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Exploring the Principles Behind Effective Collaborative Ministry on Multi-Point Charges in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church

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EXPLORING THE PRINCIPLES BEHIND EFFECTIVE COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY ON MULTI-POINT CHARGES IN THE PENINSULA-DELAWARE CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

The Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church covers the Eastern Shore of Maryland and the State of Delaware. The area, known as the "Birthplace of Methodism," has 451 churches. Many churches are older, small membership congregations and are not able to afford their own pastor. Many pastors serve multiple congregations as part of a United Methodist Charge. As issues in surrounding communities become more complex, attendance declines, and resources diminish, congregations must work together in order to make a significant impact on their communities and fulfil the Great Commission.

Throughout biblical history there are examples of God calling His people to work together. Through the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God models collaboration. Secular fields, including healthcare and education, have discovered the need for collaboration. Many congregations in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church are working together effectively in ministry and mission.

For this project case studies were conducted on three United Methodist Charges. Each Charge was comprised of multiple congregations under the supervision of one pastor and was considered by Conference leadership to be effective in collaborative ministry and mission. Information was gathered through face-to-face interviews with pastors and key representatives from the laity, multiple site-visits and personal observations, church-produced documents, and open-ended questionnaires. Through

grounded theory and coding of the data, key elements necessary for building an effective collaborative relationship between multiple congregations were identified.

The project was designed to help pastors on multi-point Charges yield effective collaborative ministry and mission. These key elements could also help congregations from different denominations in the same geographical area begin to work together. Furthermore, these practices might be applied within a large congregation where multiple groups, each with their own unique personality, would be more effective if they worked together collaboratively.

CHAPTER ONE: NEED FOR COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY AND MISSION

The Problem and Its Context

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed in this project is the need for effective collaborative ministry between small established congregations on multi-point Charges in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church. A multi-point Charge consists of two or more congregations which are close geographically and are overseen by a single pastor. In response to this problem the researcher took five main steps. First, the researcher explored the theme of collaboration modeled in the nature of the Holy Trinity, observed in the formation of the early church in Acts, and emphasized throughout Paul's letters. Second, the researcher reviewed relevant literature centered on effective collaborative models in fields outside of ministry including healthcare and education. Third, the researcher reviewed relevant literature around the history, need, and benefits of intentional collaborative ministry between churches. Fourth, the researcher observed and studied examples of effective collaborative ministry between small established congregations on multi-point Charges in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church using on-site visits, interviews, and questionnaires. Fifth, the researcher identified common practices from these observations and interviews across several multi-point Charges which were instrumental in producing effective collaborative ministry. Insights will be shared in the future with pastors and congregations in the

Peninsula-Delaware Conference through the creation of training materials and clergy retreats.

Delimitations of the Project

The research was limited to congregations within the United Methodist tradition, specifically congregations within the Peninsula-Delaware Conference, comprising Delaware and the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Furthermore, the research was limited to congregations that were part of a multi-point Charge, shared a pastor, were averaging less than 100 in membership, and had been in existence for at least fifty years. The biblical research was limited to pertinent biblical passages that underscored collaborative practices. This included the theme of collaboration modeled in the nature of the Holy Trinity, observed in the formation of the early church in Acts, and emphasized throughout Paul's letters. Further research was limited to church history and current effective collaborative church models, along with examples of effective collaboration found in the fields of healthcare and education.

Assumptions

The first assumption is that the Bible is the written Word of God and can be trusted to provide instruction and guidance for effective ministry and mission, along with insight into historical and present challenges for creating collaborative ministry and mission. The Bible can also be trusted to help us understand and observe how Christians and individual congregations should relate to one another. The second assumption is that together more can be accomplished than individually. The third assumption is that collaboration is more effective than competition for small congregations in the same geographical area. The fourth assumption is that each congregation's role is to reach

people for Christ and to better serve those in need, impacting the community and the world. The fifth assumption is that developing effective collaborative ministry and mission between existing congregations is possible and effective, but must be intentional and will be difficult.

Subproblems

The first subproblem is to explore the theme of collaboration modeled in the nature of the Holy Trinity, observed in the formation of the early church in Acts, and emphasized throughout Paul's letters.

The second subproblem is to discover what can be learned about effective collaboration by studying effective collaborative models in ministry, as well as outside of ministry, specifically healthcare and education.

The third subproblem is to discover what the current literature reveals about the history, need, and benefits of intentional collaborative ministry between churches.

The fourth subproblem is to observe and study examples of effective collaborative ministry between small established congregations on multi-point Charges in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church.

The fifth subproblem is to identify practices behind effective collaborative ministry and mission occurring on multi-point Charges in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church. These practices will be validated through peer review. The culmination of identifying and validating these practices will be for the future design of training materials and retreats in order to communicate collaborative practices observed with clergy of multi-point Charges across the Conference and United Methodist Denomination.

Setting of the Project

This researcher has served as a pastor in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church for eighteen years. The Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church comprises the state of Delaware and the Eastern Shore of Maryland. It includes 451 churches, many of which are small, established congregations.[1] Many of these congregations are part of multi-point Charges in which one pastor oversees two or more congregations which are close to one another.

This researcher has served as pastor on two multi-point Charges. First, this researcher served as pastor of the Walston-Switch Charge in Salisbury, Maryland which was comprised of two churches, Mt. Hermon United Methodist and Bethel United Methodist. Most recently, this researcher served as pastor of the Rock Hall Charge in Rock Hall, Maryland which was comprised of three churches, Rock Hall United Methodist, Raum Chapel, and Wesley Chapel United Methodist. Pastors serving such multi-point Charges are common throughout the Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Each year statistics revealed at the Peninsula-Delaware Annual Conference show that less than half of the United Methodist congregations across the Conference brought in new members on Profession of Faith.[2] Many of the congregations in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference lack resources, at times hampering their effectiveness, or have a wealth of financial resources stored away allowing a small congregation of even a dozen people to sit quietly and be ineffective in their community. Many congregations continue

[1] Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church, "About the United Methodist Church," *Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church*, accessed January 30, 2014, http://www.pen-del.org/pages/detail/638.

[2] The Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church, *2013 Peninsula-Delaware Conference Journal* (Newark, Delaware: American Solutions for Business, 2013).

to compete against one another, many in the same community, rather than work together. It was during this researcher's tenure on the Rock Hall Charge that the need for and value of collaborative ministry was most vividly observed.

In Rock Hall, a town of 1500 people, there exists three individual congregations with individual identities who would claim that they worked cooperatively together in ministry. Unfortunately, this researcher discovered unresolved issues between individual churchgoers from each congregation, competition between the churches that affected the church's witness in the community, and a duplication of ministry efforts and spending. There were a few ministries that were Charge-wide such as Vacation Bible School, a Backpack Ministry, and a weekly Bible study, but for the most part each church operated independently. The Pastor, Associate, and Secretary were shared, along with a Charge Treasurer who would collect and distribute each congregation's contribution to the pastor's salary and parsonage upkeep.

Over the course of the four years this researcher served as pastor in Rock Hall work was done to bring the three congregations together in ministry. Efforts were made to understand the issues that separated them and to help them catch the vision that together they could accomplish much more than they could alone. A vision of "Three Churches, One Mission" was established. Charge-wide worship services, small groups, missional opportunities, evangelistic outreach, and fellowship gatherings helped build deeper relationships between members, especially the leadership of the three individual congregations.

Toward the end of year one, after much discussion, the three separate Administrative Boards began to meet together quarterly to discuss ways the

congregations could do ministry together. Such collaboration was essential in creating vibrant and effective ministries, with limited resources, which would impact the community of Rock Hall and the surrounding county. It was an important step in moving beyond a Christian identity dominated by attachment to the building and its history, toward an identity attached to the mission of Jesus Christ.

Over the next couple of years, individual youth groups, food ministries, crisis funds, visitation ministries, women's ministry, and small groups were brought under one Charge-wide umbrella. Decisions were made together as a Charge as to how these ministries would operate and what programs or activities would be developed. Many people, including leadership from all three congregations, were involved in the creation, organization, and operation of these Charge-wide ministries. A Charge-wide mission statement was developed with the help of over forty leaders, including representatives from all three congregations. Furthermore, as individuals from the three congregations saw the tremendous blessing of collaboration, they began to develop their own ministries out of their small groups. They began to co-create. This resulted in a Community Clothing Closet, Mentoring Program, and Monthly Feeding Ministry.

Throughout this researcher's tenure in Rock Hall there was a group of dissenters who were adamantly opposed to the three congregations working so closely together. Many feared being forced to merge with their sister churches and losing their individual building, identity, and history. This group constantly made it difficult to move toward greater collaborative ministry, mission, and administration. Yet, this researcher observed numerous leaders across three congregations becoming empowered to move beyond their local church, seeing the big picture, and questioning how they might be involved in

impacting the greater community. Many were moving beyond self-imposed isolation to collaboration. They were beginning to recognize that they could do collaborative ministry and claim kinship with their sister congregations. Though they shared a different history and practiced slightly different traditions within a different architectural structure across town, they were discovering how they could work together without losing their identity.

Many peers pastoring multi-point Charges throughout the Peninsula-Delaware Conference are frustrated and struggling to get their congregations to work together to reach their communities. This is ironic considering the United Methodist denomination was born out of a collaboration between the Evangelical United Brethren and Methodist Church in 1968. United Methodist leaders refer to the denomination as "the connection," a concept that has been central to Methodists from the beginning. The denomination recognizes that no local church is the total body of Christ and that all United Methodist Churches are bound together by a common mission and common governance that allow the denomination to reach across the globe. It is this connection, each individual congregation contributing to the whole, which allows the denomination to be in mission to more than 125 countries. It is this connection that created the Global Health Initiative, mobilizing the people of the United Methodist Church into action. This has led to the development of a major education and fund-raising campaign to stamp out malaria in Africa, as well as the creation of a powerful foundation that will build a stronger and more broad-based community health infrastructure to fight against other diseases of poverty such as HIV/Aids and tuberculosis.

This researcher senses a growing concern among denominational and Peninsula-Delaware Conference leadership regarding the lack of resources and finances of these

smaller congregations. There is the possibility that in the near future many may have to close their doors if unable to grow in ministry and mission. This researcher's passion for collaborative ministry grew from hearing such frustrations and concerns, as well as from personal experiences while serving the Rock Hall Charge.

The Importance of the Project

The Importance of the Project to the Researcher

At times dedication to one's own traditions and church building play a greater role in decision-making than a desire to impact the Kingdom of God by joining forces with one's sister congregations on the Charge and in the surrounding communities. This researcher believes such collaboration can help the Peninsula-Delaware Conference's almost five hundred churches be more effective in ministry and mission.

This researcher observed the frustration of members, especially in Rock Hall, who caught the vision of collaborative ministry only to see many contest every change. Collaborative ministries were established resulting in numerical, financial, and spiritual growth. It was still a constant battle to get some in the congregations to see themselves as one with their sister congregations, working together toward the one mission of impacting the community of Rock Hall for Christ. This researcher observed the frustration of churchgoers and the negative impact on the church's witness to the community when members of the three congregations pitted themselves against one another.

The Importance of the Project to the Immediate Ministry Context

This researcher no longer serves a three-point Charge in Rock Hall, Maryland, having been transferred in July 2013 to Janes United Methodist Church in Rising Sun, Maryland. Janes United Methodist Church is a single point Charge, one congregation with about five hundred members. Even though this researcher is no longer serving on a Charge where collaborative ministry can be proposed and practiced between multiple congregations, passion and interest in collaborative ministry has not diminished.

This researcher believes it is vital for United Methodist congregations across the Peninsula-Delaware Conference to recognize and affirm their "connectional" roots and by working together experience a greater effectiveness in ministry and mission. With such limited resources and dwindling attendance, many of the congregations across the Conference are failing to have a substantial impact on their community. Many of these small congregations do not have the finances or people to effectively feed the hungry in their community, support international missions and disaster relief through the United Methodist Committee on Relief and other organizations, run a successful youth and children's ministry, provide financial assistance to those in need, or create small group and worship opportunities which will lead the unchurched to Christ. Most of the budget of many of these small congregations goes to maintaining the building, covering utilities, and providing the pastor's salary. This leaves very little available for ministry and mission. Clergy need to be trained to help the lay leadership in their congregations form a common vision for ministry and a collective missional focus.

This researcher believes that many of the practices leading to effective collaborative ministry observed in congregations on multi-point Charges will also be applicable to a single congregation. Janes United Methodist Church may be one

congregation but it has three worship services with three unique personalities, all of which come together in collaborative ministry under the Janes United Methodist umbrella to impact the community and world for Christ. Furthermore, there will be many opportunities in the future for Janes United Methodist to combine forces with other United Methodist congregations and other denominations in the area to do collaborative ministry and mission. Principles gleaned through this project will assist this pastor in helping those future partnerships succeed. These same principles may be applied by other clergy in their settings resulting in greater collaborative ministry and mission between the congregations they serve.

The Importance of the Project to the Church at Large

Though the research will be limited to the United Methodist Church, particularly the Peninsula-Delaware Conference, the principles observed and learned apply to the church universal. It is not only in the United Methodist Church that many small congregations are finding themselves lacking the resources to accomplish effective ministry and are closing their doors. Alan Nelson and Gene Appel note, "Each year, estimates are that as many as 2,700 churches in the United States alone hold their last service . . . and put up the 'For Sale' sign," many churches existing in a "holding pattern, going through the motions of church, void of vitality, hoping only to keep the bills paid and attendees pacified." [3] Over the last ten years the national population has increased 11.4 percent and the membership of all Protestant denominations has decreased 9.5 percent. Most disturbing, "half of all churches last year did not add even one new

[3] Alan Nelson and Gene Appel, *How to Change Your Church without Killing It* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 2000), xix.

member through conversion growth."[4] Nelson and Appel note that George Barna asserts, "Only 10-15 percent of churches are highly effective." Barna defines "highly effective" as being competent at completing strategic tasks, helping members grow spiritually and share their faith, managing resources well, challenging people to be more Christ-like, being involved in the community, and having deep relationships and vibrant worship.[5]

Change is not an option for congregations eager to fulfill the mission to "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt. 28: 19-20). [6] Peter Drucker explains,

> Every few hundred years in Western history there occurs a sharp transformation. We cross . . . a "divide." Within a few short decades, society rearranges itself—its worldview, its basic values, its social and political structures, its arts, its key institutions. Fifty years later, there is a new world. And the people born cannot even imagine the world in which their grandparents lived and into which their parents were born.[7]

Gordon MacDonald reiterates that "once that burst of change begins, nothing stops it. You might resist it for a while or simply hope it's going to go away. But finally you capitulate to it. As Drucker said, 'A new world exists.'"[8] This means that a congregation that may have been successful and growing in the past might begin to decline during such a burst of change. If the congregation does not take the changes seriously and ask what the cultural transformations around them mean for the congregation and its mission, and

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[4] Nelson and Appel, *How to Change Your Church*, xix-xx.

[5] Nelson and Appel, *How to Change Your Church*, 3.

[6] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations are from The Holy Bible, New International Version (Colorado Springs, CO: International Bible Society, 1984).

[7] Peter Drucker, *Post-Capitalist Society* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993).

[8] Gordon MacDonald, *Who Stole My Church: What to Do When the Church You Love Tries to Enter the 21st Century* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 56.

make adjustments, it will continue to lose ground. In fact, MacDonald goes as far to say that the congregation may not have to make "just suitable adjustments, it may mean total reinvention."[9]

Therefore, to combat the paradigm shift that is occurring in our history, as society rearranges itself and its worldview, congregations must change, develop, and reinvent themselves. The General Secretaries of the United Methodist Church state, "We will only succeed if we operate in an uncommon spirit of collaboration, break our inertia and transcend our disagreements."[10] In other words, we will only be able to tackle the complex problems of this time in church history through teamwork and cooperation.

A process of developing transformational collaboration could be applied to ecumenical relationships between congregations, relationships between business and congregations or non-profits, as well as relationships between ministry teams and leaders within individual congregations. Congregations and organizations must come together to study issues citizens are facing and how to combat those issues. There must be training for pastors and other leaders to help them in promoting, practicing, and producing collaborative environments within their congregation and community settings.

Summary

[9] MacDonald, *Who Stole My Church*, 58.

[10] "A UMNS Commentary from the General Secretaries of the United Methodist Church," *The United Methodist Church*, accessed November 16, 2011, http://www.umc.org/site/c.lwL4KnN1LtH/b.3478199/k.68C7/ Areas_of_Ministry_Focus.htm.

Paul states, "So, my brothers and sisters, you also died to the law through the body of Christ that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God" (Rom. 7:4). J. Robert Nelson discusses how the Church is the body of Christ and each Christian is part of this body. He explains how Paul is clear that Christians share, not only in the death of Christ, but in the life of His risen body. He writes, "Thus we can seriously and literally say that divisions are wounds in the body of Christ, injuring the possibility of a community of love among ourselves, and hindering the work of salvation which the risen Christ will carry on in and through His body for the world."[11] As believers in Christ, we have entered community. We are one with Christ and one with all those who believe, who share in baptism.

Nelson shows how individuals, clusters of churches, and even denominations must "die to the law of its own self-interest and thus [come] to understand that [the church] belongs to another, to the Christ whose body it is."[12] When this happens, the body of Christ is productive for God. He writes, "The mandates of Christ are not distributed separately and piecemeal to the different communions, denominations, caucuses, or special interest movements. They are incumbent upon all, and then can be obeyed and performed better in unity than in the confusion of division."[13] It is documented that fields such as healthcare and education have discovered this need for collaboration to fulfill their mission. Furthermore, the scriptures speak adamantly about the need for unity and collaboration in order to be effective in ministry and mission. Congregations must understand that only by working together can the world come to see

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[11] J. Robert Nelson, "The Unity We Want and St. Paul's Dilemma." *Mid-Stream* 19, no. 1 (January 1980), 79.

[12] Nelson, "The Unity We Want," 80.

[13] Nelson, "The Unity We Want," 80.

and experience the Triune God, three-in-one, love incarnate. Unity is essential for the church to fulfill its mission; without unity the church will find itself inadequate for its assigned mission.

There is a great need in the church universal and in the smaller, established congregations across the Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church who share a pastor and a common geographical area to see themselves as one body in Christ. Together, through collaborative ministry and mission, these congregations which lack financial and volunteer resources will have a greater opportunity to impact their communities for Christ. To be more effective in fulfilling their mission, leadership needs to understand principles and practices for building collaborative ministry and mission. Only by people working together can the issues and problems of today be tackled, the Great Commission fulfilled, and the Church's witness go forth to a hurting and divided world.

CHAPTER TWO: A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION FOR COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY AND MISSION

> Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.
>
> -Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12

Throughout biblical history there are examples of God calling His people to unite in purpose and work together to achieve the vision God places before them. The psalmist cried, "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity" (Ps. 133:1). The writer of Proverbs exclaimed, "For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisors" (Prov. 11:14). The people came together under Moses' leadership to construct the tabernacle in the wilderness (Exod. 25: 8-9). When Moses stood atop a hill looking down on Joshua fighting the Amalekites, it was only after Aaron and Hur joined Moses, holding up his arms, that the victory was won (Exod. 17). Later, when Moses was about to suffer collapse because he was doing all the work himself, God led him to turn to Jethro, his father-in-law, for advice and help. Jethro guided Moses to delegate that task of governing the people to "capable men from all the people – men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain" (Exod. 18). Nehemiah set out to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, an insurmountable job; yet, the walls were completed in fifty-four days because Nehemiah had the people come together, work in teams, and encourage one another (Neh. 4). It is only after Deborah was willing to go

with Barak that Sisera's chariots were defeated (Judg. 4). Zerubbabel, Joshua son of Jozadak, and others rebuilt the house of God in Jerusalem together. This captured King Darius' attention and the gold and silver articles taken from the Temple years before by Nebuchadnezzar were returned (Ezra 5-6).

Throughout the Old Testament the reader discovers many examples emphasizing the importance and power of collaboration. However, the most relevant examples for contemporary church life can be found in the birth and life of the New Testament Church following Jesus' ascension and the descending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Moreover, the call to collaborative ministry is modeled for the believer by God in the nature of the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Holy Trinity

A Model to Emulate

Humanity was created in the image of God. God's nature, which comprises the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, calls the church to become collaborative in its character and ministry. Stanley Grenz explores the idea that humankind is created in the image of the three-in-one God; therefore, when people fail to live in community they disfigure the image they were created to emulate. The Christians' witness to the world is tarnished. Grenz asserts, "The creation of humankind in the divine image, therefore, can mean nothing less than that humans express the relational dynamic of God whose representation we are called to be."[1] Stephen Pickard takes this principle and applies it to the church. He argues that collaboration is not just an option for the church but its calling. The church is called to mirror the image of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to the

[1] Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2000), 179.

surrounding community and world. It is through the church that society experiences God's nature first hand as His children work alongside one another in ministry and mission. As Paul writes in Philippi, "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ . . . with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the Gospel" (Phil. 1:27, ESV).[2] Pickard states,

> "To collaborate or not to collaborate" is never a question in pastoral ministry. To ask the question is to lose sight of the fundamental reality of what the Church is and who we are formed to be in the purposes of God. Rather the Church is called repeatedly to actualize in its life collaborative practices that bear witness to its life in the triune God.[3]

The church discovers in the nature of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit a model to emulate.

