power than might be beneficial for the life of the congregation. He pointed out that the executive committee has a lot of power, as they are the ones setting the agenda for what is to be processed by the church council. There has been, and continues to be, friction in the congregation because of some of these questionable practices. Pastor K had the luxury of working together with the leadership to create a team-based structure, built to empower lay leadership while also working within a sense of common vision and mission. Part of the struggles have been moving from three pastoral sized congregations to one program sized congregation. Decisions were often made by individuals in the past, and the transition has been somewhat difficult moving to a team-based system.

All three pastors put great value on the presence of the Holy Spirit, both on a personal level, as well as on a congregational level. Pastor B referred to it as “Christ’s spirit,” when I initiated the conversation about the Holy Spirit. He talked about the obvious presence in Scripture and prayer, but also how the Spirit is active in daily life, which led him to connect the Spirit with the book of Acts, and how important that book is in describing the work of the Spirit in the early church.

Pastor D also talked about the book of Acts, and the great significance of the Pentecost experience, and how the Spirit is part of everything. He mentioned three qualities he feels are foundational in how the Spirit leads the church in gaining a sense of mission: The Spirit creates a sense of trust and direction moving forward. The Spirit creates a sense of enthusiasm, something that is badly needed, but has often been lost in many congregations. The Spirit is “unreasonable,” as in the Spirit often works against our human reasoning. On a personal level, Pastor D finds the Spirit to often show up in conversations with strangers as well as fellow clergy. To him, communion, worship space, and music are also elements which help keep him grounded in the Spirit.

Pastor K talked about how the Spirit is always active in everything. She pointed to how she as an intuitive person, often finding herself sensing the Spirit at work as a “gut feeling.” One of her most powerful personal realizations of the Spirit was when she realized that the Spirit is who has formed her faith. Having grown up in a more fundamentalist faith community, this provided great relief, as it gave her permission to accept that the Spirit had given her a different kind of faith, more inclusive, more grace filled. The Spirit calls us to take risks, and she believes the guidance of the Spirit has been the only thing making the consolidation of the three churches possible. She likened

it to jumping off a cliff, having no idea what might be on the other side, yet trusting that God would be there. She also finds the Spirit present in interaction with colleagues, and she finds spiritual direction helpful on a personal level. She finds an intentional focus on discipleship practices, such as prayer, service, and generosity, on a personal as well as congregational level, to be important in furthering the work of the Spirit.

I described the research process in this chapter. I also processed the data collected, and summarized the findings. There are common traits, values, and practices that can be defined as missional, which do make a difference in how the pastors' approach to ministry in times of transition. In the following chapter, I will summarize what I have learned from this research, and what is important from these findings. I will then put the findings in conversation with my biblical, theological, and theoretical lenses. I will furthermore discuss the limits of this research, and entertain questions for future research.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

The previous chapter reviewed my research process. It described the research participants. All the data were presented in the chapter, categorized by research site, responses from the individual pastors, congregational council focus groups, results from member questionnaires, and finally focus group of the three pastors. The findings were then categorized according to common focus areas and traits among the pastors. This chapter summarizes the findings and puts them in conversation with the research question and the lenses. A final conclusion is reached based on what was discovered.

Summary and Learnings

Although the three settings were very different, they were all in some kind of transition, and although the results from the congregational questionnaires yielded a wide variety of levels of participation in the various parts of ministry, there were some commonalities across the board, which I believe to be important to point out in conclusion. Virtually all reported that they pray either regularly or sometimes, which I believe is an important part of having a close relationship with God. Virtually all reported to financially support their congregations regularly or sometimes, which shows faithful commitment to their places of worship.

It was interesting to note the responses to “What does it mean to be a missional church?” About 65% answered that it is a church that is sent out, and seeks to join God in

God's mission in the world. About 20% answered that it is a church that seeks to find effective ways to get people to join their congregation. When answering the question: "What statement best describes your understanding of the church?", about 90% indicated that the church is a community led by the Holy Spirit, sent to join God's work in the world. This shows me that there might be a fair amount of the respondents who do not have a clear understanding of the word "missional," but yet understand that it is the churches' role to live out its purpose in missional ways—"sent out."

The vast majority showed an appropriate understanding of the Holy Spirit as one of the persons of the Trinity, the one who leads and guides us in doing God's work. About 90% of the respondents answered that they see the main role of the pastor in this time of transition to help them to look to the future to see how they can do ministry most faithfully in their setting. I suspect that answer may have been chosen by many because they had been informed either by the Synod or their pastor that to be their role during this time of transition. My reasoning here is grounded in that many indicated that one of the fears during the time of transition is that they would lose members, and some of the most common answers to the question asking about hope for the future was "growth" or "new members." It would have been interesting to have offered one of the answer options to the question about pastors' role as "growing the congregation and bringing in new members."

When asked about the greatest joys in their congregation, many of the answers were grounded in a sense of community or fellowship and being with likeminded people in worship. Although this is certainly valuable and important, I wonder how well it carries out through the church doors. Is the same level of fellowship and relationship

building being sought intentionally with the larger community, and even across the world? This happens differently in the different settings. The congregations in setting one are doing so to some degree through serving the needs of the local community. There seems to be a different mindset in setting two where there is more intentionality in building relationships with the community beyond just service. Setting three is heavily involved in serving the needs of the local community, especially as they relate to poverty and hunger, yet the demographic of the neighborhood looks very different than the worshipping community, and there has not been great success in building bridges across these different cultures.

There were common areas of focus, qualities, and traits among the pastors. I will summarize these, then process them on a deeper level, looking at how they relate to the theoretical, biblical, and theological lenses, rooted in a missional understanding.

Scripture plays an important role in the life of the congregations, especially in the form of Bible studies. It was also noteworthy how each pastor would not necessarily follow the Revised Common Lectionary (RCL) in choosing texts to preach from, either by using the Narrative Lectionary, in Pastor K's case, or occasionally deviating from the RCL in Pastors B's and D's case. The RCL is a prescribed calendar of Scripture readings for each Sunday of the year, rotating in a 3-year cycle. The Narrative Lectionary is a calendar of readings focusing on telling God's story one book at a time. The reasoning behind these decisions are rooted in connecting Scripture to people's lives in more meaningful ways, and not just sticking with tradition for the sake of tradition.

It is important to note that the three pastors have a desire for networking and relationship building, both in their roles as pastors, as well as within the congregational

structure, the structure of the larger church, and the larger community. All three pastors sought to build or rebuild such relationships in their ministry settings. Pastor B in particular, realized how the “lone wolf” approach of the previous pastor had been extremely damaging for the life, development, and ministries in the congregations in the parish.

Another important observation was that the three pastors realize that conflict is unavoidable, if lasting change is to happen. Pastors who are willing to be change agents are often subjects of harsh criticism and pushback. It is necessary to have a resilient personality, yet at the same time exhibit grace, realizing this is a normal part of a systemic change. All three pastors have had lives filled with lots of transitions and change, and because of this are better prepared to recognize the various aspects of change, both difficulties and opportunities.

The ability to help their congregations imagine a different, God-given future is another important aspect of missional leadership, which all three pastors express. They look for opportunities and hope where the recent past might have been filled with difficulties and hopelessness. This also ties in with the willingness to take risks and try new things, realizing that there will often be failure. Failure, however, is something to be learned from, and without a willingness to take risks, nothing will change.

All three pastors focus on team-based ministry, rather than a “top down” approach. It is important to empower people, equipping them and helping them to recognize and utilize their gifts and talents for the sake of the greater good. This includes leading by example, as well as providing direction, tools, and resources for growth. This

also spills over to the way the ministries are structured, aiding in creating structures where there is a good balance between individual creativity and input, and team-work.

All three pastors seek to instill an outward focus, as well as building up the faith community itself, recognizing that a vital component of missional ministry is connecting with the world outside the church doors, discerning what God is up to in the neighborhood. One expression of this is serving the needs of our neighbors, something which is happening to varying degrees in all the congregations. It goes, however, deeper than that, as a missional approach also includes getting to know your neighbor by building relationships, seeking to meet them where they are on their life's journey.

Another important quality evident in these three pastors was their inquisitive nature. They all realize the importance of knowing the faith community as well as the community in which the congregation is located. Being well informed helps framing the bigger picture in light of facts rather than assumptions.

One of the most important aspects of their leadership lies in the importance and focus on the leading of the Holy Spirit, both in their own lives and in the lives of the people and faith communities they have been called to serve. Part of this is the importance of personal spiritual practices, such as prayer, reading and meditation, but equally important on a communal level where spiritual discernment and practices become integrated parts of who they are as faith communities.

Putting the Findings in Perspectives of Lenses

Theoretical Lenses

Transformative Pastoral Leadership

All three pastors apply adaptive leadership well. They are able to look at the bigger picture, which includes stepping back at times. They resist the temptation of being sucked into emotional triangles. They are willing to take risks and explore, realizing that doing so will often create push-back and conflict, yet is a necessary part of transformation.

All three pastors realize the importance of spiritual leadership in transforming congregations. Gilbert Rendle helps us understand that giving the members the tools to grow spiritually can be more important in the process of congregational transformation than the business management aspect of being church.¹ Pastor B does so by helping them to recognize and use their spiritual gifts. Pastor K does so by mentoring the members in how to pray, and by teaching discipleship. Pastor D does so by empowering leaders to build a growing prayer ministry.

What makes transformational leadership missional, is that it is not the leaders' agenda which drives the change, but it is rather Spirit led, as part of *missio Dei*. I see that lived out in the pastoral leadership in all three settings. All three pastors bring their personalities, experience, and leadership styles to the table, but in the end, they do not let

¹ Gilbert R. Rendle, *Leading Change in the Congregation: Spiritual and Organizational Tools for Leaders*, (Bethesda, MD.: Alban Institute, 1998), 23.

personal agendas influence what the congregation will look like, but rather, they realize this is God's work.

Congregational Transitions

The three congregations are by default in some stage of transition, and I argue that the leadership approach makes a difference, if the transition is to lead to the congregation becoming a community which strives to be more missional in the way it carries out its ministries. There are, however, certain aspects of leadership that apply to such transitions, regardless of being carried out through a missional lens or not. It is important for leaders in any organization to consider such factors.

As mentioned in chapter 2, William and Susan Bridges talk about the psychological aspect of transitions and how there are three phases of how people process transitions; letting go of the old, the neutral zone, and new beginnings.² At any given time, there are people in any one of these psychological phases, and it is important to be able to meet people where they are, recognizing these factors. Pastor K mentioned that there are still people bringing up and grieving the past, three years in as a new congregation, yet there are others in her congregation who fully embrace a new future with excitement, and ready to move forward full speed.

Pastor D in setting three was very intentional in getting to know people, learning about their past, and inquiring about their hopes and dreams. Due to the hurtful experience of the suicide of a pastor in the past, followed by a time of conflict and several pastoral transitions, many are ready for a new future filled with stability and purpose.

² William, and Susan Mitchell Bridges, *Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*. 4th edition, (Boston, MA: Da Capo Lifelong Books, A Member of the Perseus Books Group, 2016).

Due to lack of progressive leadership in the past in setting one, many are stuck in the mindset of the past, yet ready for new beginnings. New beginnings seem to be of particular importance in congregation C as they are moving toward a future calling their own pastor.

Bolman and Deal present change in the form of reframing.³ They name four organizational frames; structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. It is important to look at these frames during times of transition, and apply a missional lens in the process of reframing.

In setting one, the structure is already being reframed since congregation C is planning to leave the parish, but I also argue that Pastor B is reframing the human resource aspect by empowering people to use their spiritual gifts in new ways. Setting two experienced a total restructuring through the process of consolidation. The way decisions are made changed from a predominantly individual approach to a primarily team-based approach. Everyone had to get used to a new worship space. The power structure changed, as many of the male leaders from the past have been replaced by strong female leadership. Traditions and rituals from times past are being challenged, as a different lectionary is used for worship. Lay people are assuming additional responsibilities and roles in worship. Setting three is also being reframed in the area of human resource, as well as on some level the political frame. Pastor D encouraged new people to seek election to council, as he recognized leadership traits in people who did not see themselves as leaders. He found ways to empower them to use their gifts in such a

³ Lee G. Bolman, and Terrence E. Deal, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, 5th edition, (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, a Wiley brand, 2013).

capacity, bringing fresh viewpoints into the leadership of the congregation. He has also worked with one of the new deacons to encourage and empower her to grow the congregations' prayer ministry, which has taken off in new and surprising ways.

Biblical Lenses

God Sends Us Out

I used the following passages to define my biblical lenses: John 20:19-22, Luke 10:1-12, and Acts 8:26-40. The common theme here is that God is a sending God, and what that looks like is highly contextual as well as Spirit led. There are some commonalities. The message is almost always one of peace. When God sends people out, it is almost always with a certain goal and purpose. Being sent out is not about being comfortable, but most often the opposite; there is often a sense of being sent out of our comfort zone to people who are often very different than us. Timing is often important. There is a sense that the Holy Spirit prepares people for certain tasks to be carried out in God's time, something that often upsets our preferred ways of being people of faith, within the security of our own walls and boundaries.

This is perhaps one of the ministry areas that could use the most work in all three settings. In thinking about timing, the three congregations are in vastly different places on their journeys. This is one of the more difficult parts of congregational transitions, especially if the impression is that the congregation is struggling with internal issues. Being sent out in setting one, seems limited to mostly serving the local communities at this point. Although Pastor B is bringing a missional leadership approach, the reality is also that many, according to the survey results, do not yet fully understand the purpose of the church from a missional point of view. Congregation A has a unique "sent out" part

of its ministries, in that it is providing space for the preschool, as well as gathering space for community events.

Setting two is according to Pastor K, “on the way” in discovering where God is sending them. They have a community outreach team in place, and they are being intentional in building relationships with their neighbors, and getting to know them. Pastor K admitted this to be a ministry in progress, as much of the focus has been on becoming a new faith community, and the efforts and energy involved with that.

Setting three is living this out by serving the community in a variety of ways through their food pantry, community meals, back-pack ministry, and other ways benefitting the poor in the community. What seems to be lacking, is the ability to build deeper relationships with their neighbors who look very different than them.

The Holy Spirit Leading and Empowering

I find the message of the Spirit’s leading and empowering, to be particularly powerful in the passage from Acts 8. Philip is led to baptize someone who is very different than him, and after he has done that task, he is swept away by the Spirit to a new location and a new task. In John 20 Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit into his disciples, empowering them to God’s work.

It was clear that all three pastors are deeply spiritual people, who take the guidance of the Spirit seriously, both in helping to sustain them and lead them personally, as they recognize the Spirits’ presence in Scripture and prayer, and also in how the Spirit works through conversations with others. The understanding and awareness of the Spirit in conversation with others was especially evident for Pastors K and D, as they shared this as part of the final focus group conversation.