Christians worship a God who lives in community, and God invites His creation to join Him in a bond of interdependence and support, not just with Him, but with all believers. Leonardo Boff expounds that when one confesses "I believe in God, Father Almighty, in Jesus Christ, His Son, and in the Holy Spirit," that one is entering a world of relationship rather than exclusion, intimacy rather than isolation, and that we do not simply live but we live together reflecting the image of our Creator. He continues, "If God means three divine Persons in eternal communion among themselves, then we must conclude that we also, sons and daughters, are called to communion. We are the image and likeness of the Trinity. Hence, we are community beings."[4] Like the persons of the Trinity, Christians are called to respect differences while recognizing one's dependence

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[2] *ESV New Classic Reference Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Publishers, 2011).

[3] Stephen K. Pickard, *Theological Foundations for Collaborative Ministry* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishers, 2009), 232.

[4] Leonardo Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 2.

upon others to fulfill the church's common mission. Boff perceives in the Holy Trinity a vision of a world without oppressors and therefore, without the oppressed. He sees in the nature of the Holy Trinity a divine reality the world yearns for and can strive towards.

This truth is reiterated in a dialogue that emerged between two of the largest Christian traditions, Roman Catholicism and Classical Pentecostalism. *The Final Reports of the International Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue* (1985-1989), in a section titled "The Holy Spirit and the New Testament Vision of Koinonia," echoes Boff and others concerning the church's calling to reflect the Trinity in its relationships. The authors state,

> Both Pentecostals and Roman Catholics believe that the Koinonia between Christians is rooted in the life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Furthermore, they believe that this Trinitarian life is the highest expression of the unity to which we together aspire.[5]

Boff shares this understanding. He states, "The church is inherently the community of faith, hope, and love seeking to live the ideal of union proposed by Jesus Christ himself: 'that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us' (John 17:21)."[6] When the church succeeds in mirroring the collaborative spirit of God in ministry and mission, the church not only fulfills its calling, accepting God's invitation to community, but society witnesses God's character firsthand.

A Divine Dance

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[5] "The Final Reports of the International Roman-Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue." *PNEUMA* 12, no. 2 (1990): #29, quoted in Veli-Matti Karkainnen, "Trinity as Communion in the Spirit: Koinonia, Trinity, and Filoque in the Roman Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue." *The Journal of the Society for Pentecostal Studies* 22, no. 2 (Fall 2000), 213.

[6] Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 43.

If the church is to mirror the image of God, the church must remember that each individual is given specific gifts, each congregation is given unique abilities and expertise, just as the persons of the Trinity each have their own personalities and tasks. Alister McGrath states, "Each person, while maintaining its distinctive identity, penetrates the others and is penetrated by them."[7] All three are involved in every action of God, working together to create and redeem creation. If the church is to mirror the Trinity, each individual in the church and each congregation must work together along with the Creator in "redeeming creation." Cornelius Plantinga states, "In God, as opposed to humanity, there is complete unity of work. Men work separately, sometimes even at cross purposes . . . Not so with God."[8] God is the ideal for believers to strive for, allowing God to transform us, as Paul writes, "into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18).

John of Damascus, a Greek theologian writing in the seventh century, described the relationship between the three persons of the Holy Trinity as "perichoresis." George Cladis asserts, "Perichoresis means literally 'circle dance.'… A *perichoretic* image of the Trinity is that of the three persons of God in constant movement in a circle that implies intimacy, equality, unity yet distinction, and love."[9] This is a relationship that is more than compromise, concessions, or simple cooperation. This is not a Trinity represented by the triangle with each point representing the persons of God, with the Father dominant.

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[7] Alister McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Wilmington, DE: John Wiley & Sons, 2011).

[8] Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., "Gregory of Nyssa and the Social Analogy of the Trinity," *Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 50 (1986), 336.

[9] George Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church: How Pastors and Church Staff Can Grow Together into a Powerful Fellowship of Leaders* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1990), 4.

This is a Trinity represented more by a round table or circle, distinct yet sharing at the table with one another in loving relationship. Plantinga states, "Each Trinitarian person graciously makes room for the others in his own inner life and envelops or enfolds that person there. Each is *in* the other two."[10] According to Robert Letham, each "mutually indwell one another in a dynamic communion."[11] The universal church and its message would be irresistible if individuals and congregations across traditional, theological, historical, and geographical borders replicated such a closeness and intimacy with one another and the surrounding world.

Russian painter Andrei Rublev's *Trinity*, created in the 15th century, captures the collaborative spirit of the Trinity. Rublev shows the three figures in an open posture, the section of the table facing the onlooker exposed, allowing room for someone to pull up a chair and join the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit at the table. Pickard describes Rublev's icon stating,

> Each of the members of the Trinity is inclined toward the others in a deferential posture of respect and acknowledgement of shared life; each is constituted as person by virtue of their relation to the other. The persons of the divine Trinity are pre-eminently "members one of another". However, the movement is a double gesture, the inclination to the other is at the same time directed to the holy table. It is an invitation gesture of hospitality to the world to gather. God's collaborative character is by nature outwardly directed, open, invitational, and hospitable.[12]

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[10] Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., "Social Trinity and Tritheism," in *Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement*, ed. Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga Jr. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), 25.

[11] Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004), 382.

[12] Pickard, *Theological Foundations*, 4.

For the church, the mission is primary and therefore there can be no division if the church is to be effective. The church must practice and exhibit the unity and hospitality shown in Rublev's icon. Cladis proposes,

> Competition is alien within God. There is no sense in Scripture that the Son is resentful of the Spirit's ministry or that the Father interferes with the redemptive work of the Son. "If a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand," Jesus said (Mark 3:25).[13]

God models in His character, in the relationship between the persons of the Holy Trinity, behavior opposite the culture of competitiveness and antagonism often surrounding the church.

The Collaborative Nature of the Trinity in Scripture

The collaborative nature of the Trinity is observed immediately in John's Gospel. John explains, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Furthermore, the Trinity is realized in Jesus' baptism as the Holy Spirit comes down upon Christ and a voice from heaven speaks, "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased" (Luke 3:22). Jesus told His disciples that He "can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing." When Jesus was about to leave His disciples He told them they would do greater things than He because of the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom would come after Him (John 5:19; John 14).

Throughout the New Testament the three persons of the Trinity are linked together in both unity and equality. Jesus gives His disciples the Great Commission in the Gospel of Matthew exclaiming, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,

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[13] Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church*, 35.

baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (28:19). Millard Erickson asserts, "Note that 'name' is singular, although there are three persons included. Note also that there is no suggestion of inferiority or subordination."[14] New converts to the early church were baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Boff describes how in the early church Christians placed everything in common, "totally turned toward the others . . . hold[ing] nothing back." Reflecting the Holy Trinity the early Christians created what Boff calls, "the perfect community."[15] In Paul's benediction in 2 Corinthians the same understanding of the Trinity is observed, three names linked together in unity and equality. Paul writes to the church in Corinth, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (13:14).

Erickson points out that the strongest evidence for the three persons of the Trinity being unified and equal to one another can be found in the Gospel of John. One sees in the Gospel a divine dance or perichoresis as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit interact, support, collaborate, and exchange places with one another in order to achieve a common purpose. Erickson explains,

> The Son is sent by the Father (14:24) and comes forth from him (16:28). The Spirit is given by the Father (14:16), sent from the Father (14:26), and proceeds from the Father (15:26). Yet the Son is closely involved in the coming of the Spirit: he prays for his coming (14:16); the Father sends the Spirit in the Son's name (14:26); the Son will send the Spirit from the Father (15:26); the Son must go away so that he can send the Spirit (16:7). The Spirit's ministry is understood as a continuation and elaboration of that of the Son. He will bring to remembrance what the Son has said (14:26); he will bear witness to the Son (15:26); he will declare what he hears from the Son, thus glorifying the Son (16:13-14).[16]

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[14] Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic Publishing, 1998), 329.

[15] Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 54.

[16] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 331.

Throughout the Gospel of John each member of the Trinity is dependent upon the other and together fulfill God's purposes. Grenz states, "In sending the Son into the world, the Father entrusted his [divine] program . . . to the Son (e.g., Matt. 11:27). The Father and Son, in turn, have entrusted the completion of the divine program to the Spirit, who glorifies the Son – and through him the Father – in the world."[17] Only together will the church effectively be able to join God in bringing His purposes to completion.

Equal yet Subordinate to the Other

It is important to note that at times a member of the Trinity may subordinate themselves to the other in order to accomplish God's mission. Erickson paints a wonderful picture describing this truth, recognizing that when this happens it does not take away from the unity and equality of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He suggests, "Each of the three persons of the Trinity has had, for a period of time, a particular function unique to himself. This is to be understood as a temporary role for the purpose of accomplishing a given end, not a change in his status or essence."[18] Erickson suggests that the relationship between the persons of the Trinity might be compared to military aircraft and their crews. He points out that on bombing runs during war the pilot often has to listen to an officer of lower rank, the bombardier, for direction. He states,

> In like fashion, the Son did not become less than the Father during his earthly incarnation, but he did subordinate himself functionally to the Father's will. Similarly, the Holy Spirit is now subordinated to the ministry of the Son (see John 14-16) as well as to the will of the Father, but this does not imply that he is less than they are.[19]

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[17] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 68.

[18] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 338.

[19] Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 338.

Humankind, created in the divine image, must express this "relational dynamic of the God whose representation we are called to be."[20] Only in community, recognizing each member as unique yet equal and each member willing to subordinate oneself to another for the sake of the mission, can the church show the world what God is like.

Mirroring the Divine Community

God's image is inscribed upon humanity's heart. Paul states that when one recognizes this fact and begins a relationship with Christ, the believer puts on the "new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness" (Eph. 4:24). McCormick writes, "As 'the whole Trinity' descends, the Holy Spirit gathers up the people of God into the body of Christ and inscribes upon their hearts the vestiges of the Holy Trinity."[21] The Holy Trinity gives the church the image it is to strive for, a picture of what it may yet become, and as Boff asserts, "is the model for each and every community."[22] Many might see such a vision as a fantasy or "pie-in-the-sky" theology, a goal that is both unrealistic and impossible. Yet, Cladis challenges the church,

> On the one hand it is both idyllic and absurd to think that our work groups and ministry teams could be like the Father, Son, and Spirit in perichoretic unity as described by Ouspensky and Lossky, in "a tranquil and lucid joyfulness." On the other hand, if we do *not* move toward an image, a goal, of spiritually meaningful and effective team ministry, our failure will surely result in relational breakdown, the result of human sin.[23]

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[20] Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 179.

[21] K. Steve McCormick, "The Church an Icon of the Holy Trinity? A Spirit Christology as Necessary Prolegomena of Ecclesiology." *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 41, no. 2 (2006), 231.

[22] Boff, *Holy Trinity, Perfect Community*, 54.

[23] Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church*, 9

The Trinity is a community of persons who love each other, live together in harmony, and strive toward the goal of glorifying each other.

God invites people to join Him and become part of the divine plan, working alongside the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each person is an individual part of the universal church yet has gifts to offer in order to make the church whole and to help see its mission fulfilled. Marcel Sarot proposes, "When the church is incorporated into Christ, it does not merely echo the Trinitarian relationships, but is given to participate in them…and thus, enter the community of God's being."[24] A divine invitation goes out to the people of God, the church, to join together with God and with one another to mirror the divine community, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to the world.

The Early Church in Acts

The Book of Acts opens with Jesus' ascension and directive to the apostles to not leave Jerusalem but to wait there for the Holy Spirit. Jesus tells them, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). After Jesus spoke these words He was lifted up and taken out of the disciples' sight. The disciples returned to Jerusalem and began to wait and pray. The day of Pentecost arrived and the Holy Spirit descended. The Holy Spirit is the "power which enables the church to 'go public' with its good news, to attract a crowd and…to have something to say worth hearing."[25] At the end of chapter two of Acts one sees the church empowered and drawn

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[24] Marcel Sarot, "Trinity and Church: Trinitarian Perspectives on the Identity of the Christian Community," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12, no. 1 (January 2010), 44.

[25] William H. Willimon, *Acts*, Interpretation: A Bible-Commentary for Teaching and Preaching, edited by James L. Mays, Patrick D. Miller, and Paul J. Achtemeier (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 33.

together by the Holy Spirit. Believers devote "themselves to the apostles' teaching," join with one another in fellowship, engage in "the breaking of bread," and come together in prayer. Through the Holy Spirit the church is birthed as community, many living and working together as one, mirroring "the divine dance" of the Creator, three-in-one.

One in Spirit

Through the Holy Spirit, the church becomes one in Spirit and *koinonia* is born. William Willimon describes the fellowship in the early church as the miracle of Pentecost. He asserts that the miracle of the early church is "that from so diverse assemblage of people 'from every nation under heaven' (Acts 2:5) a unified body of believers is formed."[26] This body of believers mirrored the collaborative nature of God, not simply working together as brothers and sisters in the faith but truly becoming one body and one spirit. The early church took on the Father, Son and Holy Spirit's personality, the personality of God, Himself. The believers were individuals yet community, distinct yet one. Willimon asserts "It is a fellowship which produces astounding 'wonders and signs' (2:43), not the least of which was that 'all who believed were together and had all things in common,' selling their possessions and distributing them to all (2:44-45)."[27] As Kenneth Barker and John Kohlenberger point out, the believers found "spiritual oneness . . . to be a living reality through their common allegiance to Jesus."[28] The early church became a reflection of God's character as seen in

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[26] Willimon, *Acts*, 40.

[27] Willimon, *Acts*, 40.

[28] Kenneth L. Barker and John R. Kohlenberger III, *Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1999), 407.

the Holy Trinity, many worshipping and working together for a single purpose, a diverse group becoming one in ministry and mission.

On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit empowered Peter to speak and call on the crowds to "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38). Luke describes that moment and Peter's message, testifying, "Those who accepted his message were baptized and about three thousand were added to their number that day" (Acts 2:41). I. Howard Marshall writes, "Despite its size it [the church] had a common mind and purpose; in other words, it was united in its devotion to the Lord."[29] The church's oneness, communal and cooperative nature, would soon become its greatest witness.

A Powerful Witness

The way the early church in Acts loved one another and worked cooperatively toward a common purpose became the church's greatest witness. Barker and Kohlenberger describe this phenomenon asserting that it wasn't Peter's preaching, the apostles' words, or even the many miracles that grew the church. They propose that the early church's power, the reason for its substantial growth, was due to the power of a community where possessions are shared to meet the needs of others. It was this kind of power Jesus had in mind when he said, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). The believers did not consider their possessions to belong only to them, but believed they were to be used to help others, echoing Jesus' commandment to "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31).

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[29] I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, edited by Leon Morris (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1980), 115.

Luke paints an image of the church being a place where believers willingly shared their wealth and together helped those who had less. Luke describes the early church as having "no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need" (Acts 4:34-35). Willimon remarks that many commentators on the Book of Acts "seem intent on showing such claims to be an idealized and romanticized creation of the later church;" but he argues "their interpretations testify…to the loss of the church's confidence in the ability of the resurrection faith to overturn all material and social arrangements."[30] The early Christians' lived together, had everything in common, and cared for one another. The people of Jerusalem observed this and drew close to hear the Gospel message that had influenced the Christians to practice such unselfish acts.

Yoked To One Another

Throughout the Book of Acts believers are seen "yoked together." Following Pentecost, believers in Jerusalem are comprised of two groups, the Hellenists who are Greek-speaking Jews and the Hebrews who are Aramaic-speaking Jews. These two groups most likely worshipped separately due to their principal language but were in close contact, making decisions together, and because of their collaborative spirit, "the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly" (Acts 6:7). At one point in the early church the Hellenists were upset that their widows' needs were being overlooked (Acts 6:3-7). The apostles, realizing the work was too great for them alone, asked the Hellenist component of the congregation to choose seven men to care for the widows. The sharing

[30] Willimon, *Acts*, 40.

of leadership, working together for the good of the church, resulted in the church continuing to grow. Soon, the apostles in Jerusalem commissioned Peter and John to go to Samaria and pray for the "new believers" there (Acts 8:14-15). Traditional Jewish boundaries were broken between Hebrews and Hellenists, Samaritans and Jews, and people were brought together through their relationship with Christ.

Later in the Book of Acts, Luke details Peter explaining to the apostles his vision of a large sheet which included all the wild beasts being lowered from heaven and a voice from heaven exclaiming, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean" (Acts 11:9). Furthermore, Peter describes to the apostles how the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles in Caesarea. The apostles praise God exclaiming, "So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life" (Acts 11:18). Soon the Antioch church experienced growth and included both Jewish and Gentile believers. Luke uses the term *ekklesia* (a term translated "church" and used eighty times in the Septuagint to describe the assembly of Israel as the people of God) to describe the believers in Antioch. It is here where disciples of Christ, regardless of ethnic background, were first labeled "Christians," later to be referred to throughout the Book of Acts as "brothers and sisters" (Acts 11:6; 15:32). It is, according to N.T. Wright, "the *unity* of the Messiah's followers that will demonstrate that they are indeed the new humanity, the true people of the one God of Israel."[31]

As the Antioch church experienced growth, Barnabas was sent to Antioch (Acts 11:19-26). Barnabas found himself needing help to advance the Gospel and to care for the believers in Antioch. Therefore, Barnabas "hunted out his old friend Paul who was at

[31] Wright, N.T., *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013), 728.

work in Tarsus and persuaded him to join in the work at Antioch."[32] After Barnabas and Paul taught for a year at the church in Antioch, there is a prophecy of an upcoming famine (Acts 11:27-28). Together, fighting the issues and problems of the day, the church decided to "provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea" (Acts 11:29). Willimon writes,

> As the Jews in Jerusalem generously reached out to include even the Gentiles in the gospel, so these gentiles reach out to share what they have with their less fortunate brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. The church is not isolated congregations, each going its own way, looking after its own household. The church consists of congregations yoked to one another.[33]

Paul would later write about a situation that arises in Antioch when Peter arrives and draws back from eating with the Gentiles because people arrived who represented the apostle James and believed in circumcision. Paul writes about this moment in Galatians. Wright explains that Paul sees this as "a denial of the status which all, Jew and Gentile alike, have as members of Messiah's people, characterized by Messiah-faithfulness. They all belong at the same table, no matter what their ethnic, cultural or moral background."[34]

Differences Aside

The early church through their shared faith in Jesus Christ began to put many of their differences aside. The church worked toward overcoming the differences between Hebrews and Hellenists and pushing the two groups to work together in ministry and mission. Walls between Jew and Gentile began to break down as well. No longer was one solely defined by one's background, history, or ethnicity. Wright asserts that Christ is

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[32] Marshall, *Acts*, 214.

[33] Willimon, *Acts*, 108.

[34] Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God,* 388.

"the one *in whom* that people are summed up and drawn together," even "across traditional boundary-lines."[35] New revelations make it clear to Peter that "God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right" (Acts 10:34-35).

The organization and administration of the church mirrors the collaborative character of God, coming together at the table to discuss important issues when they arise. When Gentile converts to Christianity are told they need to be circumcised, the leadership in the church does not make a decision on their own, but as Willimon writes, "When there is a dispute about innovation or new twists in the task of applying the gospel to contemporary challenges … missionaries touch base with apostolic authority in Jerusalem."[36] Another example is the leadership at the church in Antioch. Its leadership was collaborative, unlike that of even most contemporary congregations. Michael Green asserts that the group that led the church in Antioch was extremely diverse, yet worked together to carry out Christ's mission. He explains,

> There is Barnabas, who used to be a rich, landowning Cypriot Levite: Symeon, called "Swarthy", who was clearly a black man; Lucius of Cyrene, no doubt a Jew from the dispersion in North Africa; Manaen, who was educated in court circles alongside Herod the tetrarch; and Saul of Tarsus, the Jew from the Levant who had studied under Gamaliel. What a varied leadership! Their very names speak volumes for the unity which the Spirit creates. Christ's will for his Church, that they should be one (John 17:21), was being carried out in the Christian community at Antioch.[37]

Green believes this is one of the reasons Paul was so upset about what was happening in Corinth as one cried, "I belong to Paul," and another "I belong to Apollos," and yet

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[35] Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God,* 834.

[36] Willimon, *Acts*, 129.

[37] Michael Green, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 132.

another, “I belong to Christ” (I Cor. 1:12). Paul had seen how collaborative leadership looked and how it mirrored God’s character and Jesus’ commands. He believed that anyone who fostered disunity would destroy “God’s temple” (I Cor. 3:17). Paul had observed and believed that it was only together, collectively, that the church would be able to successfully discern God’s will and make decisions for the good of all.

Traveling Companions

Throughout the early church the apostles, following Jesus’ directive, did not travel alone to minister to the churches being birthed and to spread the message of Christ. When the apostles were first called, Jesus “began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority…” (Mark 6:7). The apostles continued to follow this practice in their ministry.

When the apostles heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, “they send Peter and John…” (Acts 8:14). Barnabas found Paul and together they taught “great numbers of people” in Antioch (Acts 11:26). Together Paul and Barnabas also traveled and ministered to the people in Paphos, Perga, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe (Acts 13-14). After traveling together they returned to Antioch in Syria and “gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles (Acts 14:27). During his journeys, Paul joined Timothy, Silas, Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Tychicus, Trophimus, and others, ministering together throughout the regions of Phrygia, Galatia, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Macedonia, and Greece (Acts 16-20).

In Lystra “some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and won the crowd over. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the city, thinking he was dead” (Acts 14:19).