Michael Welker brings up a relevant point in *God the Spirit*, as he talks about the constant need for spiritual discernment.⁴ Pastor K and Pastor D both talked about the power of evil, and how evil seems to be pushing harder, the more faithful we are in carrying out God's will. Pastor D has experienced what he believes to be the attempt of evil to create a lot of unexplained conflict in his congregation, something that he on one level sees as a sign of being on the right track, but he also recognizes the importance of staying firmly connected to the Spirit during such difficult times.

Theological Lenses

Missional Ecclesiology

What might it mean to be a missional church, and what might that process look like from a leadership point of view during transitional times? Again, we are looking at joining God in God's work in the world, and what that might look like in context. Patrick Keifert talks about the importance of meeting people where they are, not where we want them to be, in his book *We Are Here Now*.⁵ I believe that is an important aspect of missional ministry in transition, as the pastor takes the time to get to know what is important to the people in the congregation, what understanding they have of who they are, and what hopes and dreams they have for the future. All three pastors spent much time and effort to get to know their people, building trust and understanding to help determine what might be needed moving forward.

⁴ Michael Welker, and John F. Hoffmeyer, *God the Spirit*, (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 309

⁵ Patrick R. Keifert, *We Are Here Now: A New Missional Era, a Missional Journey of Spiritual Discovery*, (Eagle, ID: Allelon Publishing, 2006), 23

Alan Roxburgh helps us to understand what values to consider in becoming a missional congregation in his book *Joining God, Remaking the Church, Changing the World*.⁶ The church is to be the living embodiment of a missionary God. It is not to be stuck in Christendom of times past, but to look to what it means to be sent out in its context. The churches' internal life should be focusing on discipleship, but for the purpose of sending its people out to participate in God's mission. The primary focus is not the church, but God. I believe this to be an ideal to strive for, but if we combine this goal with Keifert's idea of meeting people where they are, there is likely to be a gap between reality and vision. This is the case in the three settings I researched as well. The congregations in setting one seem to be in the early stages of understanding who they are to be in this time and place, and Pastor B is meeting them where they are, helping them to discern what a God-given future might look like for them in their unique settings.

Setting two might be the furthest ahead on their journey to understand more fully what a missional approach to ministry might look like, yet not without struggles. People are still remembering the old ways. People are still adjusting to a new reality, but they understand that the past reality is no longer there. It might in some ways be easier when there is no longer a familiar place of worship to remind them of the past, but rather a new journey with a pastor who is helping them to create a new kind of structure, with an intentional missional focus. It could be interesting to learn how a new building might make things more or less difficult on their missional journey.

⁶ Alan J. Roxburgh, *Joining God, Remaking Church, Changing the World: The New Shape of the Church in Our Time*, (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2015), 43-44

Pastor D is quite successful in balancing the idea of meeting people where they are in setting three, and also challenging them to consider that change is necessary. There have been some struggles within. Some are resisting change, largely due to differing opinions of what the future should look like. Having a large reserve fund might prevent change from happening as quickly as it otherwise could, but Pastor D is quite intentional in helping them to understand that these resources are best used planning for a Spirit led future, and not simply be used to maintain the status quo.

Congregational Spiritual Practices

Van Gelder points out three important points of being Spirit-led congregations in his book *The Ministry of the Missional Church: purpose, core practices, and vision*.⁷ Why does this congregation exist? How do the congregation's ministries reflect its core values? How does it discern what God has in store for this faith community moving forward? These are all important questions a missionally minded pastor needs to bring to the forefront in instituting a missional mindset in congregations that have a history of being primarily focused on their own wellbeing and journey, rather than God's calling.

In looking at setting one, I believe Pastor B is helping the people of the three congregations to discover their future by aiding the individual members in discovering their strengths, and inviting them to consider how these gifts can strengthen and shape their faith communities. He is helping them to visionary discernment through a study of Exodus. He is also asking tough questions about viability, especially in light of lack of resources in congregation A.

⁷ Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missional Church: A Community Led by the Spirit*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 146-147

Setting two, has a different mindset because of its very intentional journey. Questions of this nature were asked and considered as part of the discernment process leading up to the consolidation. Pastor K is intentional in her missionally focused leadership, and continues to remind them that being church faithfully is about answering God's calling, not always knowing what tomorrow will bring, yet trusting that the Spirit will lead them.

Setting three already has a strong sense of purpose. They are there to help feed the hungry and support the poor in the community. Many of their ministries reflect that calling. What is not so clear, is an understanding of what God might want for them for tomorrow. Part of their struggles has been that there are different views among the members regarding what the future should look like. Although there are five Bible studies in this congregation, Pastor T, the retired "Pastor in Residence," is questioning if people are able to process what they learn using a Spirit led lens. He feels that there are many who have a hard time accepting people who are different than them.

Dwight J. Zscheile calls for an attitude of agility and innovation in his book *The Agile Church, Spirit-led Innovation in an Uncertain Age*.⁸ This is a necessary approach to faithfully being Spirit led church in this new and uncertain age. Changing from a mindset of having the right answers, to an attitude of asking the right questions, at the same time trying and testing where the Spirit might be leading through action/reflection, is a healthy way of being church. It calls for an inquiring attitude, intentionally listening for and learning where the Spirit might be leading.

⁸ Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Agile Church: Spirit-Led Innovation in an Uncertain Age*, (New York, NY: Morehouse Publishing, 2014), 65-68

Pastor D has been able to get people on board with this mindset in a variety of ways in setting three. They are trying out different marketing strategies. They are trying different worship options. They are connecting with the community through a new music program intended to connect with young people. These are all efforts that the leadership realize may or may not be fruitful, and they are prepared to adjust accordingly.

By nature of the consolidation process, the entire ministry of setting two is an exercise in agility, and it continues to be so. The mindset is one of trial and error processed within a team-based structure. Pastor K referred to this ministry as likened to “jumping off a cliff together,” and simply trusting that the Spirit will lead the way. This was also verbalized by several of the council members during the focus group conversation.

The congregations in setting one are struggling a bit with this. It was obvious during the focus group conversation that the presidents of congregations B and C were frustrated with the lack of willingness to try new things in their settings. New ideas are often brought up, but it has been a struggle getting to the point where they have been tried out. Congregation A seems to be the one with the most difficult struggles, running out of both money and people. It is hard to implement new ideas if there are few resources.

Common Traits and Values

The following represents a list of common traits and values shared by the pastors who were part of the study:

- Being agents of change
- Seeking to dig deep to get to know their faith community and context
- Empowering and building up lay leaders
- Helping people to recognize their gifts and talents
- Envisioning a different future— new life

- Challenging the status quo
- Striving to strengthen relationships inside and outside the faith community
- Focusing on possibilities rather than staying stuck in the past
- Willing to experiment and take risks
- Discerning a God-given identity and purpose
- Welcoming outside resources
- Seeking to provide the appropriate balance between support and challenge
- Self-care— seeking collegial support and spiritual guidance

Although many of these are simply traits and values which identify healthy practices, there are some of these I find to be particularly important in missional leadership, such as a willingness to be a change agent, envisioning a different future, challenging the status quo, a willingness to take risks, and most importantly, discerning a God-given identity and purpose. Congregational transitions provide unique opportunities to introduce and implement such values and practices, as the congregation is already in transition mode. I believe being intentional in applying such values and practices during such times, has the potential to significantly alter the future of the congregation in positive and life-giving ways.

Limits of this Research

One of the limitations of my research is the relatively short time I had to perform the research. If I had been able to observe the relationship between a specific pastor and congregation over a longer period of time, it could yield more information about how certain approaches to missional ministry would be more or less effective, and how the congregations would change because of that. It would be interesting to study the congregations even after the current pastors had moved on to see what lasting changes took root as a result of changes implemented by the current pastor.

Another limitation is the relatively small number of case studies that were part of this research. If the research was conducted by performing numerous case studies over a wider range of ministry contexts, including those where pastors would apply different leadership approaches to interim ministry, it could give us a broader picture of what transitional ministry can look like.

A third limitation is that the research was performed in congregations in the same Synod. It would be interesting to do research in the various synods across the ELCA to learn how different practices are carried out, and to also learn if aspects of missional ministry are applied to congregations in transition differently depending on geographic location.

Questions Raised by the Research

As I went through this research process, there were several questions that came to mind that were not part of my research. One area to look deeper into, would be how the pastor's background, experience, gender, and leadership style plays a role in transitional ministry. Another area to explore would be the connection between lay leader involvement and transitional ministry outcome. It would also be interesting to perform a participatory action research study in a transitional ministry setting.

Final Conclusion

A missional understanding and approach to transitional ministry might make a difference. It brings the focus on God and *missio Dei* rather than being stuck in seeing the institution of the church as the primary object to be nurtured. It involves an intentional focus on discipleship, Scripture, prayer, and guidance by the Holy Spirit. It involves

agility and risk-taking, not always knowing what comes next, yet trusting God. It involves conflict and struggles. It is much more about asking the right questions, rather than always having the right answers. It is about loving relationships, within and without. It is about compassion and love. It is about God-given identity and purpose. It is about envisioning and faithfully living into a God-given future.

Pastors who have a missional understanding of their call to ministry nurture their own spiritual life. They lead by example. They seek to empower people and build them up. They balance the task of being relational and compassionate on one hand, yet do not get sucked into the emotional aspects of conflict. They are resilient. They understand the importance of change, and the difficulties and anxiety which often come with that. They are visionaries who often see possibilities and hope where others might see doom and gloom. They tend to be able to see the “bigger picture,” seeking to understand how things connect, rather than getting stuck in a certain mindset.

Finally, I learned that there is no “one shoe fits all,” or quick fixes when applying a missional approach to create change. Every ministry setting is unique and requires its own, unique approach. It is about “meeting people where they are,” and moving forward from there, realizing that lasting change will take years, perhaps even decades, of persistent, hard work. We trust that whatever seeds may have been planted through faithful ministry in a time of transition has, by God’s help, the potential to grow into something great and fruitful; that lives may be transformed both within and outside the walls of these churches, so that God’s love for the world might be known to all.

EPILOGUE

In thinking back on entering the Doctor of Ministry program four years ago, I was not really sure what to expect. I did not grow up in the church, and even when I was in seminary working on my Master of Divinity degree, I sought to learn more about how I as a pastor could better connect God's love with people who were not "church people." My first call was in a re-development setting, and I knew then that I was called to transitional ministry. I have experienced several different contexts of transitional ministry since, and every setting has taught me something new. The DMin process has given me the tools to do my job even better; more resources, and deep insight from professors and class mates. It has taught me a lot about leadership, and the importance of team work and relationships. It has taught me a lot about the importance of empowering people, and even allowing them to fail. It has taught me how grace is such an important part of the Christian life, especially as I have received grace upon grace from both my professors and class mates, as I was not always on track. It has given me a better picture of what it might look like to be a missional church, recognizing that there are no "one size fits all," but rather that missional ministry is a bit of an art, or a journey where it is a lot less about the pastor being in control, and a lot more about discerning and living into where the Spirit might call us to go.

In thinking about how the process has influenced my leadership, I believe it has made me more patient, recognizing how important it is to let things happen in God's

time, and not to push an agenda. It has helped me to learn how important it is to take the time to learn about people's likes and dislikes, hopes and dreams. It has helped me to try to be better at meeting people where they are, rather than where I would like them to be. It has helped me to see the importance of continuing research in the congregation. I use surveys all the time now, as it is a great tool to help not just me, but the leadership to take the pulse of the faith community, as we consider where God might be calling us next, and how we can best meet people where they are.

Finally, as this work is coming to an end, I will always appreciate the friendships and relationships that were built on this journey, and I will always carry those with me. I am curious and excited to see what other adventures God might be calling me to, and I am eager to apply my learning wherever that might be.

APPENDIX A: DATA CONGREGATION A

Number of respondents: 7

Gender: Female: 7 (100.00%)

Marital Status: Married: 7 (100.00%)

Education: High School diploma: 2 (28.57%), Some college: 1 (14.29%), BS/BA degree: 2 (28.57%), Some Graduate school: 2 (28.57%)

Frequency of worship: Every week: 5 (71.43%), Several times a month: 1 (14.29%), Once or twice a year: 1 (14.29%)

Birth year of respondents: 1957, 1988, 1937, 1946, 1959, 1957, 1940

Attending Bible study: Regularly: 2 (28.57%), Seldom: 3 (42.86%), Would like to: 2 (28.57%)

Frequency of prayer: Regularly: 5 (71.43%), Sometimes: 2 (28.57%)

Attending social ministry outreach programs: Regularly: 2 (28.57%), Sometimes: 3 (42.86%), Seldom: 2 (28.57%)

Evangelism/mission ministry: Sometimes: 2 (28.57%), Seldom: 2 (28.57%), Would like to: 2 (28.57%), Don't know: 1 (14.29%)

Visiting the sick or homebound: Regularly: 1 (14.29%), Sometimes: 3 (42.86%), Seldom: 2 (28.57%), Don't know: 1 (14.29%),

Financial support: Regularly: 6 (85.71%), Sometimes: 1 (14.29%)

Leadership: Regularly: 3 (42.86%), Sometimes: 3 (42.86%), Don't know: 1 (14.29%)

Choir/Music ministry: Regularly 1 (16.67%), Sometimes: 4 (66.67%), Don't know: 1 (16.67%)

Assist with worship: Regularly: 1 (16.67%), Sometimes: 3 (50.00%), Would like to: 1 (16.67%), Don't know: 1 (16.67%)

Understanding of meaning of missional church: A church that is sent out and seeks to join God's mission in the world: 3 (42.86%), A church that seeks to find effective ways to get people to join their congregation: 2 (28.57%) Don't know: 2 (28.57%)

Understanding of the Holy Spirit: The one person of the Trinity, the one who leads and guides us to do God's will: 7 (100.00%)

Understanding of church: A community led by the Holy Spirit, sent out to join God's work in the world: 6 (85.71%), The building where people worship: 1 (14.29%)

The role of the pastor during transition: Help us to look to the future to see how we can do ministry most faithfully in our context: 6 (85.71%), Leading worship: 1 (14.29%)

Favorite Bible passage and why: I do not know the Bible that good to list a bible verse. John 3:16 I feel that it says it all. John 3:16 just love the message. 1 Corinthians 13 It just speaks to me as to what life is all about. 23rd Psalm-It gives me a sense of peace. protection, love and knowledge that I will be with the Lord forever.

Most afraid of losing during this time of transition: Nothing. Nothing. Not sure. Nothing. Any of our current, cherished members as a result of being unwilling to accept the changes that will be needed.

Greatest joys in this congregation: The many friends and brother and sisters with the service together. The church family. Working with the children. Sense of true family. The sense of community and comfort. Few as they are now, the young children. They are the key to our future.

Hope for the future of this congregation: To increase the members. To grow and be a light in the community. To grow and not die. That we can flourish and grow. That we will be able to find a Bible believing pastor that will cause young families to want to come worship with us and go out to spread the Good News to their friends and families

Where the congregation is seen in five years: Hope going strong. With wide open doors. Not sure at this point. I hope to see it with strong leadership and increase attendance. Again, with the right leadership, including lay leaders, we will be a younger more vibrant presence in our community.