Then "the disciples gathered around him" and he was able to get back up and leave the next day with Barnabas for Derbe (Acts 14:20). It is the strength that Paul received from the disciples in the context of community that allowed him to get back up and continue to minister. The apostles and leaders of the early church cannot, as Pickard exclaims, "be what they are or shall be without the other."[38] Here is seen the importance and power of collaboration in advancing the Gospel. The apostles and early leaders of the church gained strength from one another to spread the message through what was at times a harsh and unwelcoming environment.

Collaboration in Paul's Letters

Paul makes it clear in his many letters that there is one God and there is one body, the church. Christ is the common ground for all Christians because all are baptized in the name of Christ (I Cor. 3:11). Paul writes to the church in Ephesus, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one, Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4: 4-6). Wright speaks of how this theme is echoed throughout Paul's letters. Paul sees the church called to imitate the character and image of God; thus, the church is to be a single united family, what Wright calls "monotheistically grounded ecclesial unity."[39] Wright explains, "It is, after all, the unity of the Messiah's followers that will demonstrate that they are indeed the true people of the one God of Israel."[40] Paul works toward this united community in letter after letter, against every threat and hazard that

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[38] Pickard, *Theological Foundations*, 149.

[39] Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God,* 729.

[40] Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God,* 728.

arises in the local church. He consistently lifts up one Triune God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and God's call to be "like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind" (Phil. 2:2).

The Trans-Congregational Church

Paul greets the Christians in Corinth, "To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be his holy people, together with those everywhere who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ - their Lord and ours" (I Cor. 1:2). Jeffrey Kloha writes, "The Corinthians are to view themselves in very concrete ways as 'church' connected to the 'church' throughout the world."[41] Paul's simple greeting in his first letter to the Corinthians reinforces Paul's argument that the church in Corinth is not, nor is it meant to be, self-contained, self-directed, and self-sufficient. Kloha uses the term "Trans-Congregational Church" to describe Paul's understanding of the early church. [42]

The concept of the Trans-Congregational Church is seen throughout Paul's letters. To the church of Thessalonica, Paul praises them for becoming "imitators of the church of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea (I Thess. 2:14). Paul sends a greeting from "all the churches of Asia" to the church in Corinth (I Cor. 16:9). Paul greets the church in Rome with "All the churches of Christ greet you" (Rom. 16:16). In his letter to the Colossians, Paul tells them, "After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea" (Col. 4:16). A collection is taken up for the church in Jerusalem, gathered from multiple

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[41] Jeffrey Kloha, "The Trans-Congregational Church in the New Testament." *Concordia Journal* 34, no. 3 (2008): 179.

[42] Kloha, "The Trans-Congregational Church," 172-190.

churches and brought together by a group of diverse individuals appointed by the churches (I Cor. 16:3-4; 2 Cor. 8:19). The churches had frequent visitors from other churches (I Cor. 1:11-17; Phil. 2: 25-28). Wendell Willis declares, "The Pauline churches, whether in a bustling metropolis such as Corinth, a major Roman colony such as Philippi, or a backwater such as Galatia, had much more in common than a commitment to Jesus. They had each other."[43] Willis shows how the congregations Paul wrote to and interacted with were not independent, each individually sharing the gospel to their surrounding community, but were the beginnings of an ecumenical and universal church working as one in the spreading of the gospel.

Throughout his letters, Paul speaks of the many house churches that are developing. He mentions the church in the house of Priscilla and Aquila (Rom. 16:5; I Cor. 16:19), the church in Nympha's house (Col. 4:15), and the church in Philemon's house (Philem. 2). Furthermore, he mentions the churches rising up in the many surrounding cities such as "the church of the Thessalonians" (I Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1), "the church of God in Corinth" (I Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1), and the church in Laodicea (Col. 4:16). Even though Paul lifts up many individual congregations, he is clear that there is a necessary and vital interrelationship between the churches. Thomas Schreiner argues that Paul emphasizes this interrelationship in his letters. For Paul, the word *ekklesia* "emphasizes the church gathered . . . God's new community, his new people."[44] Schreiner argues that Paul uses terms interchangeably throughout his letters in order to define the church as both individual and universal.

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[43] Wendell Willis, "The Networking of the Pauline Churches: An Exploratory Essay." *Restoration Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (2007), 78.

[44] Schreiner, Thomas R., *Paul Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 333.

For Paul, the New Testament churches did not exist in isolation from each other. The church had been established as a series of house churches. On the day of Pentecost the church consisted of 3,000 people and they met "in their homes" like those of Priscilla and Aquila (Rom. 16:5; I Cor. 16:19) and Nympha (Col. 4:15). Furthermore, Paul understood that the early Christians also "met together in the temple courts" (Acts 2:46), together send their greetings to Corinth (I Cor. 16:19), and gather together in the same place for the celebration of the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11:20). According to Kloha, in Paul's letters there is "no theological or practical distinction between 'church' as individual local congregation and 'church' as multiple congregations gathering, working, and confessing together."[45]

A "Messiah" People

Paul's letters refer to the birth of a new community, the universal church. Paul writes that one should give no offense "to the church of God" (I Cor. 10:32), explains that he once persecuted "the church of God" (I Cor. 15:9, Gal. 1:13), he persecuted "the church" (Phil. 3:6), and that Christ is "the head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18, 24). Schreiner argues that the focus on the universal church is most evident in Ephesians. He explains,

> Jesus is the head of the church (Eph. 1:22). Through the church, God's wisdom is disclosed to angelic powers (Eph. 3:10). Glory resounds to God in the church (Eph. 3:21). The parallel between husbands and wives and Christ and the church receives extended attention in Ephesians 5:22-33 (see esp. Eph. 5:32). Christ is the head of the church (Eph. 5:23), and the church is subject to Christ (Eph. 5:24). Christ demonstrated his love for the church through his death and nurture, and he cherishes it (Eph. 5:25, 29); and his intention is to preserve a pure church (Eph. 5:27).[46]

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[45] Jeffrey Kloha, "The Trans-Congregational Church," 177-178.

[46] Schreiner, *Paul Apostle of God's Glory in Christ,* 334.

According to Schreiner, for Paul the emphasis in Ephesians, as well as in his letter to the church in Colossae, "falls on the church as a whole – the church as a unity throughout the world."[47] God has created, through His Son, Jesus Christ, a new community.

Paul describes this new community in his letter to the church in Galatia. He writes, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Later in his letter to the Galatians, he explains that God has created a new community; moreover, a new creation. Paul explains, "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is *the new creation*. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule – to *the Israel of God*" (Gal. 6:15-16, *italics mine*). Wright explains that this unity of body that Paul describes is much more than just working together in ministry and mission, and attempting to stand up against division when it arises. God has ushered in a new era, a new reality. Wright clarifies, "Paul believed that in baptism one entered a new reality, a new family, a new version of the human race, in which all sorts of things were possible that had previously not been."[48] Furthermore, this reality is non-negotiable. Wright exhorts, "God is one and therefore deserves a single family . . . The Messiah's people are a single family, and must strain every nerve to make that a reality that goes all the way down into their hearts and minds."[49] When individuals give up their own rights and wants, allowing the mind of Christ to be one's conscience, guide, and truth, a united community is created.

The Primary Goal

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[47] Schreiner, *Paul Apostle of God's Glory in Christ,* 335.

[48] Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God,* 1103.

[49] Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God,* 389-390.

Throughout his letters, Paul states that the primary goal of the universal church is to declare the Gospel and to emulate Christ in the surrounding community and world. Paul asserts that the church's witness is marred when disunity flourishes in its ranks. Wright emphasizes, "Paul was aware that existing differences still had to be navigated with wisdom and humility. All this is in the service of a larger vision . . . the vision of a new temple, a new house of praise, where songs originally sung in the shrine in Jerusalem would arise from the hearts and mouths of every nation."[50] According to Schreiner, Paul challenges the church to bring honor to God and the church does this when it maintains, as Paul writes in Ephesians, "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). Paul often found himself having to address divisions in the church that were not only having a negative impact on a congregation, but on the church's mission to make disciples.

Paul asks the church in Corinth, "Is Christ divided?" (I Cor. 1:13). The behavior of the church in Corinth seems to be shouting that Christ is indeed divided. Wright explains that the goal of unity has a very practical component. It is easier if everyone gets along and works together. But unity in the church is more important than that for Paul. Wright explains, stating that Paul wants the church to understand that "something essential to bring Messiah-people is lost when the community is split."[51] According to David Horrell, for Paul Christ alone is "the basis for community solidarity."[52] This is clear in Paul's letter to the church in Philippi. He writes, "Whatever happens, conduct

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[50] Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God,* 1494.

[51] Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God, 390.*

[52] Horrell, David, *Solidarity and Difference: A Contemporary Reading of Paul's Ethics* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 195.

yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ . . . stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the Gospel" (Phil. 1:27), and be united with Christ (Phil. 2:1). Paul called on the church to glorify God with "one mind and one voice" (Rom. 15:6).

Many Gifts, One Body

Paul understood that bringing someone to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ was a collaborative event with some planting the seed of faith, others watering it, and God making it grow (1 Cor. 3: 6-9). Therefore, God has given individuals different gifts to build up the body of Christ (Eph. 4: 11-13). Paul describes the church as a body with many different parts and Christ is the head (Col. 1:18). Vitalis Mshanga writes, "Paul conceives of the church in a metaphorical way, not only as the 'body of Christ', which suggests uniformity, but also, 'people of God', which points to diversity."[53] Mshanga argues that Paul calls for not simply unity (one body), but unity in diversity (many parts). Paul does not call all Christians to act and live the same way, do the same things, but to be whom God created them to be and fulfill the role God has given them as part of His Church.

For Paul, the factor that unifies Christians is not their gifts or works or how they minister in the church and to the world. The unifying factor for Christians is justification through faith in Jesus. Mshanga argues that for Paul, Christology trumps ecclesiology. He argues that before one can understand the church and one's place in the church, one has to understand the head of the church, Jesus Christ. One has to find Christ. He writes,

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[53] Vitalis Mshanga, "The Ecumenical Vision of the Apostle Paul and its Relevance for Contemporary Search for Full Unity of all Christians." *Exchange: Journal of Missiological and Ecumenical Research* 40, no. 2 (2010), 149.

> According to Paul, baptism is the beginning of the new life-in-Christ. Having been baptized in Christ's death, 'our old self is crucified with him' and gives rise to new being (Rom 6:6). Through baptism one is justified, that is, one is vindicated by God and inwardly renewed through faith (Rom. 1:17). Paul's use of the concept of 'justification by faith' in Rom. 1:17 and Rom. 3:21-26 has not only a salvific agenda but also an ecumenical programme. Justification by grace through faith in the suffering, dead, risen and glorified Christ incorporates one into the body of Christ, namely the church. By virtue of our common justification in Christ through faith, we constitute one mystical body of Christ (Rom. 3: 21-26). This is the first and fundamental uniting factor between Christians of various Christian denominations.[54]

In finding Christ, not only does one come to know the church and his/her place in it, but one comes to perceive the church as something beyond the walls of a building, beyond denominational, historical, and geographical boundaries. One comes to perceive and understand that the universality of the Church, the "body of Christ" includes all who profess faith in the Savior.

The mission of the church is not an individual issue but something that can only be fulfilled if all the members of the "body of Christ" are unified in purpose, each one using their unique God-given gifts. A diverse group with a single mission and more importantly, a single faith. Divisions among Christians and churches destroy the church's witness in the world. Pope John Paul II once asked,

> When non-believers meet missionaries who do not agree among themselves, even though they appeal to Christ, will they be in a position to receive the true message? Will they not think that the Gospel is a cause of division, despite the fact that it is presented as the fundamental law of love?[55]

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[54] Mshanga, "The Ecumenical Vision of the Apostle Paul," 150-151.

[55] John Paul II, "Ut Unum Sint. That They May Be One: Commitment to Ecumenism." *Origins* 98 (1995), 50-72, quoted in Vitalis Mshanga, "The Ecumenical Vision of the Apostle Paul and its Relevance for Contemporary Search for Full Unity of all Christians." *Exchange: Journal of Missiological and Ecumenical Research* 40, no. 2 (2010), 165.

Paul calls the church to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3). If those who are part of the church and believe in Christ, though diverse in gifts and personalities, walk in such love and unity, it will make the body grow and God will be glorified (Eph. 4:16).

Summary

The church sees in the Triune God the image they are called to emulate. It is an image of collaboration, distinct yet unified, different yet one. The early church in Acts mirrored this divine community, becoming "one in heart and mind" and having "everything in common." Throughout the early church differences were set aside and a church of "no Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor free" was established. Decisions were made together and churches served and reached out to one another. A call for collaboration is further seen throughout Paul's letters as Paul speaks of a Trans-Congregational Church, all "one in Christ Jesus." Paul challenges the newly formed churches to take on their identity as a "Messiah people," melded together through their baptism, to help each other and to emulate Christ. He calls on them to love God and one another. Division would only injure the "body of Christ" and mar its witness.

The nature of God seen in the Holy Trinity, the actions of the early church observed in Acts, and Paul's teachings throughout his letters to the churches make it clear that the church is called to be collaborative in ministry and mission. Only together can Christ's followers successfully fulfill the church's mission to "go and make disciples," mirroring the character, love, and light of Christ.

CHAPTER THREE: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

> *When I was a kid, there was no collaboration; it's you with a camera bossing your friends around. But as an adult, filmmaking is all about appreciating the talents of the people you surround yourself with and knowing you could never have made any of these films by yourself.*
>
> -Steven Spielberg

We live in a world of increasingly complex issues and problems requiring diverse perspectives and gifts to solve. Frank LaFasto and Carl Larson state, "The problems that confront us are complex and becoming increasingly so. For an organization to change or refocus its efforts in any significant way – in strategy, in design, or in structure – requires a coordinated effort."[1] Many in business, education, healthcare, government and a hosts of other areas are discovering the need to come together with those both inside and outside their discipline in order to unravel today's multifaceted problems. Russell Linden comments, "The most significant challenges facing our society cannot be addressed by any one organization. They all require collaboration among many organizations."[2] Collaborative meetings, conversations, processes, and connections between many diverse groups, each bringing their unique gifts to the table, can lead to future possibilities that would have remained dormant otherwise. In response to today's many challenges, this chapter reviews the current literature concerning the need for and characteristics of effective collaborative leadership. Due to the immense amount of literature describing

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[1] Frank LaFasto and Carl Larson, *When Teams Work Best: 6,000 Team Members and Leaders Tell What It Takes To Succeed* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2001), xviii.

[2] Russell Matthew Linden, *Leading across Boundaries: Creating Collaborative Agencies in a Networked World*, 1st ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 9.

collaborative projects across multiple disciplines, this researcher concentrated on collaboration within the fields of healthcare and education. Examples of collaboration between churches and other organizations for the betterment of the community are presented. Those examples presented are but a small sample of collaborative ventures in healthcare, education, ministry and mission which are proving to be extremely effective and valuable.

Collaborative Leadership

Writing from a ministry perspective, Loughlan Sofield and Carroll Juliano define collaboration as "The identification, release, and union of all the gifts in ministry for the sake of the mission.[3] Whether one is dealing with environmental issues, the AIDS epidemic, business mergers, poverty, church growth, rising healthcare costs, falling test scores, or illegal immigrants, solutions require the participation of many groups bringing diverse perspectives and possible solutions to the discussion. Collaborative leaders are needed to facilitate "people with different views and perspectives coming together, putting aside their narrow self-interests, and discussing issues openly and supportively in an attempt to solve a larger problem or achieve a broader goal."[4] In order to solve today's difficult problems many unique and diverse gifts are needed at the table.

Collaboration develops through four clear stages, which Sofield and Juliano call "The Four C's": Co-existence, Communication, Cooperation, and Collaboration. Co-existence is when individuals share history or membership in an organization but work independently from one another in accomplishing tasks. Communication occurs when

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[3] Loughlan Sofield and Carroll Juliano, *Collaboration: Uniting Our Gifts in Ministry* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2000), 17.

[4] LaFasto and Larson, *When Teams Work Best*, xvii.

there is an intentional effort made to bring two or more of these independent groups together for dialogue and sharing of information. Cooperation is the stage in which there is a recognition that the different departments or groups in the organization do have an impact on each other and can be a help or a hindrance. An effective collaborative relationship will include the following:

1. Individuals involved will acknowledge, articulate, and experience a sense of ownership of a common mission.
2. Individuals involved will achieve a sense of unity accompanied by a desire to work together for a common goal.
3. Individuals involved will make an intentional effort to identify, value, and bring together the various gifts of the members.[5]

At this level, many of the obstacles to collaboration including competitiveness, arrogance, burnout, fear, and an unwillingness to face conflict have been worked through and overcome.

A Common Mission

In order to be successful, collaborations need to establish trust between diverse groups of people. According to D.D. Chrislip and C.E. Larson, once trust is established individuals "recognize the need to share responsibility and accountability for the well-being of the community as a whole."[6] Susanna Axelsson and Runo Axelsson explain, "Such an ability to transcend and sacrifice particular interests for a common purpose is called altruism. Instead of defending a territory against others, altruism is based on a concern for others and for the society at large."[7] Altruism is the opposite of territoriality.

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[5] Sofield and Juliano, *Collaboration: Uniting Our Gifts in Ministry,* 18-19.

[6] D.D. Chrislip and C.E. Larson, *Collaborative Leadership: How Citizens and Civic Leaders Can Make a Difference* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1994), 11.

[7] Susanna Bihari Axelsson and Runo Axelsson, "From Territoriality to Altruism in Interprofessional Collaboration and Leadership." *Journal of Interprofessional Care* 23, No. 4 (July 2009), 324.

The welfare of those served becomes the priority in the minds of leadership and staff. It is this single-mindedness of purpose that creates a willingness to sacrifice personal wants and desires, working together as a team to solve the problems and meet the needs placed before them.

Therefore, leadership is vital in establishing successful collaborative relationships and ventures. Hansen points out that leadership must create a "credible, open process in which participants have confidence, resisting shortcuts, protecting the process against vested interests, serving the group and the broader purpose for which it exists"[8] Top-down initiatives or hierarchical decision-making can result in failure. Traditional hierarchical structures create climates of monologue and not dialogue, thwarting attempts at collaboration. Van Roekel explains that "the likelihood of real change, backed by organizational commitment, occurs only when those who must live with the change are in some way engaged in designing the change."[9] A sense of unity and commitment to work together must be established in and between all participants.

A Common Goal

[8] Audrey J. Hansen, "Heath Care Collaboration: A Case Study of the Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement" (Master's thesis, Bethel College, 2002), 27-28.

[9] Marjorie A. Van Roekel, "Critical Care Practice Area: Change through Collaboration" (Master's thesis, Bethel University, 2006), 39.

Vision can be defined as "a picture of the future with some implicit or explicit commentary on why people should strive to create that future."[10] John P. Kotter describes three important purposes of an effective vision:

1. A vision clarifies the general direction for change; thus, simplifying hundreds and thousands of more detailed decisions.
2. A vision motivates people to take action in the right direction.
3. A vision helps coordinate the actions of different people in a remarkably fast and efficient way.[11]

Kotter then goes on to list six major characteristics he believes are part of an effective vision (Appendix A).

A successful vision statement takes time to develop. Input must be sought, rewriting must be done, and consensus must be grown. Furthermore, leaders must recognize the vital role they play in not only developing the vision but making sure it is communicated. Robert Stephen Reid explains, "During times of change or crisis, a leader plays a key role in helping organizational participants engage in the cognitive restructuring necessary to image ways to live into the new vision of what the organization must do or needs to become."[12] A collaborative leader must constantly keep the vision in front of the group, relaying both its necessity and significance. The importance of each member of the group, along with how the vision will be achieved only if each member successfully fulfills their leadership role, must be continually stressed by the leader.

A vision gives people a direction and a goal to work towards. It provides excitement and energy as a picture is painted of a new and effective future. Burt Nanus

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[10] John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 1996), 68.

[11] Kotter, *Leading Change*, 68-69.

[12] Robert Stephen Reid, "Responding to Resistance during a Change Process," *Leading Churches through Change Transitions*, ed. David N. Mosser (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 173-188.

states, "There is no more powerful engine driving an organization toward excellence and long-range success than an attractive, worthwhile, and achievable vision of the future, widely shared."[13] According to Sooksan Kantabutra, both positive and negative visions exist. While a negative vision emphasizes the status quo, a positive vision emphasizes change and growth. The attributes of a positive or effective vision include brevity, clarity, future orientation, stability, challenge, abstractness, and the ability to inspire. Kantabutra argues that when these seven characteristics "interact" it creates "a positive impact on overall organizational performance."[14]

Various Gifts

Not everyone has the same set of gifts or abilities to help an organization to be effective. Jim Collins describes how necessary it is for a leader to determine who in their midst has which gifts and abilities before moving forward. He writes, "The executives who ignited the transformations from good to great did not first figure out where to drive the bus and then get people to take it there. No, they *first* got the right people on the bus (and the wrong people off the bus) and *then* figured out where to drive it."[15] It is the combined gifts and abilities of those in leadership that will most successfully determine the organization's direction.

Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem and James H. Furr define this group of leaders who are moving forward and in the right seats on the bus as the "vision community." Writing from a church perspective, they point out five characteristics of members of the vision

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[13] Burt Nanus, *Visionary Leadership* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1992), 3.

[14] Sooksan Kantabutra, "What Do We Know About Vision?" in *Leading Organizations: Perspectives for a New Era*, ed. Gil Robinson Hickman (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2010), 262.