APPENDIX B: DATA CONGREGATION B

Number of respondents: 7

Gender: Female: 6 (85.71%), Male: 1 (14.29%)

Marital Status: Married: 6 (85.71%), Divorced 1 (14.29%)

Education: High School diploma: 2 (28.57%), Master degree: 3 (42.86%), Doctorate: 1 (14.29%), Vocational: 1 (14.29%)

Frequency of worship: Every week: 5 (71.43%), Several times a month 1 (14.29%), Several times a year: 1 (14.29%)

Birth year of respondents: 1950, 1984, 1979, 1939, 1946, 1952, 1966

Attending Bible study: Sometimes: 1 (14.29%), Seldom: 2 (28.57%), Would like to: 4 (57.14%)

Frequency of prayer: Regularly: 4 (57.14%), Sometimes: 3 (42.86%)

Attending social ministry outreach programs: Sometimes: 5 (71.43%), Seldom: 1 (14.29%), Don't know: 1 (14.29%)

Evangelism/mission ministry: Sometimes: 1 (14.29%), Seldom: 1 (14.29%), Would like to: 2 (28.57%), Don't know: 3 (42.86%)

Visiting the sick or homebound: Sometimes: 2 (28.57%), Seldom: 5 (71.43%)

Financial support: Regularly: 5 (71.43%), Sometimes: 1 (14.29%), Seldom: 1 (14.29%)

Leadership: Regularly: 4 (57.14%), Sometimes: 2 (28.57%), Don't know: 1 (14.29%)

Choir/Music ministry: Regularly: 2 (28.57%), Sometimes: 1 (14.29%), Seldom: 2 (28.57%), Would like to: 1 (14.29%), Don't know: 1 (14.29%)

Assist with worship: Regularly: 2 (28.57%), Sometimes 3 (42.86%), Seldom 1 (14.29%), Don't know: 1 (14.29%)

Understanding of meaning of missional church: A church that focuses on helping people in countries overseas: 1 (14.29%), A church that is sent out and seeks to join God in

God's mission in the world: 4 (57.14%), A church that seeks to find effective ways to get people to join their congregation: 2 (28.57%)

Understanding of the Holy Spirit: It is too hard to understand: 1 (14.29%), The one person of the Trinity, the one who leads us and guides us in doing God's will: 5 (71.43%), Don't know: 1 (14.29%)

Understanding of church: A community led by the Holy Spirit, sent out to join God's work in the world: 6 (85.71%), It is the building where people worship

The role of the pastor during transition: Preserve traditions that are important to us: 1 (14.29%), Help us to look to the future to see how we can do ministry most faithfully in our context 6 (85.71%)

Favorite Bible passage and why: To everything there is a season. Describes highs and lows of life and how transitory they are. God so loved the world that he gave his only son to die for us. Because he sacrificed his son to bear our sins. 23 Psalm, as it's comforting and easy to remember.

Most afraid of losing during this time of transition: Not at all fearful. Originally, I would have said members and optimism but so far this seems strong as we've begun the transition. The congregation has faith in the greater plan. Sense of fellowship. Nothing My love for this church community.

Greatest joys in this congregation: Sense of community and belonging. Very open hearted in quiet ways. The community and feeling of home, a loving place for my children to learn, the music and participating in choir and handbells. Tradition Welcoming attitude. Our church members are like a family. The fellowship with the members of this church. They are my second family!

Hope for the future in this congregation: Growth. To find a pastor who can help guide us as we transition and help us to accomplish the goals we've set, to go grow in both number and purpose. That it continues. That the separation from the parish does not cause all the churches to fail. Growth. Hope we get a pastor that can convey the message that everyone can understand. Growth in ministry and outreach. Growth in congregation members. And we would LOVE to get indoor plumbing!

Where the congregation is seen in five years: I'm hopeful we'll have greater attendance, and more activities to offer. I see a congregation that has grown in number, hopefully a bit of a larger Sunday School, an increase in outreach opportunities, and members coming together more often through various worship opportunities like Bible study or different services as well social events. I'm not sure. Hopefully thriving. Struggling to keep our membership strong. Struggling, unless we get a pastor that can turn this around. I am hopeful we can build a congregation that reaches out to those in need as well as providing spiritual food for our members.

APPENDIX C: DATA CONGREGATION C

Number of respondents: 6

Gender: Female: 2 (33.33%), Male: 4 (66.67%)

Marital status: Married: 4 (66.67%), Never Married: 2 (33.33%)

Education: High School diploma: 1 (16.67%), Some college: 1 (16.67%), BS/BA degree: 1 (16.67%), Master degree: 2 (33.33%)

Frequency of worship: Every week: 3 (50.00%), Several times a month: 3 (50.00%)

Birth year of respondents: 1954, 1979, 1956, 1966, 1957, 1954

Attending Bible study: Regularly: 2 (33.33%), Sometimes: 1 (16.67%), Would like to: 3 (50.00%)

Frequency of prayer: Regularly: 4 (66.67%), Sometimes: 2 (33.33%)

Attending social ministry outreach programs: Sometimes: 4 (66.67%), Seldom: 2 (33.33%)

Evangelism/mission ministry: Sometimes: 3 (50.00%), Seldom: 3 (50.00%)

Visiting the sick or homebound: Sometimes: 5 (83.33%), Seldom: 1 (16.67%)

Financial support: Regularly: 6 (100.00%)

Leadership: Regularly: 3 (50.00%), Sometimes: 3 (50.00%)

Choir/Music ministry: Regularly: 2 (33.33%), Seldom: 4 (66.67%)

Assist with worship: Regularly: 3 (50.00%), Sometimes: 1 (16.67%), Seldom 2 (33.33%)

Understanding of meaning of missional church: A church that is sent out and seeks to join God in God's mission in the world: 4 (66.67%), A church that seeks to find effective ways to get people to join their congregation: 2(33.33%)

Understanding of the Holy Spirit: The one person of the Trinity, the one who leads and guides us to do God's will: 6 (100.00%)

Understanding of the church: A community led by the Holy Spirit, sent out to join God's work in the world: 5 (83.33%), A community of believers who come together to worship God for their personal benefit: 1 (16.67%)

The role of the pastor during transition: Leading worship: 1 (16.67%), Help us to tool to the future to see how we can do ministry most faithfully in our context: 5 (83.33%)

Favorite Bible passage and why: John 3: 16-17. Don't know. Jeremiah 29:11-13. I have recently entered into retirement years, and these verses reassure me that I still have a bright future ahead, yet to be determined. John 3:16. John 3:16. This passage that we all we memorized when we were young puts all everything in perspective, what we need to do in our daily lives.

Most afraid of losing during this time of transition: Fear of unknown. I have no fear of losing anything during this transition. This time of transition has been good for strengthening our congregation. We are hopeful that we will find a minister that will be a truly Christ-like individual that will stay with us for many years to come. I wouldn't want to lose that stability that we are used to. People. Some members leaving this church for another congregation. Perhaps also the respect from the community because we "abandoned" the other two churches. I personally have heard this addressed to me numerous times.

Greatest joys in this congregation: Growing in Christ. Worshiping as a community. These people are very caring and very committed to living out their faith each day. They are a congenial group that focuses on growing daily in the Lord. The people. The closeness of the church's members, being able to view your thoughts and ideas. Also our music program consisting of choir, hand bells for the adults as well as for the children.

Hope for the future of this congregation: Centered in Christ. To grow, attract and keep younger members/families. We want to grow. As with most congregations, we have seen a decline during the decades and we want to find a way of presenting the gospel that will re-energize folks, especially those who have been away from church for a while. To grow. To try and regain back our members, to continue to aid members of the community when possible, and to get more young people involved as well.