[15] Jim Collins, *Good To Great* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2001), 41.

community including diversity, spiritual maturity, ability to make a meaningful contribution, willing to support the right changes, and appropriate staff representation.[16] Each member of the vision community should be willing to share his or her unique perspective and gifts. It is the leader's responsibility to determine what gifts are needed to move forward, as well as who carries these essential gifts needed to bring about effective and sustained change.

Choosing and training the right people for the right jobs is so vital to bringing about successful change. Unfortunately, as Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan explain,

> The same leaders who exclaim that "people are our most important asset" usually do not think very hard about choosing the right people for the right jobs. They and their organizations don't have precise ideas about what the jobs require – not only today, but tomorrow – and what kind of people they need to fill those jobs. As a result, their companies don't hire, promote, and develop the best candidates for their leadership needs.
>
> Quite often, we notice, these leaders don't pay enough attention to people because they're too busy thinking about how to make their companies bigger or more global than those of their competitors. What they're overlooking is that the quality of their people is the best competitive differentiator. The results probably won't show up as quickly as, say, a big acquisition. But over time, choosing the right people is what creates that elusive sustainable competitive advantage.[17]

Such behavior occurs not only in the business world, but in healthcare, education, ministry, and countless other fields as leaders are often impatient and focused on implementing change quickly or are simply attempting to survive the vast number of day-to-day responsibilities. Many leaders do not take the time necessary to lay the groundwork so true collaboration can take place. This can lead to dysfunctional teams.

Obstacles to Collaboration

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[16] Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr, *Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformational Journey* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

[17] Larry Bossidy and Ram Charan, *Execution: The Discipline of Getting Things Done* (New York, NY: Crown Business, 2009), 109-110.

There are many obstacles to building a healthy collaboration. Sofield and Juliano list competitiveness, parochialism, arrogance, burnout, hostility, unwillingness to deal with conflict, and lack of commitment or training as some of the general obstacles toward collaborative leadership.[18] Furthermore, as Pickard points out, "the competitive spirit is deeply encoded into our way of life economically, socially, politically, and alas religiously . . . In the life of the Church we see all too clearly the influence of [this] competitive spirit between churches; within churches; and among leaders and the ministries of the body of Christ."[19] There must be a deliberate choice made to collaborate. There must be an intentional focus on building relationships.

Daniel J. Gute, writing about racial reconciliation, suggests five steps (the Five A's) that are applicable in helping build collaboration between diverse groups.[20] Gute writes, "The goal is not to minimize the differences between us but to *intentionalize* the relationships through which our understanding of those differences moves from being an *irritant* to being *interesting* to being *important* to being *indispensable*."[21] Leaders must take time to question whether their attitudes, behaviors, and skills are contrary and detrimental to collaboration. Are differences an irritant to collaborative efforts? Leaders will need to deal with the obstacles to collaboration within themselves through self-

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[18] Loughlan Sofield and Carroll Juliano, *Collaborative Ministry: Skills and Guidelines* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1987), 25-46.

[19] Stephen K. Pickard, "The Collaborative Character of Christian Ministry," *The Expository Times* 121, no. 9 (2010), 434.

[20] These steps include acknowledging the differences, accepting the differences, affirming the differences, appreciating the differences, and appropriating the differences.

[21] Daniel J. Gute, "The Great Community: A Pathway from Diversity to Unity," in *A Heart for the Community: New Models for Urban and Suburban Ministry*, eds. John Fuder and Noel Castellanos (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009), 373-376.

examination and outside themselves through relationship building, training, and the acquisition of new skills.

Collaborative Models in Fields outside Ministry

Healthcare

Collaboration in the field of healthcare is becoming increasingly more imperative due to many challenges, including rising healthcare costs, access to care, changing demographics, increased demand for quality, and increased regulations. The Joint Commission, an independent not-for-profit organization that certifies more than 20,500 health care organizations and programs across the United States, requires healthcare organizations to implement certain collaborative practices in order to obtain accreditation. According to Lori Fewster-Thuente and Barbara Velso-Friedrich, The Joint Commission reports that "almost 70 percent of patient adverse events cite the lack of collaboration and communication between providers as a main cause of error."[22] In fact, in a study by the Patient Safety Culture and Teamwork it was found that "almost all nurses surveyed felt that communication and collaboration were at par with skill."[23] A person might have great skills and intellect but because of a lack of socialization skills and training in how to work successfully with others could be more of a detriment than a help.

G.P. Mays, P.K. Halverson, and A.D. Kalunzny studied 60 local community health alliances or collaborative ventures and discovered three types. They describe (1)

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[22] Lori Fewster-Thuente and Barbara Velsor-Friedrich, "Interdisciplinary Collaboration for Healthcare Professionals." *Nursing Administration Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (2008), 40.

[23] Fewster-Thuente and Velsor-Friedrich, "Interdisciplinary Collaboration for Healthcare Professionals," 45.

opportunistic alliances which exist so members can gain knowledge from one another in order to follow their own interests; (2) dependency alliances that allow members to share costs and other necessities; and (3) stakeholder alliances where members work toward a common purpose collaboratively. They argue that "stakeholder alliances where members seek to achieve a common outcome from their collaborative efforts…are the most difficult to develop and maintain because of the need to achieve consensus about core mission and goals."[24]

Obviously there are many barriers to successful collaboration in the field of healthcare. Hansen lists several possible barriers including lack of time, inability to work as a team, territorial and entitlement thinking, hierarchical thinking, lack of trust or commitment, fear of punishment, and lack of support from above.[25] Axelsson and Axelsson point out cultural differences, structural and administrative barriers, rules and regulations of the organization, and differing attitudes and values. Furthermore, they go on to argue that much of the research on collaboration in the field of healthcare has focused on these barriers and difficulties; thus, this has "led to a negative and rather pessimistic view of interprofessional and other forms of collaboration."[26]

Collaborative ventures in healthcare can only be effective when those involved share a common vision and purpose. In any organization competition exists and knowledge gives people power over others; thus, there can be a compulsion among leaders to stockpile knowledge rather than to share it. This results in territorial behavior.

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[24] G.P. Mays, P.K. Halverson and A.D. Kaluzny, "Collaboration to Improve Community Health: Trends and Alternative Methods." *The Joint Commission Journal on Quality Improvement* 24, no. 10 (October 1998), 524-525.

[25] Hansen, "Healthcare Collaboration," 33-34.

[26] Axelsson and Axelsson, "From Territoriality to Altruism," 320-321.

Axelsson and Axelsson explain how "tribal wars" or "turf battles" are created as professional groups are "motivated by material rewards and privileges." Conflicts are birthed by establishing "strong professional territories … striving for 'jurisdiction' over their field of work," and pushing for "dominance over other professions within the same field and clear boundaries against those professions."[27] Professional and organizational territoriality can stand in opposition to collaborative efforts. Axelsson and Axelsson acknowledge, "In order to collaborate across professional boundaries, the professional groups must be able to see beyond their own interests and even be willing to give up parts of their territories if necessary" in order to meet the needs of the community or to solve the problem being addressed.[28]

Van Roekel worked directly with a metropolitan hospital offering healthcare services to the people of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Her goal was to help create one harmonious Critical Care Practice Area out of three physical units and staff. Improved continuity of care, improved employee satisfaction, and improved teamwork were three principles that guided the process toward greater collaboration. Van Roekel was adamant that "involving staff in every step helps them to gain insight into the benefits that can lead to a successful conclusion, bringing about effective and lasting change."[29] Therefore, staff were called upon to develop a plan to bring the three Critical Care Units together. Informational meetings were held, interested staff recruited, and even paid time was offered for those who would help develop the plan.

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[27] Axelsson and Axelsson, "From Territoriality to Altruism," 321.

[28] Axelsson and Axelsson, "From Territoriality to Altruism," 324.

[29] Van Roekel, "Critical Care Practice Area," 23.

After many meetings and conversations among the staff and those who would be affected by the changes a plan was put in place which included a combined Critical Care budget and staff roster, greater mentoring of the next generation of Critical Care nurses, increased communication and relationships between the three units, and greater collaboration and cooperation between staff. Van Roekel admits that everything was certainly not perfect but the effectiveness of the Critical Care Unit was increased due to: (1) one person being aware of everything happening on all three units; (2) one call was required for patient placement and staffing; (3) resources could be shared between units; (4) multidisciplinary rounds were established; and (5) number and seriousness of patients were spread out across the three units leading to greater care rather than one unit being overwhelmed.[30]

In 2008, a large health system in Minnesota asked for a formal review of how a collaborative approach to chemical dependency treatment services (including Austin Medical Center, Family Focus, Fountain Centers, and others) might benefit patients and the organizations involved. A work group was formed, known as the "Chemical Dependency Work Group," to research the possibilities and ramifications. Jerome T. Ehn describes the process and conclusions this work group arrived at concerning the advantages of a collaborative relationship between organizations connected to chemical dependency treatment including both counselor led and medical model programs. These included: (1) a more seamless system of care for patients eliminating duplicate testing, repeated gathering of information, and other administrative tasks; (2) shared assessments, data collection, and a holistic treatment plan; (3) patients moving more easily between

[30] Van Roekel, "Critical Care Practice Area," 77.

levels of care leading to increased success in treatment; (4) common treatment plans promoting continuity of care as each level of care built upon the tools and skills shared in the previous level; (5) a sharing of resources in a time of reduced budgets; (6) helping build quality care leading to greater access of outside resources, (7) keeping costs down; (8) an increased ability to respond to market changes; (9) generating the critical mass necessary to provide the number of clinical supervisors needed; and (10) creating a supportive work environment, attracting high-level professionals.[31]

Findings led to launching a plan for implementing collaboration between those organizations involved. This led to positive results for both patients and the organizations, as well as greater interaction between counselor led programs and the medical model program. This resulted in three of the programs in the health system working together on a "research program looking at how a medication used to reduce cravings could impact the counseling sessions, hopefully increasing abstinence rates."[32] The benefits of collaboration have been embraced and there is approval to move forward in collaborative efforts.

The benefits of collaboration in healthcare are not only being discovered in the United States. Axelsson and Axelsson write about a number of experiments in Sweden focused on collaboration. They specifically address a program called SocSam which called for collaboration between different agencies and professionals around vocational rehabilitation for individuals with physical, mental, psychiatric disorders, and a history of drug abuse. The collaborative effort included the local offices of Employment Services

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[31] Jerome T. Ehn, "Benefits of Collaboration in Substance Use Treatment" (Master's thesis, Bethel University, 2008), 36-40.

[32] Ehn, "Benefits of Collaboration in Substance Use Treatment," 54.

and the Social Insurance Administration, the Regional Health Authority, and the Municipal Social Services. Writing about the success of this collaborative healthcare venture, Axelsson and Axelsson describe how the many different professionals involved, including physicians, nurses, physiotherapists, psychologists, economists, lawyers and social workers, realized over time the vast competences embodied in the multidisciplinary teams and how together more could be accomplished for the patients. The authors describe how the group discovered, "By meeting these patients or clients together, it has been possible to avoid them being sent around the different agencies in a vicious circle. It has also become clear to more and more professionals that they can supplement each other in different aspects of rehabilitation and also learn a lot from each other."[33] The collaborative efforts of so many different professionals led to a more holistic vision of rehabilitation and resulted in greater benefit for the patients or clients.

The need for collaboration is being realized and having a positive effect throughout the field of healthcare. At the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania "nursing leaders and clinical caregivers are involved in decision making that initiates changes through shared governance and interdisciplinary work groups" leading to increased performance and effectiveness.[34] On the other side of the globe, in rural Zambia, community health workers, traditional birth attendants, and Neighborhood Health Committees have teamed together to provide essential newborn and care for

[33] Axelsson and Axelsson, "From Territoriality to Altruism," 327.

[34] Sandra L. Dietrich, Terese M. Kornet, Diane R. Lawson, Katherine Major, Linda May, Victoria L. Rich, and Elizabeth Riley-Wasserman, "Collaboration to Partnerships." *Nursing Administration Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (2010), 49.

children 0-59 months.[35] In a time of increased and complex challenges, many leaders from across disciplines are finding themselves requiring new skill sets to face increased challenges and are discovering many tasks beyond their individual capabilities. The new skill set needed must include greater collaboration skills as individuals across the discipline combine their expertise to combat existing complexities.

Education

Collaboration is also becoming increasingly more imperative in the field of education. Schools are faced with decreased funding and budget cuts, increased class sizes, a growing number of students living in poverty, the breakdown of the family and increasing lack of parental involvement, rapidly changing technologies, increased student health issues including obesity, an increasing need for specialized knowledge and continuing education, and high stake testing. Education has realized a need for students in the 21st century to not merely be conduits for information, but individuals capable of analyzing, synthesizing, and applying what they have learned to address new problems and create solutions.

Federal and State governments have found collaboration to be so important for student success that guidelines and expectations have been established and implemented across education. For example, in 2007 the Iowa Department of Education developed the Iowa Professional Development Model, "requiring educators to engage in practitioner collaboration and peer reviews" working "collectively at improving the teaching and

[35] Kojo Yeboah-Antwi, Gail Snetro-Plewman, Karen Z Waltensperger, Davidson H. Hamer, Chilobe Kambikambi, William MacLeod, Stephen Filumba, Bias Sichamba, and David Marsh, "Measuring Teamwork and Taskwork of Community-Based 'Teams' Delivering Life-Saving Health Interventions in rural Zambia: a Qualitative Study." *BMC Medical Research Methodology* 13 (2013).

leadership practice" in order to improve learning for all students.[36] Federal Head Start legislation has led to State Collaboration Offices being established in all fifty states. Public Law 110-134 *Improving Head Start for School Readiness*, established in 2007, requires the governor of every State "to establish or designate an early childhood education and care advisory council to address issues of collaboration, coordination, alignment, quality, and availability of early care and education services."[37] In the field of special education several legislative mandates including The Handicapped Act and Public Law 94-142 have "required student evaluation by a multidisciplinary team. This law shifted the primary decision-making role in special education placements from the school psychologist to a team of persons that included parents, teachers, administrators, medical personnel, social workers, and counselors."[38]

Furthermore, the emphasis on collaboration has influenced higher education. Adrianna Kezar looked at the number of educators on college and university campuses who understand the need for collaboration to combat dwindling resources, state mandated reforms requiring collaborative work, federal guidelines concerning improved student retention, and other issues facing education, but due to institutional structures and cultures find collaboration difficult. Kezar attempts to answer the question, "How can colleges and universities move from bureaucratic structures and siloed disciplinary units

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[36] Iowa Department of Education, "Extended Guidance on Practitioner Collaboration and Peer Review," accessed September 4, 2014, https://www.educateiowa.gov/documents/newsroom/2013/06/2013-01-25-extended-guidance-practitioner-collaboration-and-peer-review.

[37] Nebraska Department of Education, "Head Start State Collaboration Office: Building and Bridging Systems in Early Care and Education," accessed August 31, 2014, http://www.education.ne.gov/oec/hssco.html.

[38] Sharon S. Coben, Carol Chase Thomas, Robert O. Sattler, and Catherine Voelker Morsink, "Meeting the Challenge of Consultation and Collaboration: Developing Interactive Teams." *Journal of Learning Disabilities* 30, No. 4 (July/August 1997), 427.

to an organizational context that supports collaboration?"[39] Looking at four institutions which had been effective in building a culture of collaboration, he discovered several features considered essential to successful collaboration including three that Kezar determined to be paramount: mission, networks, and integrating structures. Mission statements included the importance of collaboration and were student-centered, networks of relationships built around trust and mutual support were already in place before attempting collaborative projects, and each campus in the study had a unit whose job it was to ensure that people and departments across campus were working together. Furthermore, those involved met "the cognitive complexity needed to overcome barriers that emerge within the redesigned system," continually improving and fostering collaborative efforts.[40]

Ann E. Austin and Roger G. Baldwin discuss the increase in college faculty partnering with colleagues in teaching, research, and writing, as well as the important role administrators play in fostering a collaborative environment by rewarding such efforts. They explain that when faculty collaborate around their teaching "three kinds of benefits occur: development of their teaching ability, new intellectual stimulation, and a closer connection to the university or college as a community."[41] Showing statistically how collaborative scholarship has grown exponentially over the last fifty years, they also argue that "academics are moving from a mode of self-reliance to a mode of multi-purpose assistance," enlivening classrooms, creating new products, and opening minds to

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[39] Adrianna Kezar, "Moving From I To We: Reorganizing for Collaboration in Higher Education." *Change* (November/December 2005), 52.

[40] Kezar, "Moving From I To We," 54.

[41] Ann E. Austin and Roger G. Baldwin, "Faculty Collaboration: Enhancing the Quality of Scholarship and Teaching. *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report* 7 (1991), 41.

new perspectives on teaching or research.[42] There are issues to work out such as fair distribution of credit for work that is co-authored, how to evaluate collaborative research and teaching, and how to uphold a culture that breeds collaboration. Nevertheless collaborative efforts are growing across academia.

The need for collaboration is being realized throughout the field of education. Northern Arizona University is bringing together the Cline Library, the E-Learning Center, the Office of Academic Assessment, Faculty Development, the University Assessment Committee, and the Liberal Studies Committee to develop and facilitate a development program for over 1,100 faculty members.[43] On the other side of the globe, in Ghana, large-scale educational reform projects focusing on curriculum development are bringing together international and local organizations, representing leaders from different cultures, to develop curriculum that is culturally sensitive and sustainable.[44] Collaborative efforts are having a positive effect on education. When teachers, administrators, counselors, and other members of the educational institution work together, students have increased opportunities for success and leaders are stimulated, enriched, and developed.

Effective Collaborative Ministry Practices

The founder of the Methodist Church, John Wesley, explains in his sermon, "Catholic Spirit,"

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[42] Ann E. Austin and Roger G. Baldwin, *Faculty Collaboration*, 3.

[43] Thomas W. Paradis and Kathleen L. Smalldon, "Unite and Conquer: A Collaborative Approach to Faculty Development." *Assessment Update* 19, No. 1 (January-February 2007), 6.

[44] Chantal J. Gervedink Nijhuis, Joke M. Voogt, and Jules M. Pieters, "The Cultural Complexity of International Collaboration: Conditions for Sustainable Curriculum Development in Ghana." *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 36 (2012), 647-648.

> 'Tis very possible that many good men now also may entertain peculiar opinions…And 'tis certain, so long as "we know" but "in part", that all men will not see things alike. It is an unavoidable consequence of the present weakness and shortness of human understanding that several men will be of several minds, in religion as well as in common life. So it has been from the beginning of the world, and so it will be "till the restitution of all things".[45]

Though they may "entertain peculiar opinions," Wesley calls for Christians to look inward at their relationship with Jesus Christ. He challenges Christians to reflect on their relationship with Christ, whether or not they are focused on things that are eternal or temporal, if they are walking by faith and not by sight, if their heart is right with God, if they are striving to serve God, if their heart is right toward their neighbor, and if their will is to do the will of the Father "which art in heaven".

Wesley believed that if Christians were to be one with each other in the faith, regardless of their differences, they must have their hearts right with God. Wesley argued that one who has his or her heart right with God cannot help but love those who also have their hearts right with God. He writes,

> He is the man of a truly catholic spirit who bears all these continually upon his heart, who having an unspeakable tenderness for their persons, and longing for their welfare, does not cease to commend them to God in prayer, as well as to plead their cause before men; who speaks comfortably to them, and labours by all his words to strengthen their hands in God. He assists them to the uttermost of his power in all things, spiritual and temporal. He is ready 'to spend and be spent for them'; yea, 'to lay down his life for' their sake.[46]

Though Wesley does not use the word "collaboration," he calls for a "Catholic" spirit, a collaborative spirit, as men and women focus on the fact that they are children of God and fellow-heirs of the eternal Kingdom. As Christ laid down His life for them, they are

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[45] John Wesley, "Catholic Spirit," in *The Sermons of John Wesley: A Collection for the Christian Journey,* ed. Kenneth J. Collins and Jason E. Vickers (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2013), 423.

[46] Wesley, "Catholic Spirit," 430.

called to lay down their lives for one another. Recognizing one another as children of God, one of many whom Christ died for, men and women can come together putting aside their differences for the joint purpose of serving God, loving neighbor, and building the Kingdom.

Many churches have adopted "a Catholic Spirt" and are working together with other churches and non-profits as well as secular organizations collaboratively in ministry and mission. The church and other organizations learn from one another and together become more effective in ministry. Cardinal Roger Mahony states, "The ministers of the church will have much to learn from the skills of collaboration developed in business, education, and other arenas of life." Mahony further states that leaders in secular arenas of life also have much to learn from the Church community "about the deeper communion of life we all share and the sacred quality of all persons."[47] As collaborators, churches and organizations come together recognizing that they are not separate entities but interdependent, each having gifts to offer in working toward solutions to today's complex problems.

In Chicago, Illinois, the Christian Community Development Association (CCDA), which grew out of Lawndale Community Church, has impacted the community of Lawndale through the power of collaborative ministry and mission. Wayne L. Gordon, founding pastor of Lawndale Community Church and President of the CCDA writes, "We cannot do all the development in a large community like Lawndale. With fifty thousand residents, a small church is clearly unable to bring about the kinds of systemic

[47] Roger Mahony, "Priests and Laity: Mutual Empowerment," A pastoral letter (undated), quoted in Loughlan Sofield and Carroll Juliano, *Collaboration: Uniting Our Gifts in Ministry* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2000), 40.

change that is needed for our neighborhoods to be sustainable and see the quality of life improved."[48]

Yet, through collaborative efforts, Lawndale Community Church and the CCDA have seen thousands in the community on the West Side of Chicago impacted. Partnering together with ten other churches they have built forty units of affordable rental housing in the Lawndale community. Partnering with the Chicago Housing Authority, local real estate developers, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation, United Power for Action and Justice, the McArthur Foundation, and the local Industrial Areas Foundation, the CCDA has helped many within the Lawndale community become first-time home owners, establish local businesses, find affordable housing, and receive college educations. Working with multiple organizations and local government they have rehabbed dozens of abandoned buildings. At one point in their history they partnered with twenty-five other churches to build more than two hundred affordable houses for ownership.[49]

Noel Castellanos, having also served on the board of CCDA and writing about collaborative ministry taking place in Chicago, asserts, "The task of seeing the Kingdom of God reign in our city can never be accomplished by any one great church or by any one visionary pastor. It will take the entire body of Christ working together to see the gospel truly impact our city. It will also take great humility to admit our need for one another."[50] Castellanos finds dozens of inspiring examples in Chicago of leaders willing

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[48] Wayne L. Gordon, "Gentrification: The Good News and the Bad News," in *A Heart for the Community: New Models for Urban and Suburban Ministry*, eds. John Fuder and Noel Castellanos (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009), 42.

[49] Gordon, "Gentrification: The Good News and the Bad News," 39-49.

[50] Noel Castellanos, "Working Together to Restore our Communities: Networking and Collaboration," in *A Heart for the Community: New Models for Urban and Suburban Ministry*, ed. John Fuder and Noel Castellanos (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009), 51.

to lay down their differences, focus on relationships, and partner together to make a difference. The Chicago Pastor's Alliance pulls leaders together, helping them network with one another and receive training on various topics. River City Community Church and New Life Covenant Assemblies of God have partnered together, recognizing their distinct gifts, to impact the Humboldt Park community. The Nehemiah Project brings together urban youth workers. Neighbors Against Gang Violence works with churches, police, schools, parents, the social science department of the University of Chicago, and gang members themselves to impact youth violence. Castellanos writes, "When we seek to build the Kingdom of God, instead of only being concerned with our own kingdom and organization, good things happen." He continues, "When our true motivation is for God to be glorified, it becomes less important that our name is mentioned, or that we get credit for some joint effort. The important thing is that people's lives are touched, that Christ is proclaimed, and that a strong witness to the Lordship of Christ is demonstrated."[51]

In Florida, a collaborative project, Churches United to Stop HIV (CUSH), has been designed to provide HIV/AIDS education and training to faith-based organizations. In the first six years, CUSH provided HIV prevention services to over 32,000 people, took 2,850 faith leaders through trainings, conducted HIV counseling for 825 people, and provided technical assistance for 48 churches. CUSH has added to "the growing body of evidence supporting collaborations between faith and public health."[52] In fact, one study centered on the Central Appalachian community in eastern Kentucky and southern West Virginia found that "the communal setting of worship as an informal resource of access

[51] Castellanos, "Working Together to Restore our Communities," 58-60.

[52] Lisa L. Agate, D'Mrtri Cato-Watson, Jolene M. Mullins, Gloria S. Scott, Vanice Rolle, Donna Markland, and David L. Roach, "Churches United to Stop HIV (CUSH): A Faith-Based HIV Prevention Initative." *Journal of the National Medical Association* 97, no. 7 (July 2005), 625.

to a community of believers, especially the highly vulnerable, may be the most viable model of religion-health partnerships."[53] Partnerships between faith communities and healthcare provide opportunities for health promotion activities, reaching more people with vital health information through the indigenous networks already established.

Though often independent and autonomous bodies, Baptist churches are coming together collaboratively in ministry and mission. In Putnam County, Tennessee, twenty-six Baptist churches worked together in a local mass feeding effort called "Feeding of the Multitude" in which 14,000 people were fed a hot meal on the Tuesday prior to Thanksgiving. In Barre, Vermont, the Green Mountain Baptist Association focuses on helping churches develop individual strategies in three areas: (1) encouraging visionary leadership, (2) engaging the culture with the gospel, and (3) igniting spiritual passions. Over the last ten years, as they have learned from one another, membership and baptisms within the churches involved in the association have doubled and attendance in Sunday morning worship and Sunday school has increased threefold. Eight churches in Cookeville, Tennessee joined together to rent out the local gym for a joint Easter service attended by several thousand people. Several churches in Smith County, Tennessee came together as a mission team to travel to a Native American reservation in Montana to teach Vacation Bible School.[54]

Closer to this researcher's home, Salisbury Urban Ministries, in Salisbury, Maryland, is an example of collaborative relationships among churches making an impact

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[53] Mary Rado Simpson and Marilyn Givens King, "'God Brought All These Churches Together': Issus Developing Religion-Health Partnerships in an Appalachian Community." *Public Health Nursing* 16, no. 1 (February 1999), 48.

[54] John Timothy Frank, "Cooperation: Churches Working Together Through the Local Baptist Association for Maximum Kingdom Ministry" (DMin, Liberty Theological Seminary, 2012), 53-61.

on the community. Salisbury Urban Ministries' mission is "to develop and implement programs that serve and minister to the needs of materially impoverished people and to promote concern for racial understanding and appreciation of all people regardless of their economic condition."[55] The governing board, or Parish Council, includes representatives from eight covenant congregations. Along with those congregations, dozens of other churches help Salisbury Urban Ministries touch lives through a feeding program, children's after-school program, financial assistance program, and community education by providing both financial resources, facilities, and volunteers.

Schaller explains that for decades the church was reluctant to move into areas of ministry where they were needed. Secular organizations had to fill the need by creating support groups for alcoholics, persons going through divorce, parents experiencing the death of a child, victims of child abuse, recovering drug addicts, and dozens of similar societal hurts. Lyle E. Schaller writes, "The entrance of the churches into this area of ministry has silenced many of the critics who were pointing out the growing irrelevance of the churches."[56] Collaboration between churches and between churches and other secular organizations can and are creating programs and opportunities for healing and transformation that could not have formed in isolation. In Colorado churches, para-church organizations, adoption agencies, Focus on the Family, and the Colorado

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[55] Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church, "Salisbury Urban Ministries," *Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church*, accessed October 2, 2014, http://www.pen-del.org/agencies/category/1.

[56] Lyle E. Schaller, *Innovations in Ministry: Models for the 21st Century* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1994), 33-34.

Department of Social Services have collaborated to reduce the number of children waiting for adoption from nearly 800 in late 2008 to only 365 in early 2010.[57]

Furthermore, collaboration may be the future salvation of the church. Schaller suggests that in order to deal with this growing number of small, declining congregations, "a larger, strong, and outreach-oriented congregation" should be asked to take them over and "help them (a) define a new constituency and (b) formulate a ministry plan to reach that new constituency."[58] Collaborative relationships have the potential to bring new life to small, declining congregations, as well as create community partnerships that lead to societal transformation.

Summary

During the Catholic Church's Bishop's Conference of England and Wales in 1995 a report was given stating, "Collaborative ministry is ministry committed to mission. It is not simply concerned with the internal life of the church. Rather, it shows to the world the possibility of transformation, of community, and of unity within diversity.[59] In fact, the Catholic bishops of Florida put out a statement in 1991 declaring adamantly, "In the service of God one does not work alone but in collaboration with many others. Self-sufficient attitudes, individualism, the lack of mutual collaboration and inability to

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[57] Marc Andreas, "Church and State Working Together for Orphans," Capital Commentary. Accessed October 2, 2014. www.capitalcommentary.org/orphans/church-and-state-working-together-orphans.

[58] Schaller, *Innovations in Ministry,* 106.

[59] Bishop's Conference of England and Wales, "The Sign We Give: Report from the Working Party on Collaborative Ministry" (September 1995), quoted in Loughlan Sofield, ST and Carroll Juliano, SHCJ, *Collaboration: Uniting Our Gifts In Ministry* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2000), 46.

dialogue do not reflect the image of Christ and his message and result in ineffective ministry."[60] Charles Colson echoes such sentiment exclaiming,

> The message is clear. The world isn't looking at our tracts and rallies and telecasts and study manuals. It is looking at us and how we behave. When it fails to see the unity of Jesus' followers – the church – it fails to see the validation that Christ is indeed the Son of the living God.[61]

Many leaders, across denominations, have reached the conclusion that collaboration is not only necessary to reach a hurting world filled with complex problems, but is a biblical mandate and a vital witness. More importantly, collaboration is a reflection of the image and character of God.

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[60] Catholic Bishops of Florida, "Pastoral Letter to the Laity" (May 19, 1991), quoted in Loughlan Sofield, ST and Carroll Juliano, SHCJ, *Collaboration: Uniting Our Gifts In Ministry* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2000), 47.

[61] Charles Colson with Ellen Santilli Vaughn, *The Body* (Dallas, TX: Word Publishing, 1992), 103.

CHAPTER FOUR: PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH METHODS

Data and Methodology

Nature of the Research

The problem this project addressed is the need for effective collaborative ministry between small established congregations on multi-point Charges in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church. The project was executed by tackling five subproblems. Subproblems one, two, and three were addressed between the winter and summer of 2014 through review and analysis of the relevant literature, both secular and religious. Subproblem four was addressed in the fall of 2014 through case study research of three United Methodist Charges in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference recognized by Conference leadership for their collaborative ministries and missions. The primary tools used to gather information: (1) face-to-face interviews with the pastor and key representatives from the laity, (2) multiple site visits and personal observations, (3) church-produced documents, and (4) open-ended questionnaires (Appendix B).

Subproblem Four

The fourth subproblem was to observe and study examples of effective collaborative ministry between small established congregations on multi-point Charges in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church. This researcher determined that a qualitative approach was most appropriate, looking at the phenomenon

from the participants' point of view. This researcher's plan of inquiry was consistent with John Creswell's definition of qualitative research. Creswell states, "Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting."[1] Following Paul Leedy and Jeanne Ormrod's teaching about qualitative methods, this researcher planned to immerse himself by interacting with participants to discover patterns in the data to help explain how the United Methodist Charges studied became effective in collaborative efforts.[2] The goal would be to understand the situation from the participant's point of view. This is called, according to Dawson R. Hancock and Bob Algozzine, "the *emic*, or insider's perspective, as opposed to the *etic*, or outsider's perspective."[3]

The next step for this researcher was to determine the qualitative approach most appropriate for tackling the type of research question being asked. According to Robert Yin, having defined the research question as a "how" or "why" question that deals with not only historical but contemporary events over which the researcher has little or no control points toward case study research as the most appropriate method of inquiry.[4] Furthermore, Hancock and Algozzine explain that a case study is "exploratory more than

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[1] John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1998), 15.

[2] Paul D. Leedy and Jeanne Ellis Ormrod, *Practical Research: Planning and Design,* 7th Ed. (Columbus, Ohio: Merrill Prentice Hall, 2001).

[3] Dawson R. Hancock and Bob Algozzine, *Doing Case Study Research: A Practical Guide for Beginning Researchers* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2006), 8.

[4] Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014), 14.

confirmatory; that is, the case study research normally seeks to identify themes or categories of behavior and events rather than prove relationships or test hypotheses."[5] The goal is to identify behaviors that may have helped lead the Charges studied into an effective collaborative relationship. Whether or not these principles or components for creating collaborative ministry and mission are generalizable to other settings would be determined by those who would later review and apply this researcher's findings. Sharan Merriam explains, "The original inquirer cannot know the sites to which transferability might be sought, but the appliers can and do. The investigator needs to provide 'sufficient descriptive data' to make transferability possible."[6] The applier (the one reading the research and attempting to apply it to their setting) would determine which principles would or would not work in the multi-point Charge they serve.

This researcher found Yin's twofold definition of case study helpful. First, Yin defines case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident."[7] This researcher investigated "a contemporary phenomenon" which related to the Charges in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church doing effective collaborative ministry. This researcher investigated the "phenomenon . . . within its real-world context" by traveling to the Charges being studied, meeting with the people involved, and observing the collaborative ministry in its natural setting. This researcher

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[5] Hancock and Algozzine, *Doing Case Study Research,* 33.

[6] Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 224-225.

[7] Yin, *Case Study Research,* 16.

investigated a "phenomenon" in which the "boundaries between the phenomenon and context" are not "evident." It was not evident to the outside observer what principles or practices had been essential and necessary in building effective collaboration. Such contextual conditions were not obvious and had to be drawn out by the researcher.

The case study typically focuses on an individual representative, organization, or phenomenon. The researcher approaches the subject in its natural context and through a variety of sources is able to describe vividly what is occurring. Sharan Merriam describes the benefits of case study stating,

> The researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Since understanding is the goal of this research, the human instrument, which is able to be immediately responsive and adaptive, would seem to be the ideal means of collecting and analyzing data. Other advantages are that the researcher can expand his or her understanding through nonverbal as well as verbal communication, process information (data) immediately, clarify and summarize material, check with respondents for accuracy of interpretation, and explore unusual or unanticipated responses.[8]

In a case study approach the researcher recognizes his or her biases but "rather than trying to eliminate these biases or 'subjectivities,' it is important to identify them and monitor them as to how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of data."[9]

A case study approach would take into account the complexity of each United Methodist Charge and the countless variables including heritage, traditions, community, leadership, resources, and location, as the researcher immerses him or herself in the setting, describing it in detail. Furthermore, a case study approach would pull together converging lines of inquiry, making the conclusions "more convincing and accurate"

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[8] Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 15.

[9] Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 15.

because those conclusions will be based on "several different sources of information, following a similar convergence."[10]

The case study design would be descriptive. Merriam explains that the researcher produces a "rich, 'thick' description of the phenomenon under study."[11] The primary goal would be instrumental as the researcher tries to better understand how effective collaborative ministry was developed on the multi-point Charges studied. The case study would be explanatory as it seeks to identify factors in the church, community, and leadership that helped encourage collaborative ministry.

This next step was to determine if a single-case or multiple-case study would be conducted and to select the setting(s) to be studied. Because of observations published by Yin, this researcher selected a multiple-case study. Yin states, "To begin with, even with two cases, you have the possibility of direct replication. Analytic conclusions independently arising from two cases, as with two experiments, will be more powerful than those coming from a single case (or single experiment) alone."[12] Therefore, the four District Superintendents representing the four Districts in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church were each contacted and asked to provide the names of several pastors who were doing effective collaborative ministry and mission. Such ministry was defined as "churches that work together utilizing resources and personnel from the respective churches in a way that accomplishes ministry and enhances the spirit of unity present in Kingdom work."[13] A list of thirteen pastors or

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[10] Yin, *Case Study Research,* 120.

[11] Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 43.

[12] Yin, *Case Study Research,* 64.

[13] Derrick Porter, interview by author, Wilmington, Delaware, August 19, 2014.

Charges was received. Each pastor was emailed asking for a brief summary of collaborative ministry and mission taking place across their Charge and the reason behind the request.

Yin argues, "You need sufficient access to the data for your potential case – whether to interview people, review documents or records, or make field observations. Given such access to more than a single candidate case, you should choose the case(s) that will most likely illuminate your research questions."[14] Of the nine pastors who responded, three were chosen. Geographical location did affect those chosen for the study as this researcher believed it important for several different Districts and communities across the Peninsula-Delaware Conference to be represented. Furthermore, each pastor was asked a single question, "Could you tell me about how your churches are working together collaboratively?"

As each pastor answered the question concerning collaborative ventures on their Charge, this researcher listened with three questions in mind. First, are there multiple ministries or missions being done collaboratively across the Charge? Secondly, are collaborative ministries and missions impacting not just the congregations on the Charge but the surrounding community? Thirdly, is the pastor enthusiastic about collaborative ministry and mission, and does he or she show a willingness to participate in the study? Bill Gillham describes the researcher not as "a detached scientist but a participant observer who acknowledges (and looks out for) their role in what they discover."[15] Recognizing in qualitative research, the researcher brings his or her own experience to

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[14] Yin, *Case Study Research*, 28.

[15] Bill Gillham, *Case Study Research Methods* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 7.

the research and is a part of the research, the previous three questions were developed out of this researcher's personal experiences on a three-point Charge. With an idea of what constituted effective collaboration in ministry and mission these questions were used as a means of screening which United Methodist Charges would be studied.

Based on the answers to these three questions, three Charges were chosen for case studies. These Charges were: (1) the Lewes Charge comprised of Faith UMC and Israel UMC in Lewes, Delaware, (2) the Nanticoke-Westside Charge comprised of Nanticoke UMC, Bivalve UMC, and Tyaskin UMC in Nanticoke, Maryland, and (3) the Cecilton United Methodist Parish comprised of St. Paul's UMC and Zion UMC in Cecilton, Maryland. These Charges represent the Dover, Salisbury, and Wilmington Districts in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference respectively.

Prior to meeting with the three pastors chosen for the study a literature review around the topic of qualitative approaches to research helped with the development of questions for interviewing and open-ended surveys. Developing effective interview questions, an interview guide, around one's research topic is essential for a successful case study. A.A. Campbell explains that interviewing "is by no means an infallible instrument: the freedom of response which it permits can lead to ambiguity rather than clarity. The successful use of this technique requires precise and thoughtful formulation of questions and careful, intelligent interviewing."[16] In fact, William Foddy describes a study by William Belson that analyzed questions from 2140 questionnaires developed by twenty-four researchers. It was discovered "in presenting variants of the six most

[16] A.A. Campbell, "Two Problems in the Use of the Open Question," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 40 (1945), quoted in William Foddy, *Constructing Questions for Interviews and Questionaires: Theory and Practice in Social Research*, 135. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

frequently occurring types of questions – all were misunderstood by 42 percent and more than half were misunderstood by over 70 percent."[17] This researcher had to take into account Belson's sixteen categories of difficult questions in developing the interview questions for the study (Appendix C).

Creating effective research questions is "one of the most crucial components to interview design," explains Daniel W. Turner. Turner writes, "Researchers desiring to conduct such an investigation should be careful that each of the questions will allow the examiner to dig deep into the experiences and/or knowledge of the participants in order to gain maximum data from the interviews."[18] Creswell offers suggestions for writing qualitative research questions. He suggests, "These questions are open-ended, evolving, and nondirectional; restate the purpose of the study in more specific terms; start with words such as 'what' or 'how' rather than 'why'; and are few in number (five to seven). They are posed in various forms, from the 'grand tour' that asks, 'Tell me about yourself,' to more specific questions."[19]

This researcher began to consider the types of interview questions that should be asked in order to hear the "life world" of those who are actively engaging their congregations in effective and sustainable change. Steinar Kvale's types of interview questions were helpful in formulating interview questions to draw out the voices of these local architects of change (Appendix D).

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[17] William Foddy, *Constructing Questions for Interviews and Questionnaires* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 51.

[18] Daniel W. Turner, III, "Qualitative Interview Design: A Practical Guide for Novice Investigators, *The Qualitative Report* 15.3 (May 2010): 754-760.

[19] Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 99.

Five questions with sub-questions were developed that would serve as the foundation for this researcher's interview guide, as well as open-ended surveys. Standardized questions were personalized for each Charge (e.g. Nanticoke-Westside Parish). The initial interview guide read as follows:

1. Describe in detail the many collaborative ministries, missions, and committees across the Nanticoke-Westside Parish.
    a. Can you explain in more detail how Nanticoke, Bivalve, and Tyaskin are working together?
2. Describe how you believe individuals from Nanticoke, Bivalve, and Tyaskin feel about working together collaboratively.
    a. Do you perceive many in the congregation to be excited to work together?
    b. Have you experienced some across the Nanticoke-Westside Parish who have been hesitant or fearful to work together?
3. How has collaboration been encouraged and communicated across the Nanticoke-Westside Parish?
    a. By your pastor?
    b. Other leadership?
4. Describe in detail a time Nanticoke, Bivalve, and Tyaskin worked together.
    a. Effectively.
    b. Not very effectively.
5. What do you believe are the three (3) most important things that must happen, that need to be in place, for effective collaboration to happen between churches?
    a. Why do you believe that to be important? Can you explain further?
    b. Can you give an example of where you experienced this across the Charge?

A semi-structured interview method would be used. K. Louise Barriball and Alison explain,

> Semi-structured interviews are well suited for the exploration of the perceptions and opinions of respondents regarding complex and sometimes sensitive issues and enable probing for more information and clarification of answers…The opportunities to change the words but not the meaning of questions provided by a semistructured interview schedule acknowledges that not every

> word has the same meaning to every respondent and not every respondent uses the same vocabulary[20]

Therefore, the interview guide would be used cautiously. Irving Seidman explains, "If interviewers decide to use an interview guide, they must avoid manipulating their participants to respond to it," allowing the interviewee to reconstruct his or her own experience.[21]

The first step in the research involved arranging meetings with the three pastors whom had been chosen for their collaborative efforts across their Charges. At each meeting the researcher (a) conducted personal interviews with the pastor, (b) obtained relevant documents including past records and reports on the specific ministries or missions being accomplished collaboratively across the Charge, (c) made preliminary observations of the ministry or mission being done collaboratively, and (d) determined names of lay leadership within the churches involved in collaborative ministry or mission. Through the pastor, further on-site visits were scheduled or the completion of open-ended surveys requested.