Where the congregation is seen in five years: Growing. Honestly, not much change from now. We have an older congregation that is reluctant to change and try new things. Our children's department is finally growing. I would hope that we continue to add to our numbers. When those children are middle school and high school age, I hope they will still find St. Mark's to be their spiritual compass. Thriving congregation. To be stronger and more active in our community.

APPENDIX D: DATA SETTING TWO

Number of respondents: 16

Gender: Female: 14 (87.50%), Male: 2 (12.50%)

Marital status: Married: 16 (100.00%)

Education: High School Diploma: 1 (6.25%), Some college: 4 (25.00%), AA degree: 4 (25%), BS/BA degree 2 (12.50%), Master degree: 5 (31.25%)

Frequency of worship: Every week 16 (100.00%)

Birth year of respondents: 1942, 1973, 1959, 1946, 1961, 1950, 1953, 1939, 1942, 1945, 1942, 1970, 1948, 1944, 1932, 1940

Attending Bible study: Regularly: 9 (60.00%), Sometimes: 2 (13.33%), Seldom: 3 (20.00%), Would like to: 1 (6.67%)

Frequency of prayer: Regularly: 14 (87.50%), Sometimes: 2 (12.50%)

Attending social ministry outreach programs: Regularly: 6 (40.00%), Sometimes: 6 (40.00%), Seldom: 2 (13.33%), Don't know: 1 (6.67%)

Evangelism/mission ministry: Regularly: 4 (26.67%), Sometimes: 5 (33.33%), Seldom: 4 (26.67%), Don't know: 2 (13.33%)

Visiting the sick or homebound: Regularly: 1 (6.67%), Sometimes: 4 (26.67%), Seldom: 8 (53.33%), Would like to: 1 (6.67%), Don't know: 1 (6.67%)

Financial support: Regularly: 16 (100.00%)

Leadership: Regularly: 5 (31.25%), Sometimes: 8 (50.00%), Seldom: 2 (12.50%), Don't know: 1 (6.25%)

Choir/Music ministry: Regularly: 4 (25.00%), Sometimes: 1 (6.25%), Seldom: 6 (37.50%), Would like to: 1 (6.25%), Don't know: 4 (25.00%)

Assist with worship: Regularly: 7 (43.75%), Sometimes: 4 (25.00%), Seldom: 3 (18.75%), Don't know: 2 (12.50%)

Understanding of meaning of missional church: A church that focuses on converting people to Christianity: 3 (18.75%), A church that is sent out and seeks to join God in God's mission in the world: 9 (56.25%), A church that seeks to find effective ways to get people to join their congregation 2 (12.50%), Don't know: 2 (12.50%)

Understanding of the Holy Spirit: One person of the Trinity, the one who leads and guides us in doing God's will: 16 (100.00%)

Understanding of church: A community led by the Holy Spirit, sent out to join God's work in the world: 15 (93.75%), A community of believers who come together to worship God for their personal benefit: 1 (6.25%)

The role of the pastor during transition: Leading worship: 1 (6.25%), Help us to look to the future to see how we can do ministry most faithfully in our context: 15 (93.75%)

Favorite Bible passage and why: John 3:16 It defines God's love. It tells it all. Proverbs 3 5:6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart. I believe this verse is the basis of my faith. Even when I stray and try to do my own will He lead me back. John 3:16. Romans 8:38. God is always with us throughout all that life brings. John 3:16. Leads to salvation. Haven't thought of it that way. Phil 4-5-6. Faith, hope, love; the greatest of these is love. It is well with my soul. John 3:16-17. It's the essence of God's love. Psalm 23. It gives great comfort in those who believe and love God.

Most afraid of losing during this time of transition: I am not afraid of losing anything. I am looking toward what is gained. I have not been afraid to lose anything during the transition. Knowing that I have belonged to this congregation from the beginning has renewed my spirit and I am excited to spread the word of the Lord. Our Lutheran faith. We dropped the word Lutheran from our church name. I am not afraid of losing anything. This is an exciting time with the building of the new church. People. Our pastor is very strong willed and that was helpful in the beginning, but now it's her way or the highway. To get stuck in the past. My favorite hymns. Nothing. Tradition. Nothing. People and traditions. Nothing. I share no real concerns here.

Greatest joys in this congregation: The people - seeing God at work - wonderful worship The ability to help others in our community that are in need. Friendships. Watching my children ages 9 and 14 look forward to going to church on Sundays and feeling comfortable learn and spread the news of God's love. A sense of community. Their caring ways, their welcoming ways, being helpful to others, reaching out to the community around the church! The people. Fellowship with all the people. People getting to know one another; new people that come and stay; when people discuss their changed discipleship habits. Singing. Hearing the Word of God. We are a family. Togetherness. All coming together to worship and work for God's good. How I feel after doing community service. Music, people joining together. It's Joy in God. I enjoy worshipping with other like-minded Christians who really care about each other. Everyone is so pleasant always ready to help.

Hope for the future of this congregation: That our ministry building is constructed and even more ministry can be accomplished. Of, course to grow. To get younger families and people to join the congregation. I hope that we might grow. Doubtful. There are no young people in the congregation. To continue the types of ministries that we all practice now! We will be able to encourage others to join our church. To grow. Growth in the fullest sense of the word. All become believers that they personally know Jesus Christ. To have a great salvation. Growth. Spreading the gospel. We get into our new building plus reach others to show them the hope in God. Growth plus mission in the community. That we touch lives with the love of God. I hope that we will continue to grow into more families with children and Sunday school teachers. That we grow.

Where the congregation is seen in five years: Working for God, serving all his people, growing in faith and relationship with God. I believe we will still be growing and filling the space in our new building with community outreach groups and ministries. Hopefully we are in our new building but I have serious reservations with zero growth and an older congregation. Growing in the community of love and sharing God's love and telling others of his grace! Worshiping in a new church with higher attendance numbers. Hopefully we will be in a new church and have grown. In their new building with a mission developer pastor, growing. In a new building. Hopefully a praise band. Hopefully we will sing "in the Garden" and "It is well with my soul." A great community in God's love. Larger Membership. In a new building reaching out in the community. Thriving plus helping our community. Still together and growing. Growing and serving. I see us as a larger congregation plus involved in the community. In our new church plus having fun.

E: DATA SETTING THREE

Number of respondents: 22

Gender: Female: 15 (68.18%), Male: 7 (31.82%)

Marital status: Married: 19 (90.48%), Divorced: 1 (4.76%), Don't know: 1 (4.76%)

Education: High School diploma: 2 (9.09%), Some college: 1 (4.55%), AA degree: 1 (4.55%), BS/BA degree 10 (45.45%), Master degree: 4 (18.18%), Some graduate school: 2 (9.09%), Doctorate: 1 (4.55%), Other: 1 (4.55%)

Frequency of worship: Every week: 15 (68.18%), Several times a month: 4 (18.18%), About once a month: 2 (9.09%), Several times a year: 1 (4.55%)

Birth year of respondents: 1978, 1949, 1964, 1955, 1970, 1960, 1929, 1945, 1989, 1961, 1950, 1949, 1954, 1988, 1953, 1941, 1955, 1938, 1973, 1951, 1931

Attending Bible study: Regularly: 11 (52.38%), Sometimes: 2 (9.52%), Seldom: 5 (23.81%), Would like to: 3 (14.29%)

Frequency of prayer: Regularly: 16 (76.19%), Sometimes: 5 (23.81%)

Attending social ministry outreach programs: Regularly: 9 (42.86%), Sometimes: 11 (52.38%), Don't know: 1 (4.76%)