A major strength of case study research is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence. Multiple sources of data are collected with the expectation that they will bring to the surface overarching themes. This is called triangulation. As Yin points out, when the researcher has "really triangulated the data, the case study's findings will have been supported by more than a single source of evidence" and "by developing

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[20] K. Louise Barriball and Allison While, "Collecting Data using a Semi-Structured Interview: A Discussion Paper," *Journal of Advance Nursing* 19 (1994), 330.

[21] Irving Seidman, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research: A Guide for Researchers in Education and the Social Sciences*, 4th ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2013), 94.

convergent evidence … the construct validity of your case study" is strengthened.[22] Yin identifies six sources of evidence including documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts. This researcher chose to incorporate all six sources in order to increase the study's internal validity through triangulation.

The external validity was enhanced in studying a real-life setting, which as Leedy and Ormrod write, "although it may not have the tight controls of a laboratory project, may be more valid in the sense that it yields results with broader applicability to other real-world contexts."[23] Creswell recommends eight methods of validation including prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the field, triangulation, peer review or debriefing, negative case analysis, clarifying, member checking, thick description, and external audits. Creswell recommends qualitative researchers engage in at least two of these methods of validation in any given study.[24] Four of Creswell's methods were used to validate findings. This researcher engaged and observed examples of collaborative ministry and mission across the three Charges. As mentioned earlier six sources of data were collected and triangulated. Working closely with a thesis advisor, this researcher practiced peer review or debriefing throughout the process. Lastly, the researcher worked to create rich, thick descriptions so readers could make knowledgeable decisions concerning transferability.

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[22] Yin, *Case Study Research,* 121.

[23] Leedy and Ormrod, *Practical Research*, 104-106.

[24] John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003).

The researcher followed the principles for grounded theory. Data was collected, organized, analyzed, and synthesized. Using the constant comparative method of data analysis, data gathered across multi-sites was examined and comparisons made in order to discover "patterns of unanticipated as well as expected relationships."[25] Describing the constant comparative method Merriam writes,

> The researcher begins with a particular incident from an interview, field notes, or document and compares it with another incident in the same set of data or in another set. These comparisons lead to tentative categories that are then compared to other and to other instances. Comparisons are constantly made within and between levels of conceptualizations until a theory can be formulated. The type of theory is called substantive theory – theory that applies to a specific aspect of practice.[26]

The researcher read and re-read the data gathered through interviews, site-visits and observations, church-produced documents, and open-ended questionnaires, repeatedly developing and refining categories, a process Creswell calls the "data analysis spiral."[27] Common themes, patterns, and ideas were found, as Merriam describes, "grounded in the data."[28] By making comparisons between data gathered across the three Charges, a substantive theory emerged as to key elements necessary for building collaborative ministry and mission.

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[25] Robert E. Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995), 41.

[26] Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 199-200.

[27] Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 143.

[28] Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 29.

CHAPTER FIVE: PROJECT ANALYSIS

Case Studies

Lewes Charge: Faith UMC and Israel UMC

The Lewes Charge comprises two congregations, Faith United Methodist founded in 1884 in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware and Israel United Methodist founded in 1840 in Lewes, Delaware. Led by the Rev. Jerome E. Tilghman, the congregations have worked together to have a greater influence on the neighboring communities. They share a common mission: "The Lewes Charge is a connected ministry whose purpose is to connect people to God, connect people to one another, and connect ourselves in ministry to a broken and hurting people."

Faith United Methodist is predominantly African-American and averages 50-60 in attendance on Sunday mornings, led in worship by Faith UMC's praise band. Rehoboth, the community that surrounds the church, is the largest beach resort in the State of Delaware. Israel United Methodist is nine miles from Rehoboth in the town of Lewes, Delaware. Founded in 1631, Lewes is located where the Delaware Bay and the Atlantic Ocean meet at Cape Henlopen, in eastern Sussex County, Delaware. The area's earliest settlers were the Native Americans. Israel UMC is predominantly Native American and hosts a more traditional worship setting with choir, drawing 20-30 in attendance.

Faith UMC and Israel UMC participate together in Bible study, worship team, Annual services, Homeless Walk, Drama Ministry, the "Open Hands" Soup and Clothing

Ministry, Community Resource Day, and the Care Team. They also worship together every fifth Sunday, as well as every first Sunday when they come together to celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion.

Cecilton Parish: Zion UMC and St. Paul UMC

The Cecilton Parish, in Cecilton, Maryland, comprises two congregations, St. Paul's United Methodist and Zion United Methodist. Led by the Rev. Bonnie L. Shively, the two congregations continue to work together to impact the surrounding area. They share a common mission:

> We the people of the Cecilton United Methodist Parish are a welcoming, friendly, accepting community of believers in Jesus Christ. As a people blessed by God, we respond to Christ's call to care for our world and the people in it. We strive to discover and meet the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of our local community as well as reach into the world beyond to touch and improve the lives of people everywhere. We provide a nurturing, supportive and safe environment where persons of all ages and any circumstance can gather to experience God's transforming love and the love and acceptance of others. We offer Bible-based worship, educational and social programs supported through joyful, responsible use of our God-given talents and resources. At Cecilton Parish we strive to live out the teaching of Jesus Christ, bringing to our troubled world His love, joy and peace.

The Cecilton Parish is centered in a quiet, residential community surrounded by farmland, but attracts many tourists and summer visitors being only a few miles from the Chesapeake Bay, the Bohemia River, and the Sassafras River.

St. Paul's United Methodist was one of the first Methodist societies established in what is known today as "The Garden Spot of Methodism," geographically comprising the Eastern Shore of Maryland and the State of Delaware. The first permanent church building was constructed prior to 1800, with the present building being constructed in 1984. Its sister congregation, Zion United Methodist, was founded in 1819. The present building was erected in 1890 after a cyclone destroyed the original church. Together St.

Paul's UMC and Zion UMC minister to the community of Cecilton, reaching out together through Search Light Contemporary Service, Operation Christmas Child, Vacation Bible School, United Methodist Men, United Methodist Women, Backpack Ministry, Rotating Homeless Shelter, Faith in Action, and countless other ministries and missions.

Westside Parish: Nanticoke UMC, Bivalve UMC, and Tyaskin UMC

The Westside Parish comprises three congregations including Nanticoke United Methodist in Nanticoke, Maryland, Bivalve United Methodist in Bivalve, Maryland, and Tyaskin United Methodist in Tyaskin, Maryland. Led by Pastor David Herr, the three congregations work closely in collaborative ministry and mission. They share a common mission:

> The Westside-Nanticoke Parish of the United Methodist Church, as a family responsive to the leadership of Christ within us, is called to love, nurture, and teach all people within God's community. Following the example of Jesus, we seek to break the barriers that separate people, and we celebrate the diversity among us.

Furthermore, they are heavily connected and involved with Asbury UMC, the African American congregation in the same community. This relationship drew attention from across the Bay after an article was written in the Baltimore Sun in 2007 concerning the two racially diverse congregations coming together for a joint worship service each month.[1]

The three congregations of the Westside Parish have a deep history. Nanticoke United Methodist began in 1887 as a Sunday school class and met above the store of John Turner and Sons. Construction began on the present church building in 1895. The Christian Center on the grounds of the church was constructed much later in 1995.

[1] Rona Kobell, "Nearer to God and to One Another: Churches in Eastern Shore Village, Black and White, Gather at Worship," *Baltimore Sun*, December 23, 2007.

Bivalve United Methodist was established in 1886 as Waltersville Methodist Protestant Church, recognizing the original name of the river village surrounding the property, named such because it was the boat landing for the Walter family plantation. Tyaskin United Methodist held its first services in a store building owned by John A. Insley in 1884. The present church building was constructed a year later in 1895. Together the three congregations alternate between one another for Sunday worship, operate a thrift store, a Christian Outreach Men's Mission Association, a community Circle of Prayer, a Missions Committee, and many other collaborative ministries and missions.

Research Findings

Following visits to the Lewes, Cecilton, and Nanticoke-Westside Charges, recordings of interviews were reviewed and transcribed. The transcriptions, along with field notes, church-produced documents, and open-ended questionnaires received were analyzed for "significant statements [for] the generation of meaning units, and the development of an 'essence' description" of the phenomenon.[2] According to Creswell, the researcher "finds statements (in the interviews) about how individuals are experiencing the topic, lists out these significant statements and treats each statement as having equal worth, and works to develop a list of nonrepetitive, nonoverlapping statements. These statements are then grouped into "meaning units".[3] This researcher attempted to have, as Merriam describes, "a conversation with the data, asking questions of it, making comments to it … making notations next to bits of data that strike [one] as

[2] Creswell, *Research Design*, 191.

[3] Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 149-150.

potentially relevant for answering [one's] research questions."[4] After working through the data in this way, this researcher attempted to group the comments and notes that seemed to go together, a process sometimes called axial coding or analytical coding (Figure I). According to Merriam "categories can come from at least three sources (or a mix of these sources): yourself, the researcher, the participants, or sources outside the study such as the literature. The most common situation is when the investigator comes up with terms, concepts, and categories that reflect what he or she sees in the data."[5] Categories should respond to the research question, be able to incorporate all the data decided to be important by the researcher, be mutually exclusive, and should capture the meaning of the phenomenon being described for the reader.

Figure I. Analytical Coding: *Groupings Developed from Comments and Notations Recorded by Researcher over Repeated Examination of the Data*

1. Common Goals
2. Shared Vision/Mission
3. Repetition
4. Communication/Dialogue
5. Compromise
6. Listen
7. Mission-Orientation
8. Inconsistencies Detrimental
9. Lead by Example
10. Stand Firm
11. Boldness
12. Pastoral Leadership
13. Strong Lay Leaders
14. Patience
15. Don't Allow Hold Outs to Stop You
16. Joint Ministries or Missions
17. Joint Administrative Committees
18. Relationship Building
19. Connections
20. Diminished Individual Identity
21. Pushing Charge Identity
22. Trust is Vital
23. Fear must be Confronted
24. Past Closures
25. Past Mergers
26. District and Conference Support
27. Must Explain Why Do Something
28. Biblical Teaching of Collaboration

[4] Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 178.

[5] Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 184.

Creswell describes the process of "looking for categories, themes, or dimensions of information" within the interviews conducted. He calls for a "winnowing [of] the data" down to a "small, manageable set of themes to write into [the] final narrative" and suggests "identifying five or six general themes."[6] This researcher identified five general themes that reflect what interviews and observations emphasized as being significant in helping congregations develop collaborative ministry and mission with one another. These themes include an emphasis on: (1) common goals and shared identity, (2) leadership, (3) patience, (4) relationships and trust, and (5) a mission-orientation. These themes were used to construct a composite, "the final result [being] a general description of the phenomenon, as seen through the eyes of people who have experienced it firsthand. The focus is on common themes in the experience despite diversity in the individuals and settings studied."[7]

"Meaning Units" or Common Themes

Mutual Goals and Shared Identity Emphasized

Across the United Methodist Charges studied, it is clear that communication is essential in building effective collaborative ministry and mission. This is clearly observed in the three United Methodist Charges' mission statements. The congregations are not emphasized individually in their mission statements. Instead they are inseparable, whether it is the Cecilton Parish, Faith/Israel United Methodist Church, or the Westside-Nanticoke Parish. Faith/Israel call themselves "a connected ministry" and mention the word "connect" three more times in their mission statement. Westside-Nanticoke puts

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[6] Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 144.

[7] Leedy and Ormrod, *Practical Research*, 153.

emphasis on collaboration and speaks of the three congregations on the Charge in the singular. Their vision statement stresses that they are a "parish," and that they are "the body of Christ" called to live out their faith "cooperatively."

Continuous communication acknowledging and emphasizing the collaborative relationship established between the congregations on each Charge is seen in multiple places. Entering Zion UMC's church hall this researcher observed a calendar of upcoming meetings on the bulletin board titled "Cecilton Parish." All church-produced documents including bulletins, brochures, and newsletters carry the label "Cecilton United Methodist Parish." They define themselves and stress in all their documents that they are a Parish rather than two individual congregations, St. Paul's and Zion. The Nanticoke-Westside Charge is no different. On the sign outside Bivalve United Methodist Church the worship schedule is posted:

December
11 AM Services

21 Bivalve
14 Nanticoke
7 & 28 Tyaskin

The agenda for the ecumenical Mission Committee is titled "Westside Mission Committee" with Bivalve, Nanticoke, and Tyaskin listed as "Westside UMC."
At Israel UMC and Faith UMC flyers on bulletin boards are labeled "Israel/Faith United Methodist Church." "Church" is always in the singular. Even their website, faith-israelunitedmethodist.org, and church email, lewesCharge1@verizon.net, emphasize the collaborative relationship that has developed. In several places the phrase "One Church, Two Locations" is visible, including on Rev. Tilghman's business cards.

The congregations' collaborative relationship is not only communicated through printed materials. It is also constantly communicated verbally. Rev. David Herr, Nanticoke-Westside Charge, states that he looks for "every opportunity" to speak of the collaborative relationship between the three congregations. He describes how important communication is stating, "Whenever discussion, decision, inkling, suggestion, or whiff stress how we might work together on this—push it. Any time fall back into old thought patterns, separate congregations, be silent, and discourage without being too forward."[8] Rev. Herr explains there are different ways to visualize separate but equal, three ropes/one braid or three horses/one plow, and those images need to be continually emphasized.

There are examples across the Charges studied when information was communicated in a way that did not stress the common goals and shared identity of the Charge; thus, stirring up controversy. Rev. Shively described a recent calendar entry published in the bulletin that read "Zion Trustees Meeting." The meeting being advertised for January 2015 was the first joint meeting of the Zion UMC and St. Paul's UMC Trustees. Rev. Shively told the Administrative Board that this "created so much grief" and assured them it would be corrected.[9] Members of St. Paul's UMC were upset because they saw Zion UMC taking over their Trustees and property rather than it being a joint effort. Rev. Herr had a similar situation when he advertised "Paint Nanticoke," a push to get local artists to come into the community. People at Bivalve and Tyaskin felt their congregations were left out and complained; thus, Rev. Herr changed it to "Paint the Parish."

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[8] David Herr, first interview by author, Nanticoke, Maryland, November 10, 2014.

[9] Bonnie Shively, second interview by author, Cecilton, Maryland, December 8, 2014.

Many identified themselves as members of the Charge and not the individual congregation they had attended over the years. This was partly due to the constant communication of the collaborative relationship between the congregations over the span of many years. This was done verbally, through printed materials, and by continually pushing the congregations to work together to fulfill shared goals. The congregations not only talked about collaboration but lived it by joining together in mission projects, worship, Bible studies, and countless other ministries. Over time the culture of the congregations merged and a new Charge identity materialized.

When this researcher asked a woman from the Nanticoke-Westside Parish Community Dinner which congregation she belonged, she replied, “”Bivalve – Nanticoke – Tyaskin Church.” At the dinner a gentleman who had lived in the community for twenty years when asked which congregation they belonged replied, “Methodist.” Another gentleman shared how he and his wife were invited to church. This researcher asked which congregation they were invited to attend. He answered, “All of them.” At the Nanticoke-Westside missions meeting when a gentleman was asked which congregation he belonged answered, “Tyaskin, if you have to pick one, but really all three. They have been three churches so long you forget. They’re all your church.” Many spoke about how there were older members who identified with one of the specific congregations, but recent members usually saw the three congregations as a single entity and called it Westside. The leadership work hard to reiterate that the church is not a building and that the people are the church. As one leader stated, “The Conference has three churches on their paperwork but it is not true. There are three buildings but there is one church.”

On the Cecilton Parish the membership of the congregations has become so blurred that there was immense discussion at the board meeting concerning who were members of St. Paul's UMC. Only members of St. Paul's, by United Methodist Polity, could vote on the upcoming sale of a piece of property owned by St. Paul's UMC. The two congregations had worked together so much and for so long that no one was sure where people officially belonged. Individuals often went to a different worship service for an earlier time or sometimes attended both. Rev. Shively emphasized how even the community of Cecilton perceives St. Paul's UMC and Zion UMC as one.[10] Her assessment was supported when this researcher overheard at the Administrative Board meeting that someone in the chorale society, which recently performed at Zion UMC, stated that they liked coming to "Cecilton." The collaborative identity established has spread beyond the walls of the individual congregations.

Across the Lewes Charge, Rev. Tilghman oversees two congregations with deep family ties. At times this makes change difficult. A member of the Administrative Board at Israel UMC, in answering the questionnaire for this project, explained that there are "lay members that are not willing to speak at the other church for some unknown reason. We don't always support each other's programs wholeheartedly." Mutual goals and shared identity are continually stressed, reminding the congregations that the purpose of the church is to glorify God and to help others not just the family. Members of the individual congregations are constantly reminded that together they are the body of Christ.

Leadership

[10] Bonnie Shively, first interview by author, Cecilton, Maryland, October 9, 2014.

Pastoral Leadership

There is no doubt that those interviewed believe leadership is key in building effective collaborative ministry and mission. Rev. Tilghman, Rev. Shively, and Rev. Herr agree that leadership begins with the pastor and the pastor should look for every opportunity to build and create joint committees, pushing people to work together on projects. No matter what committee, ministry or mission is developed, someone from each congregation should be asked to be part of the team and to represent their congregation. Rev. Herr declares, "Collaboration will fall to the wayside if not pushed."

The pastor not only needs to push collaboration but explain to the congregations why it is necessary, why the Charge is going in the direction proposed, and why it is the right thing to do verses what has always been done. Rev. Jerome E. Tilghman, Sr. describes how he discovered the finances were not transparent when he arrived on the Lewes Charge. There was a lot of resistance to a monthly Charge financial report. He emphasizes that the leader needs to communicate the answer to the question, "Why are we doing this?"[11] The reasoning behind decisions and changes in the church should be communicated to the congregation.

Furthermore, in introducing changes the pastor should, according to Rev. Tilghman, have an understanding of each congregation's family dynamics. They need to recognize that a large percentage of people in the small, established, older United Methodist congregations are related. Rev. Tilghman believes one should teach the difference between congregations focused on family verses congregations focused on community. All three pastors interviewed believe it is the pastor's job to help

[11] Jerome E. Tilghman, Sr., first interview by author, Lewes, Delaware, October 8, 2014.

parishioners recognize their main purpose is to glorify God by reaching out to the community and not remaining inward focused.

Once a decision is made to come together collaboratively in ministry or mission that decision must be upheld by the pastor. A lay leader on the Nanticoke-Westside Parish shared how years before the pastors of the Nanticoke-Westside Parish and Asbury UMC, the African American Church, decided that on the first Sunday of each month they would come together for worship and to celebrate Holy Communion. The two pastors agreed on the principle, "No communion but the communion." When a new pastor took over the Nanticoke-Westside Charge, the pastor held a special communion service for people who did not want to attend the joint service with the African American congregation. This undermined collaborative efforts.

Lay Leadership

It is not only pastoral leadership that is vital to collaborative ministry. There needs to be strong lay leadership, men and women who understand the purpose and need for collaboration with their sister congregations. A member of Faith United Methodist Church reported on their questionnaire that they believe the success or failure of the individual congregations working together hinged on the chairperson of the collaborative ministry or mission being attempted. If the chairperson is unwilling or fails to communicate needs, to empower individuals, and to share leadership with others from across the Charge, collaboration will break down.

For successful collaboration to happen, men and women need to lead by example. A member of Faith United Methodist Church describes on their questionnaire how the pastor and lay leadership are constantly encouraging the congregations to support one

another's ministries. Individuals "get involved with both churches' ministries as leaders lead by example." Rev. Tilghman states adamantly, "Leadership is everything. You need committed leaders." Across all three Charges observed, there are a host of dedicated volunteers working many hours. These men and women are committed to help grow collaborative ministries and missions understanding by working together more can be done to help the surrounding community.

District and Conference Leadership

Recognizing that change is difficult, Rev. Herr believes the United Methodist District or Conference leadership can be helpful in building collaborative relationships between congregations. Rev. Herr questions if the District Superintendent's role may be to not only encourage the pastor but to "take the heat so the pastor will not get beat up." Many times a congregation can see themselves as the "pastor's boss," suggesting that the pastor does not have the power to make sweeping changes. Sometimes a voice more powerful than the pastor is needed to assert, "By next year I want concrete steps toward greater collaboration." With pastors often moving every four to seven years, the vision needs to be communicated to the new pastor and reemphasized to the congregation by the District and Conference leadership.

The District Superintendent and Conference leadership can have tremendous influence on bringing about collaborative ministry. The three congregations of the Nanticoke-Westside Parish did a trial run at worshipping together monthly with the only African American United Methodist Church in Nanticoke, Asbury. After a trial period of worship, supported by the pastors, the congregations came together to discuss if they would continue the practice. In support of the pastors' vision and the good work observed

across the trial period, the District Superintendent made the decision and declared that the congregations would continue to worship together once a month.

On the Lewes Charge this researcher noted there had been a church merger followed by church closures. In 2006, St. Paul United Methodist, Faith United Methodist, and John Wesley United Methodist churches were merged together forming a single congregation, Faith United Methodist. St. Paul United Methodist church was closed and has been sold. John Wesley United Methodist Church has been closed and is under contract. Rev. Tilghman said that many of the individuals from St. Paul and John Wesley began attending Faith, forced to worship and work with members of what had been their sister congregation for many years. Rev. Tilghman said that there were many upset saying, "You sold our church." This was a teachable moment for Rev. Tilghman as he instructed his parishioners, "Every church has a lifespan. Your church lived out its ministry. Your church is not dead. It just moved."[12] This past history cannot be ignored, yet the effects of the merger and closures on present collaborative efforts across the Charge cannot be fully determined.