Evangelism/mission ministry: Regularly: 2 (9.52%), Sometimes: 8 (38.10%), Seldom: 8 (38.10%), Would like to: 2 (9.52%), Don't know: 1 (4.76%)

Visiting the sick or homebound: Regularly: 5 (23.81%), Sometimes: 6 (28.57%), Seldom: 8 (38.10%), Don't know: 2 (9.52%)

Financial support: Regularly: 17 (80.95%), Sometimes: 3 (14.29%), Seldom: 1 (4.76%)

Leadership: Regularly: 11 (52.38%), Sometimes: 5 (23.81%), Seldom: 3 (14.29%), Would like to: 1 (4.76%), Don't know: 1 (4.76%)

Choir/Music ministry: Regularly: 6 (28.57%), Sometimes: 1 (4.76%), Seldom: 11 (52.38%), Would like to: 1 (4.76%), Don't know: 2 (9.52%)

Assist with worship: Regularly: 4 (19.05%), Sometimes: 6 (28.57%), Seldom: 7 (33.33%), Would like to: 2 (9.52%), Don't know: 2 (9.52%)

Understanding of missional church: A church that focuses on converting people to Christianity: 1 (5.00%), A church that is sent out and seeks to join God in God's mission in the world: 16 (80.00%), A church that seeks to find effective ways to get people to join their congregation: 3 (15.00%)

Understanding of the Holy Spirit: It is too hard to understand: 1 (5.00%), One of the persons of the Trinity; the one who leads and guides us in doing God's will: 19 (95%)

Understanding of the church: A community led by the Holy Spirit, sent out to join God's work in the world: 18 (90.00%), A community of believers who come together to worship God for their personal benefit: 2 (10.00%)

The role of the pastor during transition: Leading worship: 1 (5.00%), Preserve traditions that are important to us: 1 (5.00%), Help us to look to the future to see how we can do ministry most faithfully in our context: 18 (90.00%)

Favorite Bible passage and why: Philippians 4:13 - With God's help, I can accomplish anything. Without it, nothing. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16. It sums up the basis of my faith. I do not have a favorite. God so loved the world he gave his only begotten son. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son to die for us. It makes me feel loved by a higher being. Jeremiah 11:29. It keeps my focus on God's will for me being one of love, mercy and grace. John 3:16. Because it sums up what I feel. Philippians 4:6-8. It helps me maintain composure, not seek to control everything, and accept change even when it's not what I expected. Philippians 4:16 b/c I feel JC is right by my side. John 3:16. Psalm 139 because it reassures me that God knows me intimately from my birth and is present with me always. "Be still and know that I am (God)". No matter the situation, it reminds me to be still/silent/calm and know that God is omnipotent, loves me, and is with me. Not sure. Philippians 4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. John 3:16, Philippians 4:6-7, Psalm 50:15, I John 1:9 and 2:1-2. They all give hope.

Most afraid of losing during this time of transition: Losing members - not everyone is willing to let go of the past! The motivation to attend church. There are so many complaining and so few doing the actual work of the church. It is a place of tension and stress and not where I go to seek growth in my faith at this time. I would miss worship in a beautiful church with organ music. Traditions. Friends. Nothing-maybe some members who are resistant to change. Existing congregants. My church family. I don't want more people leaving. Members. Community. Long-time congregation members leave because they do not agree with leadership decisions. I am afraid that we, as a body, will lose our openness, willingness, and faith to be able to move forward. I am also afraid we will forget the lessons we discovered/learned, and will fall into old patterns again. More of the congregation leaving because they don't like changes. The positivity we have developed in this new phase. People come and go but lately we have had more to come and stay. We

have worked on being openly welcoming, overcoming our shyness and smiling to everyone every day. Faith.

Greatest joys in this congregation: Seeing how everyone interacts and loves each other! The support of the few that volunteer and are there many, many days each week. Hearing the gospel, listen to church choir, singing hymns, meeting people and sharing interests. The Fellowship of the people the way we come together in times of turmoil grief etc. Worship/music, a sense of community. Fellowship, mission (food & Clothing Banks). Being together in worship with fellow believers and good friends. Becoming close and being able to help other members. Spirit of giving. The sense of family that I feel like I belong. Doing things together. Music ministry offerings and fellowship times. The openness and love of many of the people. Friendly atmosphere, welcoming, but not pushy. So much: the human bonds, the support of a non-territorial pastor, the contemporary service, the music that speaks to my soul, the Bible studies and community outreach opportunities. All of it. Kindness and caring of congregation.

Hope for the future of this congregation: That people will stay open-minded and attentive to God's call for us. I am not sure. It seems so divided. Maybe working toward one mission that we can all compromise to agree to work toward? Increase attendance. Sharing responsibilities. More young people attending. That it will survive. To grow and/or be strengthened so that we can continue to serve the community. Adaptive ministry to the poor neighborhood around our church; to change from a closed social club atmosphere to one of inclusivity, diversity, love and grace. Growth. Helping more to serve more. We will continue to honor and expand on our community involvement. I hope we attract people who are passionate about that as well. That we continue to grow, to bring in the younger generations. To help others. What the leadership has learned from studying 'Canoeing the Mountains': hold on to worthwhile traditions and, at the same time, be willing to go into uncharted territory to advance the mission Jesus gave the church. My hope is that we can be truly welcoming to all God's and learn to love each other as Jesus taught us. That we reach a more diverse audience. That the word spreads from visitors that we are very welcoming to anyone that attends any of our events. That we advertise that message on tv and radio. More of the congregation is involved in our work. That we see a much bigger number of people especially young kids and teens. More /continued outreach. Maintaining the progress. To continue in God's service.

Where the congregation is seen in five years: Stable, with more outreach and programs OUTSIDE the doors of the church - truly a member of the local community. I am not sure it will still be here. I have no idea. If we continue spending as we have in past few years, I'm afraid the doors will be closed and we will be searching for a new church. Learning from the last five years, and looking forward to the next five. Having strong ties to the community. Changing, still struggling but with a new purpose. Right where we are! Serving the Lord in as many ways as possible. Reinvigorated. A place where people come to give and worship. I hope still here, just more of us. Combined with other congregations. Being welcoming to young and old, meaning: a vital Christian education ministry including young children and their parents, and finding ways to make the various sections of the church buildings fully accessible and usable, while celebrating

150 years of Lutheran teachings and tradition. I am not sure. I think it will be a more diverse group. With many more active followers. Well, at least maintaining the status quo, plus more young families and youth in general. Continued growth and service to God.

APPENDIX F: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

- How long have you been in this particular ministry?
- What has been your experience of this ministry?
- If we think about missional ministry as joining God in God's work in the world, led by the Holy Spirit, how do you see the role of this congregation in this place and time? Your role as their pastor and leader?
- How might your leadership help form the future ministry and practices of this congregation?
- Can you describe some challenges this congregation is facing in this time of transition?
- How are decisions made in this congregation?
- How does Scripture inform your ministry?
- What passages guide your understanding of leadership, especially considering what it might mean to be the church in the world?
- How does the Holy Spirit inform your life and ministry?
- What spiritual practices are meaningful to you?
- Anything else you would like to share?

APPENDIX G: LEADERSHIP FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

- How long have you been a member of this congregation?
- How long have you been on council?
- What has been your experience as a church member and being part of leadership?
- If we think about missional ministry as joining God in God's work in the world, led by the Holy Spirit, how do you see the role of this congregation in this place and time? Your role as leadership?
- How might your leadership help form the future ministry and practices of this congregation?
- Can you describe some challenges this congregation is facing in this time of transition?
- How are decisions made in this congregation?
- How does Scripture inform your ministry?
- What passages guide your understanding of leadership, especially considering what it might mean to be the church in the world?
- How does the Holy Spirit inform your life and ministry together?
- What are the most meaningful spiritual practices for you personally and for this congregation?
- Anything else you would like to share?