Patience

Another theme that emerged across all three United Methodist Charges is the need for patience. During a conversation with a gentleman on Cecilton's Administrative Board this researcher was told he was witnessing the product of twenty years. He described how in the past people from the two congregations would talk socially but had nothing to do with each other's church. Over several years, things slowly changed as the women began to meet consistently as an official United Methodist Women group. Then the men began

[12] Jerome E. Tilghman, Sr., second interview by author, Lewes, Delaware, December 18, 2014.

to meet as United Methodist Men, working together on mission projects and having breakfast with one another. Leadership having patience to allow relationships to develop is necessary in building collaborative ministry and mission. In the Cecilton Parish, it took over two decades for relationships to be established, the groundwork laid, for it to be possible to make the changes which led to the collaboration observed across the Charge today.

Rev. Tilghman emphasized that the pastor should take at least six months evaluating the situation and dynamics across the Charge before making the first change. This patience is crucial. Rev. Herr emphasized the need to work gradually, to do groundwork, and to build up to the change "in incremental positive little steps." He described the process as "moving the snowball." He explained that leadership needs to keep momentum when it starts, but recognize when an issue is too much and back off. When the issue comes up again, try once more. Rev. Herr stated that a leader must not expect it to work the first time but prepare for it to flop, and perhaps flop the second, the third, and even the fourth time. A leader must have patience and persistence.[13]

During a second interview, Rev. Herr furnished a football analogy. He stated, "In order to get a first down one has to go in different directions, not simply down the middle over and over again. One can get a first down with a long pass, but one can also get a first down with two or three short passes. It is important to remember it is far more likely to be intercepted on a long pass." Another leader gave an example of incremental steps toward collaborative ministry and mission that had taken place. Years earlier the pastor looked at two major services on the Charge, the Children's Program at Bivalve UMC and

[13] David Herr, second interview by author, Nanticoke, Maryland, December 6, 2014.

the Advent Sing at Tyaskin UMC. Recognizing the importance of these traditions to each of the individual congregations, rather than trying to combine these services, they were left at their respective location. The other congregations on the Charge were encouraged to participate. Therefore, it was decided the congregations on the Charge, along with the African-American and Episcopal congregations, would join together for a Thanksgiving Eve service. A Thanksgiving Eve Service was chosen because it did not exist at the time so no one could say, "You can't take that away from my church." Today, all the aforementioned services are Charge worship services.

Relationships and Trust

Joint ministries and missions are prominent across the Charges studied. Grief share studies, joint Sunday school, Soup and Clothing ministry, Bible studies, joint worship services, joint men and women's choirs, Circle of Prayer, missions committees, Thrift shop, community dinners, Christian Community Center, men's and women's ministry, and Vacation Bible School are just a few of the ministries and missions that pull people together. These ministries not only build the Kingdom of God, but strengthen relationships between those participating.

Each pastor stressed the importance of building relationships with one's parishioners before considering changes. Not only did they stress the pastor building relationships but that the pastor's job was to help parishioners build relationships with one another. Rev. Tilghman explained how many are afraid of inviting other people into their lives, "afraid to walk across the room and join the other group." He spoke about changing the environment and teaching the congregation to "treat their sister church how they treat the visitor who comes along the way." When he first arrived on the Lewes

Charge, Faith UMC and Israel UMC each had their own worship teams. The worship teams were combined creating one worship team for the Charge. Members of both churches participating on the team got to know one another. Many stereotypes and walls were broken down.

On the Nanticoke-Westside Charge, one of the leaders spoke of how he believed members "genuinely enjoy the togetherness worshipping, supporting each other in times of need, and simply working with each other." Disciple Bible Study brought twelve people together from four congregations for the purpose of spiritual growth. The pastor of Nanticoke-Westside held the Bible study in the African American church hall. He stated that people "come out of Disciple understanding anybody you are going to meet anywhere is going to teach you about God. You come to respect them, value them. Study the Bible together, leads to VBS together, other things together." He continued, "Relationships changed." This researcher asked, "What do you mean?" He explained that changes occurred especially when in regard to race. In the past a white woman would have a black woman clean her house but wouldn't think of worshipping with her or inviting her to tea. He explained,

> There is a great social discomfort in racial relationships. It is one thing to greet people at the Mini-Mart, but the whites don't know where the blacks live and vice-versa. Worship changed that because a worship service is part of your home. It didn't change things for everybody but it raised the level of comfort and the acceptance of bigotry diminished."[14]

Worship, Bible study, missions, joint choirs, prayer circles, church bazaars, and countless other joint ministries and missions help build deep relationships between the men and

[14] Anonymous, interview by author, Nanticoke, Maryland, December 6, 2014.

women of the different congregations across the Charge. As these relationships deepen, the ministry and mission see a new level of faith, commitment, and unity.

A leader from Tyaskin UMC, on the Nanticoke-Westside Charge, explains, "Don't see it as Tyaskin. We're just one big family, working for the good of all." This depth of relationship was evident when Tyaskin, an older building, had to redo the wooden frames around their windows. This was an expensive repair. The other congregations on the Charge helped financially with the repairs, seeing the Tyaskin congregation as their brothers and sisters in Christ due to the relationships that had been built over the years.

Throughout the interviews, conversations, and questionnaires, men and women mentioned that trust was essential to collaborative ministry and mission. Congregations on a Charge must not only learn to trust one another but also trust the pastor, District, and Conference leadership. A leader on the Nanticoke-Westside Parish stated, "The major obstacle to cooperation is the fear that my church will be closed." Many of the small congregations that make-up the multi-point Charges across the Peninsula-Delaware Conference have a fear that the Conference will close their church. They are afraid of losing the place where they have grown up, developed deep friendships, and experienced God. For many their church building has become synonymous with God or faith. When a pastor arrives who begins to speak of working together collaboratively there is an instant mistrust that he or she has been sent to merge the congregations, resulting in one or more of the churches being closed. Across the Charges, leadership believed fear or mistrust must be overcome if effective collaborative ministry and mission is to happen.

Several decades ago, before the congregations on the Nanticoke-Westside Charge began to work together, everything was scrutinized. A leader explained, whenever a decision needed to be made the question was always asked, "Will this give an advantage to my church when consideration is made to close one of the three churches on the Charge?" For example, when the Trustees pushed bathrooms through at their church without Board permission, they believed if the Conference did decide to close one of the churches, having bathrooms would exclude them from being considered. Another leader emphatically stated that trust is one of the three greatest things that must happen for effective collaboration to take place.

On the Cecilton Parish, at the Administrative Board meeting in December 2014, there was discussion about the upcoming vote concerning the final piece of the Cecilton Parish administrative merger. The Board of Trustees at Zion UMC and St. Paul's UMC were to join together into one Cecilton Parish Board of Trustees beginning in 2015. According to United Methodist polity the District Superintendent had to oversee the vote. Rev. Shively explained that it was vital that people understand this vote was not about closing a church building. Rev. Shively stated, "I cannot emphasize this enough." Such rumors had surfaced many times in the past causing friction and slowing progress. At the same meeting the discussion that ensued dealt with the Cecilton Parish long-term strategic plan that was continuing to be revised. The board discussed how more people needed to be involved. It was reported that some in the congregation felt they had been "pushed" and didn't have a voice. People in the congregation must be able to trust the leadership and the process. Their fears must be addressed and their voices heard.

Fear of church closure is not the only fear that must be overcome in building effective collaborative ministry and mission. Rev. Tilghman, on the Lewes Charge, explained how many people are afraid of inviting other people into their lives. They are afraid to walk across the room and join the other group. Furthermore, many want to do more but are afraid of speaking up. The reason is that many of the smaller congregations are family-oriented and many in the congregation are related. He gave an example of one woman who spoke concerning the pastor's salary and became an outcast because in doing so was speaking against family members in the congregation. The pastor has the job of helping members of the congregations to build relationships with their sister congregations and also with one another within their own congregation. The pastor must build relationships between parishioners and him or herself, and the congregation must build relationships between itself and the community it serves. Rev. Tilghman points out, "If people don't trust you, they won't want to become a part of you."

When asked if some across the Lewes Charge had been hesitant or fearful to work together, answering the questionnaire the SPPRC Chair wrote, "Yes, many! Some believe there is an inconsistency between the two churches." The chairman of the Administrative Board at Faith UMC on the Lewes Charge wrote about how the older members did not seem to trust the other congregation in financial decisions pertaining to the pastor, the parsonage, and sharing the pastor's schedule. This may partly be due to the fact that for many years the two congregations on the Lewes Charge had separate Charge Conferences with the District Superintendent. He writes on the questionnaire, "It was like there was something to hide in the finances or something being said to one congregation that wasn't for the hearing of the other. It always led to distrust." Now the congregations are working

more closely together. Not only do Faith UMC and Israel UMC come together for Charge Conference each year but they hold meetings to discuss issues both congregations are facing like declining membership. They also make sure both congregations receive the same training on church issues and function. This has increased the level of trust between the two congregations.

A Mission-Orientation

This researcher observed that missions were believed to be a prime catalyst for bringing people together. Missions take the focus off the individual and their particular congregation's needs and places it on a greater need. After listing nine mission opportunities on the Cecilton Parish, Missions Committee member Doris Obenshain writes in the newsletter, "If the Cecilton Parish is to fulfill its commandments to these outreach projects and the Kingdom of God, we need YOU!" The Cecilton Parish has in its strategic plan a "parish goal to have as many members participate as possible" in the mission-oriented Faith in Action group.[15] It is stressed that everyone is needed in order to reach people effectively. Gloria Miller, volunteer coordinator of the Open Hands Soup and Clothing Ministry on the Lewes Charge, shared her belief that when men and women from different churches come together to help others "ministry is seen in a different light" and people are moved by the "surprises God does." Serving together helps parishioners from both congregations recognize that "we all bring something to the table" and "a sense of love for one another develops" as one looks out for those in need together.[16]

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[15] *Cecilton Parish Strategic Plan 2014*, Goal 1, Objective 5, Cecilton Parish, Cecilton, Maryland, December, 2014.

[16] Gloria Miller, interview by author, December 18, 2014.

All three United Methodist Charges emphasized missions. The Cecilton Parish has a Faith in Action group who organizes a Christmas Community Dinner for those in need, participates in the Meeting Ground's Cecil County homeless shelter network, runs a backpack ministry for the local elementary school, supports the Generation Station after-school program locally and the United Methodist disaster relief efforts worldwide, and sends missionaries to Red Bird Mission in Kentucky. The Lewes Charge runs the Open Hands Soup and Clothing Ministry each Tuesday for the community and joins with other civic organizations to organize a Community Resource Day. The Nanticoke-Westside Charge has established a thrift shop, supports the community after-school program, provides basic needs to families who are struggling, puts in wheel chair ramps and does minor household repairs in the community through the Christian Outreach Men's Ministry Association, and operates a community food bank. All of these missions are collaborative ventures involving participants from all the congregations on the particular Charge. According to Rev. Tilghman on the Lewes Charge, these missional opportunities help move parishioners through serving others from viewing their congregation as simply a family (inward focused) to becoming a vital part of the community (outward focused). Not only are people in the community cared for, but by coming together to serve collaboratively parishioners begin to catch a bigger vision of what is possible.

Summary

This researcher perceived strong collaborative relationship and effective collaborative ministry taking place across the Lewes, Cecilton, and Nanticoke-Westside Charges. Yet, on all three Charges examples of people not being willing to work together were found. There continued to be parishioners focused on an individual congregational

identity rather than a Charge-wide identity. On the Lewes Charge, Faith United Methodist is in the process of building a new building in order to bring the many ministries and missions under one roof. Israel United Methodist has opted to continue to work with Faith UMC but not come on board with the new building project, continuing to worship at their present location. All three Charges have individuals that will not worship in any other church building than their own on Sunday mornings and will only participate in ministries and missions conducted by the congregation in which they have their membership. Across all three Charges whenever there is a joint worship service attendance does go down.

Nevertheless, many people across the three Charges have caught the vision and have come to understand the importance of collaborative ministry and mission. Leadership, both clergy and laity, have been persistent in pushing collaboration. This researcher identified five general themes that reflect what leaders believe to be significant in aiding the Lewes, Cecilton, and Nanticoke-Westside Charges to come together in the many ways perceived throughout this project. These themes include an emphasis on: (1) common goals and shared identity, (2) leadership, (3) patience, (4) relationships and trust, and (5) a mission-orientation.

CHAPTER SIX: EVALUATION OF PROJECT

Strengths of the Project

The project presented the researcher with the opportunity to hear the stories and observe the practices of multi-point Charges across the Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church known for effective collaborative ministry. Having served two multi-point Charges over the years this researcher believes collaborative ministry can help small, established congregations in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference. This researcher experienced blessings and saw people fed, clothed, and cared for when several congregations came together in ministry and mission. For a pastor to carry several key principles helpful in building effective collaboration to a new appointment would be extremely beneficial. This will help pastors coming into multi-point Charges bring their congregations together in ministry and mission. The unity of spirit and sharing of resources will strengthen the witness and influence of the Charge and each individual congregation to the surrounding communities.

Practicality of the Project

The project is practical as the principles appear to not only be transferrable across ministry settings, but are supported throughout scripture and are being practiced effectively in the fields of healthcare and education. As mentioned earlier, the General Secretaries of the United Methodist Church believe it is only through

collaboration that the Church will be able to tackle the complex problems of our time. They state, "We will only succeed if we operate in an uncommon spirit of collaboration, break our inertia and transcend our disagreements."[1] There is a need in the smaller, established congregations across the Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church who share a pastor and a common geographical area to work together. By understanding principles and practices for building effective collaboration, leadership can be more effective in fulfilling their mission and modeling the character of the Triune God, three-in-one.

The principles gleaned from the research are extremely practical and have shown themselves to be essential in building collaboration not only in ministry but in other fields like healthcare and education. By practicing principles for building effective collaboration leaders in healthcare have been able to improve continuity of care, increase teamwork, provide greater access to outside resources, generate a more supportive work environment, and share resources in a time of reduced budgets. In education guidelines have been established because collaboration has been found to be so important for student success. When teachers, administrators, counselors, and others work together, students have increased opportunities to succeed and not to fall through the cracks. Many secular organizations are ahead of the Church in implementing and experiencing the positive effects of collaboration.

Reflection On Findings

[1] "A UMNS Commentary from the General Secretaries of the United Methodist Church," *The United Methodist Church*, accessed November 16, 2011, http://www.umc.org/site/c.lwL4KnN1LtH/b.3478199/k.68C7/ Areas_of_Ministry_Focus.htm.

In today's rapidly changing environment, leaders are constantly being called upon to be learners in order to bring the change necessary for growth in ministry and mission. The United Methodist Church has recognized this and in response to declining membership, as well as other global and societal issues, are seeking ways to "take the best of what United Methodists do today and focus and grow that work." This has led to the creation of four "areas of focus" for the denomination. These areas include: (1) creating new places for new people by starting new congregations and renewing existing ones; (2) engaging in ministry with the poor; (3) stamping out killer diseases by improving health globally; and (4) developing principled Christian leaders for the church and the world.[2]

The findings of this research could support two of the "areas of focus" the United Methodist Church is striving to fulfill. First, the development of "principled Christian leaders for the church and the world" is significant for the response to the rapid-fire changes in our world and the impact these changes are having on ministry. Many Christian congregations in America today need to experience life-giving transformation. Herrington, Bonem and Furr ask, "How do we transform declining congregations into Christ-like bodies that display the power of the Gospel in our communities?"[3] The principles gleaned from this research could help Christian leaders serving multi-point Charges in the United Methodist Church begin to build collaborative relationships between their congregations. This could bring transformation to their communities as

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[2] "A UMNS Commentary from the General Secretaries of the United Methodist Church," http://www.umc.org/site/c.lwL4KnN1LtH/b.3478199/k.68C7/Areas_of_Ministry_ Focus.htm (accessed November 16, 2011).

[3] Jim Herrington, Mike Bonem, and James H. Furr, *Leading Congregational Change: A Practical Guide for the Transformational Journey* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

they share resources for the betterment of others and demonstrate the power of the Gospel to unite diverse groups in Christian fellowship. Secondly, "creating new places for new people by … renewing existing [congregations]" is essential. In the three United Methodist Charges studied, renewal is occurring and new people are connecting with the congregations due to the collaborative ministry and mission that has developed over the years.

The five major practices or themes raised from the data collected from the three United Methodist Charges studied were: (1) mutual goals and shared identity, (2) leadership, (3) patience, (4) relationships and trust, and (5) a mission-orientation.

Mutual Goals and Shared Identity

The most significant and most surprising observation was the depth of shared identity across the United Methodist Charges studied. There were many members of the congregations who were not interviewed and whose thoughts were not heard. As was mentioned by leadership on each Charge, some of these individuals saw their identity in the church building where they had grown up, attended with their family, and had their membership. For some the idea of a Charge identity remains a foreign concept and they primarily attend functions held at their home church. However, every person this researcher did have the opportunity to speak with at community dinners, thrift shops, feeding ministries, and Administrative Board meetings did share a common identity based on a collaborative relationship with their sister congregations and the goals they shared.

Gary Yukl discusses how it is "more difficult to change culture in a mature organization than it is to create it in a new organization."[4] He explains,

> One reason is that many of the underlying beliefs and assumptions shared by people in an organization are implicit and unconscious. Cultural assumptions are also difficult to change when they justify the past and are a matter of pride. Moreover, cultural values influence the selection of leaders and the role expectations for them.[5]

This researcher is excited to observe that it is possible, though difficult and time-consuming, to change the existing culture of a small, established congregation that has been in existence, in many instances, for over a century.

Such change mirrors our relationship with Christ. Paul wrote, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here" (2 Cor. 5:17). Jesus taught that people do not "pour wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved" (Matt. 9:17). The culture may change but the Word of God remains constant and the Word of God brings new life. How often do churches miss out on the new ways God is ready to share His unchanging Word because of their refusal to change, to identify themselves with someone and something greater than the building in which they worship?

Across many fields individuals identify themselves with a greater mission than their personal goals or the success of their department to work together for the betterment of children or a patient's health. At some point in the history of the Lewes, Cecilton, and Nanticoke-Westside Charges a vision was cast pushing people to look beyond

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[4] Gary Yukl, "Influencing Organization Culture," in *Leading Organizations: Perspectives for a New Era*, ed. Gil Robinson Hickman (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2010), 329.

[5] Yukl, "Influencing Organization Culture," 329.

themselves. Many years were needed for the vision to blossom. It was Paul's vision of the body of Christ, a church where "there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). A vision was cast which pushed the idea that "For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ" (I Cor. 12:12). The vision drew people together toward a mutual set of goals asking individuals to commit "to make measurable progress toward God's ideal."[6] The vision gave many a sense of purpose, challenging them to live out their faith in real and tangible ways beyond the walls of their individual congregation.

Application Questions: Mutual Goals and Shared Identity

As a result of the interviews and observations made across the Charges, this researcher developed the following questions dealing with collaboration from the perspective of mutual goals and shared identity. These questions can aid pastors in applying the principles of this research in their specific setting and help them begin building collaborative ministry and mission.

1. How might I begin to cast the vision of collaborative ministry and mission, and begin to build a shared Charge identity while still respecting the history and traditions of each individual congregation I serve?

2. How might I begin to slowly communicate the theme of collaboration through messages, newsletter articles, bulletins, mottos, symbols, and conversations with leadership?

3. Where do the scriptures emphasize collaboration and God's calling for Christians and congregations to work together to reach "the least of these" and to fulfill the Great Commission?

Leadership

[6] Herrington, Bonem, and Furr, *Leading Congregational Change*, 56.

The leader must recognize the vital role they play in developing the vision and making sure it is communicated. Robert Stephen Reid explains, "During times of change or crisis, a leader plays a key role in helping organizational participants engage in the cognitive restructuring necessary to image ways to live into the new vision of what the organization must do or needs to become."[7] H. Beecher Hicks explains,

> A clear vision statement is necessary because it helps both pastor and church understand where the ministry is going, how it is going to get there, and what the desired outcomes and expectations are once it has arrived. Vision is vital for ministry. Without vision, people cannot see or grasp their direction.[8]

The leader is the main communicator of the vision. He or she is the one who keeps the vision alive and nurtures it, bringing outsiders in to catch the beauty of what awaits them in the future if they travel down the path described. There were past and present leaders on the United Methodist Charges studied who fulfilled the role of the visionary effectively. They pushed for collaborative ministries between the congregations, were open to dialogue and working with other pastors in the community, and believed, as Rev. Herr stated, "It's not like this is *our* church."

Many of the pastors that served on these Charges, whether intentionally or not, incorporated all the elements John Kotter states are necessary for the effective communication of a vision (Appendix E). Words chosen to express the vision were simple like Rev. Tilghman's "One Church, Two Locations." Metaphors and analogies were used to help people understand what collaboration looked like such as Rev. Herr's "Three Ropes, One Braid" or "Three Horses, One Plow." Multiple forums were used to

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[7] Robert Stephen Reid, "Responding to Resistance during a Change Process," *Leading Churches through Change Transitions*, ed. David N. Mosser (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 173-188.