APPENDIX H: PASTOR FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

- Has anything changed in your ministry since we met for our initial interview?
- As I shared some of the findings from the congregational census survey with you, were there anything that struck you?
- As you think about this time of transition in your congregation, what have been your hopes and dreams?
- Have these hopes and dreams been realized, and if not, what do you think will need to change, if anything?
- What resources or forms of support would be helpful for these hopes and dreams to be realized?
- Anything else you want to share?

APPENDIX I: CONGREGATIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Gender

Male Female Other

Current Marital Status

Married Divorced Separated Never Married Don't know

What is your highest level of education?

No School 1-5th Grade 6-8th Grade 9-11th Grade High School Diploma/ GED Some College

AA Degree BS/BA Degree Master Degree Some Graduate School Doctorate Vocational

Other Don't know

Of what congregation are you a member?

On average, how often do you attend worship services in this congregation?

Usually every week Several times a month About once a month Several times a year

Once or twice a year Almost never Don't know

Which one of the following statements describes your church affiliation prior to becoming a member of this congregation?

I have always been a member of this congregation.

I was a member of another Lutheran congregation before joining here.

I was not a member of any church prior to joining this one.

Other

If member of another denomination before, please identify denomination.

In what year were you born?

Please indicate how often you engage in the following practices:

Bible Study

Regularly Sometimes Seldom Would like to Don't know

Prayer

Regularly Sometimes Seldom Would like to Don't know

Social ministry outreach programs

Regularly Sometimes Seldom Would like to Don't know

Evangelism/mission ministry

Regularly Sometimes Seldom Would like to Don't know

Visiting the sick or home bound

Regularly Sometimes Seldom Would like to Don't know

Financial support of the congregation

Regularly Sometimes Seldom Would like to Don't know

Leadership

Regularly Sometimes Seldom Would like to Don't know

Choir/ Music ministry

Regularly Sometimes Seldom Would like to Don't know

Assist with worship

Regularly Sometimes Seldom Would like to Don't know

What statement best describes your understanding of what it means to be a missional church?

A church that focuses on converting people to Christianity.

A church the focuses on helping people in countries overseas.

A church that is sent out and seeks to join God in God's mission in the world.

A church that seeks to find effective ways to get people to join their congregation.

Don't know

What statement best describes your understanding of the Holy Spirit?

It is something we don't focus too much on. It is for denominations such as Pentecostals and alike

It is too hard to understand.

It is one of the persons of the Trinity; the one who leads and guides us in doing God's will.

Don't know.

It is something people experienced at the first Pentecost event, but not relevant anymore.

What statement best describes your understanding of the church?

It is a community led by the Holy Spirit, sent out to join God's work in the world.

It is a community of believers who come together to worship God for their personal benefit.

It is the building where people worship.

It is all about salvation and going to heaven when we die.

Don't know.

Pastors wear many hats. What statement best describes what role of the pastor is most important during this time of transition?

Leading worship

Visiting the sick and home bound

Preserve traditions that are important to us

Help us to look to the future to see how we can do ministry most faithfully in our context

Please answer each question with 1-3 sentences

What is your favorite Bible passage, and why?

What are you most afraid of losing during this time of transition?

What are your greatest joys in this congregation?

What is your hope for the future of this congregation?

Where do you see this congregation in five years?

APPENDIX J: INFORMED CONSENT INDIVIDUAL

You are invited to be part of an exploratory study seeking to determine the effect of missional leadership in congregations in transition. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you might have before signing this form.

This study is being conducted by Pastor Tormod Svensson as part of his doctoral thesis project in Congregational Mission and Leadership at Luther Seminary. His advisors are Dr. Daniel Anderson and Dr. Alvin Luedke.

Background information:

The purpose of this study is to explore how a missional approach might affect the leadership of pastors in congregations in transition.

Procedure:

If you agree to be part of this study, we ask that you be willing to participate in an interview answering and discussing questions relevant to the topic. The interview will be limited to 90 minutes.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept confidential. If I publish any type of report, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. All data will be kept in a locked file in my home; only my advisors, Dr. Anderson and Dr. Luedke, and I will have access to the data and, if applicable, any tape or video recording. If the research is terminated for any reason, all data and recordings will be destroyed. While I will make every effort to ensure confidentiality, complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed due to the small number to be studied.

No one will have access to audio recordings except a transcriptionist and Pastor Svensson himself. The recording will be erased after it has been transcribed. No one besides the transcriptionist and Pastor Svensson will have access to raw data. The transcriptionist will be required to sign a statement of confidentiality before receiving data of any kind.

Raw data will be destroyed before May 31, 2023.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Luther Seminary, Pastor Svensson, nor your congregation. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Pastor Tormod Svensson. You may ask any questions you have by contacting him. You may contact his advisors: Dr. Daniel Anderson and Dr. Alvin Luedke.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information or have had it read to me. I have received answers to questions asked. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of investigator _____ Date _____

I consent to be audiotaped:

Signature _____ Date _____

I consent to allow use of my direct quotations in the published thesis document.

Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX K: INFORMED CONSENT FOCUS GROUP

You are invited to be part of an exploratory study seeking to determine the effect of missional leadership in congregations in transition. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you might have before signing.

This study is being conducted by Pastor Tormod Svensson as part of his doctoral thesis project in Congregational Mission and Leadership at Luther Seminary. His advisors are Dr. Daniel Anderson and Dr. Alvin Luedke.

Background information:

The purpose of this study is to explore how a missional approach might affect the leadership of pastors in congregations in transformation.

Procedure:

If you agree to be part of this study, we ask that you be willing to participate in a focus group discussion answering and discussing questions relevant to the topic. The focus group discussion will be limited to 90 minutes.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept confidential. If I publish any type of report, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. All data will be kept in a locked file in my home; only my advisors, Dr. Anderson and Dr. Luedke, and I will have access to the data and, if applicable, any tape or video recording. If the research is terminated for any reason, all data and recordings will be destroyed. While I will make every effort to ensure confidentiality, complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed due to the small number to be studied.

No one will have access to audio recordings except a transcriptionist and Pastor Svensson himself. The recording will be erased after it has been transcribed. No one besides the transcriptionist and Pastor Svensson will have access to raw data. The transcriptionist will be required to sign a statement of confidentiality before receiving data of any kind.

Raw data will be destroyed before May 31, 2023.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Luther Seminary, nor Pastor Svensson nor your congregation. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Pastor Tormod Svensson. You may ask any questions you have by contacting him. Email: You may contact his advisors at these e-mail addresses: Dr. Daniel Anderson and Dr. Alvin Luedke

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information or have had it read to me. I have received answers to questions asked. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature _____ Date _____

Signature of investigator _____ Date _____

I consent to be audiotaped:

Signature _____ Date _____

I consent to allow use of my direct quotations in the published thesis document.

Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX L: IMPLIED CONSENT, QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear congregational member over the age of 18:

You are invited to participate in a survey regarding your life, attitudes and involvement in your congregation, as well as your views regarding certain theological topics.

If you decide to participate, please complete the enclosed survey. Your return of this survey is implied consent. The survey is designed to explore attitudes around missional ministry in congregations in transition. No benefits accrue to you for answering the survey, but your responses will be used to inform my research, as well as inform your church council and pastor with the compiled results. Any discomfort or inconvenience to you derives only from the amount of time taken to complete the survey.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. Rev. Tormod Svensson,
(Contact info)

Regards, Tormod Svensson.

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