[8] H. Beecher Hicks, Jr., *On Jordan's Stormy Banks* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 19.

communicate the vision of collaborative ministry and mission. It was repeated across the Charge in meetings and at dinners, on bulletin boards and in newsletters, in the weekly bulletins and in conversations at the Mini-Mart. Many of the pastors across these Charges have led by example, loving on each congregation and treating them as one. Members of the congregations were constantly invited to dialogue and be part of the conversation and both the practical and theological reasoning behind the push for collaboration has been shared.

Yukl points out that "it takes considerable insight and skill for a leader to understand the current culture in an organization and implement changes successfully."[9] Sometimes outside help and support is needed if several established, older congregations are going to begin to work together. A crisis can also spark the beginnings of collaboration. Both examples were found with the United Methodist Charges studied. Whether it was the District Superintendent pushing the joint worship of the congregations on the Nanticoke-Westside Charge or the closing of one of the churches on the Lewes Charge due to financial difficulties, there were other dynamics at work that helped the pastors' vision for collaborative ministry and mission be heard.

The effects of the Conference's involvement or a past crisis on the Charge in comparison to the pastor's influence could be a topic for future study. Nevertheless, conversations, observations, and personal experience have led this researcher to firmly believe that whether or not other influences are involved without the pastor promoting the vision effective collaboration will not take place. The pastor's role is too vital as he or she, respected by many in the church as one called by God to serve that particular community, emphasizes the vision for collaborative ministry and mission frequently and

[9] Yukl, "Influencing Organization Culture," 329.

repeatedly. No one else has the opportunity or consistent platforms to reiterate the vision as often as the pastor.

Strong lay leadership is necessary to promote and grow the vision. Paul describes the church as a body with many parts. He writes, "Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ" (I Cor. 12). Paul goes on to explain, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?" (I Cor. 12). Paul understands that God has placed many different people with many different gifts in the church. Herrington, Bonem and Furr define this group of leaders who God has placed to help move the congregation forward as the "vision community." Building this vision community is a necessary step in effectively following God into the future and successfully building upon the vision. They explain, "The right collection of individuals, knitted together by the Holy Spirit at a deep heart level, must invest heavily in each other and in the process from start to finish." [10] Across the three Charges this researcher met strong laity working together and committed to collaborative ministry.

Application Questions: Leadership

[10] Herrington, Bonem, and Furr, *Leading Congregational Change,* 42.

As a result of the interviews and observations made across the Charges, this researcher developed the following questions dealing with collaboration from a leadership perspective. These questions can aid pastors in applying the principles of this research in their specific setting and help them begin building collaborative ministry and mission.

1. How might I begin to be the communicator of the vision, voicing before the congregations the possibilities of what God can and will do in the future through them if they are willing to work together?

2. How might I model collaboration to my parishioners? Are there other pastors in the community I am willing to work alongside? Are there lay persons from multiple congregations who could be brought together to work on a specific project?

3. In considering building a "vision community" (a group of leaders in the congregations served who will help move the vision for collaborative ministry and mission forward) what names come to mind? Would it be beneficial to spark a conversation? Should I share the vision for collaborative ministry with Conference leadership, seeking their support and guidance?

Patience

After studying the Lewes, Cecilton, and Nanticoke-Westside Charges it is clear there is no easy or quick formula for bringing congregations together in ministry and mission. It is disappointing that the process is so time-consuming, taking many years as groundwork is prepared, dialogue takes place, understanding is built, and eyes are opened to the biblical truth that "in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (Rom. 12:5). It is unfortunate that in many cases the pastors appointed to many of the small, established congregations on multi-point Charges across the Peninsula-Delaware Conference are fairly new and inexperienced in their role. Furthermore, these pastors often end up serving a short time before moving to another appointment. Many Charges undergo several pastoral transitions over the decades and

with these transitions the importance placed on collaborative ministry and mission can be impaired as the new pastor emphasizes a different area.

In a project completed in 2012, this researcher had the opportunity to interview several other pastors in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference concerning things they had learned over the years in implementing change in their congregations. Rev. Vonnie Paxton spoke of how important patience is in helping members of one's congregation understand the changes that need to take place. She explains,

> You have to start slowly and at the grass-roots. I'm patient. Just because we needed a new roof didn't mean we had to have it this week. It could wait two more years while we talked it through. When you talk it through, they come along. I think if we did not talk it through and they saw a new roof going up they would have problems. But because we talked it through, they were okay.[11]

Not only must a leader take time to explain and talk through the changes, but in order to be effective changes need to be made gradually. Rev. Jack Shitama noted that there is a Japanese term he believes translates, "continuous incremental improvement." He states, "It's basically the philosophy we can always get better and it doesn't always happen in big giant leaps but in continual change."[12] This emphasis on gradual change allows many who would immediately fight against such changes to have time to process, begin to understand why the changes are necessary, and to observe positive results. In this researcher's own experience, many leaders arrive in an appointment and immediately observe ways the congregations served could be reformed to be more effective. They rush into implementing change. This results in conflict and broken relationships as changes are made too quickly for many to process and understand.

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[11] Vonnie Paxton, interview by author, Kennedyville, Maryland, November 20, 2012.

[12] Jack Shitama, interview by the author, Centreville, Maryland, November 26, 2012.

Application Questions: Patience

As a result of the interviews and observations made across the Charges, this researcher developed the following questions dealing with collaboration from the perspective of patience. These questions can aid pastors in applying the principles of this research in their specific setting and help them begin building collaborative ministry and mission.

1. Are there times when implementing change was rushed into quickly and was met with resistance? How could the change have been handled differently?

2. How might I slow down and help parishioners understand the reasoning behind changes that must happen for the congregation and Charge to be more effective in ministry and mission?

3. How might I break down the goal of collaborative ministry and mission for the Charge into incremental steps to be implemented over several years, allowing the change to be more gradual? What might these steps be?

Relationships and Trust

This researcher's first appointment in the United Methodist Church was serving at a large church in the role of Associate Pastor. The Senior Pastor would often instruct this young student, "Don't Do…Be." It was not until years later this pastor understood these wise words. It appears the pastors on the Lewes, Cecilton, and Nanticoke-Westside Charges also understand. Relationships are more important than program. Relationships are key.

Successful pastoral ministry as with leadership in education, healthcare, and other fields relies significantly on the strength of relationships. Jonathan Young and Michael Firmin conducted a study exploring the relational aspects of pastoral leadership. Pastors interviewed indicated effective pastoral ministry requires being intentional about building relationships with parishioners, being alert to zeroing-in on the needs of parishioners, and

initiating and building special connections with church leaders.[13] Young and Firmin explain,

> Interpersonal relations are a powerful dynamic that, when harnessed effectively by leaders, can produce behavioral and attitudinal results in others – that otherwise would not be possible – using other motivational means, such as exhortation or verbal speeches. It is the exchange of one's life with another person's life that is said to unleash cogent motivations and leaders would do well to take deliberate steps in harnessing the effects of this dynamic.[14]

The work put into these relationships by the leader is more of an investment rather than an expenditure. Pastors need to view "individual-touch as being a critical element in achieving overall pastoral leadership success."[15]

In building relationships the pastor must look at studying areas often left out of seminary curriculum including conflict resolution, listening skills, team building, and servant leadership. This pastor believes that as imperfect leaders we must open ourselves to truly care and love the imperfect people we serve. Robert Greenleaf describes a great leader. He writes, "The interest in and affection for one's followers that a leader has – and it is a mark of true greatness when it is genuine – is clearly something the followers "haven't to deserve." Great leaders, including "little" people, may have gruff, demanding, uncompromising exteriors. But deep down inside the great ones have empathy and an unqualified acceptance of the persons of those who go with their leadership."[16]
Jesus taught, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you

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[13] Jonathan W. Young and Michael W. Firmin, "Qualitative Perspectives toward Relational Connection in Pastoral Ministry," *The Qualitative Report* 19:47 (November 24, 2014), 1-14.

[14] Young and Firmin, "Qualitative Perspectives toward Relational Connection," 10.

[15] Young and Firmin, "Qualitative Perspectives toward Relational Connection," 8.

[16] Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1977), 34.

love one another" (John 13: 34-35). Kevin Leman and William Pentak state, "What makes a shepherd a shepherd isn't the staff or the rod; it's the heart. What distinguishes a great leader from a mediocre one is that a great leader has a heart for his people."[17]

Though time was limited on the Lewes, Cecilton, and Nanticoke-Westside Charges, this researcher observed pastors who were close to many of their parishioners, showed love and attentiveness towards their parishioners, and were loved and cared for in return. These relationships between pastor and parishioner, especially with those in leadership positions on the three Charges, are essential in bringing about effective change and collaboration. This researcher believes it is vital that young pastors serving a new appointment have stressed that their time should be invested more heavily in relationships than program. Whether or not this was accomplished might be one of the main topics of Supervisory reviews.

Application Questions: Relationships and Trust

As a result of the interviews and observations made across the Charges, this researcher developed the following questions dealing with collaboration from the perspective of relationships and trust. These questions can aid pastors in applying the principles of this research in their specific setting and help them begin building collaborative ministry and mission.

1. Are there times when relationships were placed a lesser priority than program and in implementing change broken relationships occurred? How might things have been handled differently and the necessary changes still take place? Personally, is there any relationship with a parishioner where reconciliation is necessary?

2. Do I spend more time focused on program than building relationships? How might I begin to be more intentional in investing in relationships, especially

[17] Leman, Kevin and William Pentak, *The Way of the Shepherd: 7 Ancient Secrets to Managing Productive People* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2004).

relationships with leaders? How can I help parishioners focus more on relationship building with one another and their sister churches?

3. Are there areas I need to grow when it comes to relationship building such as conflict resolution, listening skills, team building, or servant leadership?

A Mission-Orientation

Reggie McNeal writes about the missional church. He speaks of how the church must make a shift from (1) an internal to an external focus, (2) a focus on programs to a focus on people and their development, and (3) a church-based leadership model to a Kingdom-based leadership model.[18] McNeal explains,

> The missional church is an expression of God's heart. It serves as an indication of his continuing commitment to his redemptive mission in the world. Because God is on mission, the people of God are too. God is a sending God. Just as he sent his Son and his Holy Spirit to the world, he is sending his people into the world.[19]

God is sending "his people" into the world. God tells us in His Word, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (I Peter 2:9). It is God's call on the life of men and women that draws them together in ministry and mission.

Intentional or unintentional, the Lewes, Cecilton, and Nanticoke-Westside Charges have begun to think missional. The majority of the collaborative activities across the Charges are missional. Yes, there are joint worship services and Bible studies, but missions is at the forefront of the conversation when one is asked about the collaborative efforts taking place with their sister congregations. All three Charges are heavily

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[18] Reggie McNeal, *Missional Renaissance: Changing the Scorecard for the Church* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2009).

[19] McNeal, *Missional Renaissance*, 20-21.

involved in their communities, caring for the hungry, hurting, and grieving. This researcher believes it is this missional emphasis that has helped to break down many of the barriers to collaboration. It is more difficult to argue against working together and merging resources to make sure the children of the community are fed and clothed then it is to argue against the congregations combining for an Annual bazaar or church program.

The congregations are effective in collaborative ministry and missions partly because many parishioners have discovered and the pastor has emphasized a purpose greater than self or an individual congregation. Many have joined together to answer Jesus' call to care for "the least of these." This researcher believes missions, parishioners thinking and reaching out beyond themselves to care for others, taking attention off issues within or between the congregations on the Charge that can turn divisive, is essential in getting multiple congregations to work together effectively. This may prove difficult and time-consuming as a congregation may be extremely inward focused, the upkeep of the building and reversal of dwindling attendance having become priority.

Application Questions: A Mission-Orientation

As a result of the interviews and observations made across the Charges, this researcher developed the following questions dealing with collaboration from a mission-orientation perspective. These questions can aid pastors in applying the principles of this research in their specific setting and help them begin building collaborative ministry and mission.

1. What does scripture say about the church's mission? What are some of the instances Jesus talks about our responsibility to care for the hurting, hungry, and

lost? What did the early church see as its mission and how did they fulfill that mission?

2. How might I be more intentional in shifting the congregations served from an inward focus to a more outward focus?

3. Can I think of at least three possible mission projects that would benefit the community served which could be done collaboratively as a Charge? How might I introduce these possible mission projects to the Charge?

The Strengths of the Project

A qualitative phenomenological approach allowed this researcher to begin to understand a situation (effective collaborative ministry on multi-point Charges) in its particular context and the interactions found there. Merriam points out that the key to qualitative research is "understanding the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspectives, not the researcher's."[20] The case study approach taken for the project allowed the researcher to account for the complexity of each United Methodist Charge and the countless variables including heritage, traditions, community, leadership, resources, and location, as the researcher traveled to the various locations multiple times to interview leadership and observe ministries and missions in action. Face-to-face interviews were insightful. Multiple sources of information including documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts were collected. Out of these sources overarching themes or "essences" were discovered. By triangulating the data the study's internal validity was increased.

The principles of grounded theory were followed as data gathered across multi-sites was examined and comparisons made to discover "patterns of unanticipated as well

[20] Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 14.

as expected relationships."[21] By making comparisons between data gathered across the three Charges, a substantive theory emerged as to key elements necessary for building collaborative ministry and mission. As mentioned earlier, four of Creswell's methods were used to validate findings. This researcher engaged and observed examples of collaborative ministry and mission, six sources of data were collected and triangulated, peer review or debriefing was practiced by working with a thesis advisor, and rich, thick descriptions were attempted so readers could make knowledgeable decisions concerning transferability.

The Weaknesses of the Project Design

In qualitative research "the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis."[22] There are advantages to this including the researcher being able to instantly respond and adapt, process information immediately, check with respondents for clarification and accuracy, and explore unusual responses. However, as Merriam writes, "The human instrument has shortcomings and biases that might have an impact on the study. Rather than trying to eliminate these biases or "subjectivities," it is important to identify them and monitor them to determine how they may be shaping the collection and interpretation of data."[23] Having been appointed to two multi-point Charges and having worked hard to build collaborative ministry and mission between the three congregations on the last Charge served, this researcher carried bias.

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[21] Robert E. Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1995), 41.

[22] Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 15.

[23] Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, 15.

Going into the project this researcher felt confident of several key principles for building collaborative relationships between congregations as well as the problems that can waylay such relationships. These ideas were carried with the researcher into the interviews and site visits. There were times when these biases did surface. For example, in one interview with Rev. Herr of the Nanticoke-Westside Charge, it was mentioned how some parishioners were not supportive of the collaborative efforts on the Charge. Having dealt with the same issue, this pastor shared a moment about his recent experience serving a multi-point Charge, and parishioners appearing to care more for their church building than the difference that could be made in the community if the congregations worked together collaboratively. These comments immediately took the conversation in the direction of how parishioners can give an inordinate amount of time, attention, and resources to their church buildings verses caring for the community and reaching the lost. In hindsight, this researcher believes his comments affected the direction of the conversation. Eventually, this researcher did lead the conversation back to the interview guide developed for the project.

Other weaknesses of the project design included the number of questionnaires completed. The questionnaires were handed out to and collected from church leaders by the pastors. Five questionnaires were received from the Lewes Charge, one from the Cecilton Charge, and two from the Nanticoke-Westside Charge. Secondly, the number of on-site visits was limited by time restraints and geographical distance. It would have been beneficial to have been able to observe other collaborative ministries and missions in action and talk to other lay leaders across the Charges. Lastly, due to time and other restraints the number of Charges studied was limited to three, leaving ten other multi-

point Charges suggested by the District Superintendents in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference believed to be doing effective collaborative ministry. What might have been learned if these other Charges could have been observed and their pastors and leadership interviewed?

Suggested Modifications for Improvement

There are several improvements that could be made to the current project. One respondent believed the questionnaire was too difficult and would have liked a multiple-choice or rating scale questionnaire. This may have resulted in a larger percentage of participation. Secondly, a greater number of on-site visits would have been beneficial to the research. Experiencing each congregation's Sunday morning worship and having opportunity to interview a greater number of lay leaders may have given further insights. Interviewing pastors that had served the appointments before the present pastor would have been illuminating. The collaborative relationships observed took many years to develop. Speaking with previous pastors who set some of the groundwork that is being built upon by the current leadership would give additional information.

Originally the District Superintendents offered up thirteen Charges across the Peninsula-Delaware Conference that they believed were doing effective collaborative ministry and mission. Again, because of time and other restraints only three of these Charges were studied. Observing and meeting the leadership across several more multi-point Charges would have added immensely to the data collected. Furthermore, interviewing the District Superintendents, past and present, could prove invaluable as they could share past history of Charges studied. This could be especially important when

it comes to mergers and closures in order to hear how Conference leadership believes the past history of each Charge impacted the current collaborative efforts.

The amount of research on collaboration is immense, especially in the fields of healthcare and education. It would be interesting to sit down with leaders in these fields, as well as observe collaborative ventures between churches and other secular organizations or non-profits. Analyzing this data alongside the data collected from the United Methodist Charges studied could lead to the discovery of "essences" that were overlooked.

Lastly, it was originally planned to further validate findings using "member checking," having pastors and lay leaders from the Charges where data was gathered review findings and interpretations. Due to time restraints this did not occur.

Possible Applications of the Project

The applications for this project are numerous. First, the five major themes or practices gathered can be applied by pastors serving multi-point Charges, in their unique settings, in an attempt to build an effective collaborative relationship between their churches. This information can be shared in workshops held for pastors of multi-point Charges in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference. In these workshops, data gathered could be shared and current pastors involved in effective collaborative ministry and mission could speak and share their experiences and insights.

Secondly, this project could impact the churches at the Conference level, challenging Conference leadership to begin to see collaboration between churches on multi-point Charges as a greater priority. It is a task that is time-consuming and takes many years to achieve, calling for longer appointments and long term planning at the

Conference level when it comes to leadership to be appointed to a multi-point Charge. The annual evaluation process could ask what collaborative efforts had been made over the last year and set collaborative goals for the upcoming year, helping pastors and their congregations see collaborative ministry and mission as a priority. Not only could the topic of collaboration be emphasized but also the pastor's investment in relationships. The Conference could begin taking steps further away from program and numbers toward a greater emphasis on relationships and mission.

Thirdly, the "essences" that surfaced through this research are not only applicable to pastors serving multi-point Charges. Currently, this researcher is serving one church which has three services each Sunday. Though not a multi-point Charge each service has its own unique personality. Many of the practices that have helped pastors bring their churches together on multi-point Charges may be able to be directly applied to building greater unity in a single congregation. Lastly, if one is intentional in focusing on relationships and being patient, while casting a vision of the future and calling the church to move outside its doors in mission, such practice should have an impact on any church and the surrounding community.

CHAPTER SEVEN: PERSONAL REFLECTION

New Insights

James MacGregor Burns writes, "The potential for real, intended change that addresses the deepest human needs turns crucially on the extent to which humans are able to separate themselves from their confining social roots and growth experiences and thus manage to control their destinies, to act creatively in pursuit of real change."[1] This pastor wants to pursue "real change" and "control [my] destiny." This pastor wants to help others leave a legacy, impact the kingdom of God, and become the men and women they were created to become. As a pastor, one wants to see people transformed and to see them sing, "I once was blind, but now I see."

Metamorphosis is the goal of our lives, our leadership, and our world. Paul wrote, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Cor. 5 ESV). As a pastor and leader, one wants others to experience what he/she has experienced in Christ, to become "new creations," allow the "old" to "pass away," and begin to help others, the church, and the world transform.

Certainly, such "metamorphosis" or "transformation" begins with self-examination and reflection. This is the starting point for our faith, recognizing that "As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one" (Rom. 3). It is also the starting point for our leadership. Especially as Christian leaders, we want to give God our very best,

[1] James MacGregor Burns, *Transforming Leadership* (New York, NY: Grove Press, 2003), 12.

making sure that one day we will hear "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25). We must recognize we have more to learn, further to go, and more people to impact. Through self-reflection we discover not only the transformation God is challenging us to undergo but we can be more effective in helping bring about transformation in others and our congregations.

For this researcher this project resulted in self-examination and reflection. Many of the "meaning units" or "essences" drawn from interviews conducted and observations made were not unfamiliar or surprising. Areas most challenging for this researcher are the need for patience and the importance of building relationships. It is not that these practices are foreign but this researcher realizes that these are two areas in which he must continue to grow.

One of the most recognized themes was the need for patience. The pastors and leadership interviewed would agree that without patience it is difficult, if not impossible, to build effective collaborative ministry. In hearing the many stories this pastor came to recognize the lack of patience in his own leadership. This pastor has always found it difficult coming into a new appointment and immediately seeing many problems which the congregation cannot see. It has always been difficult to take the time necessary to lay the groundwork, build relationships, communicate ideas, build critical mass, and help critics process the reasons behind the changes being suggested before jumping in. Often this pastor finds himself quickly making changes and moving the congregation in a new, future direction. The fast pace of these changes often results in individuals in the congregation being unable to mentally and emotionally process the changes; thus,

succumbing to their fears and suddenly feeling they have no control, they fight against the change. Nelson and Appel note,

> Sometimes the best approach is to move three steps forward and two steps back. The idea is to introduce the improvement significantly and then step back almost to square one, so as not to let too much opposition or stress develop. If you blow up a balloon a time or two, it will expand the latex. A flexible balloon will grow larger after it has been stretched a time or two. If you blow up a balloon to full capacity the first time, it's liable to burst.[1]

They continue, "While backing up two steps can feel discouraging after you have gone forward three, the net gain is one step. You are now one step closer to being the kind of church you want to be than you were before."[2]

Nelson and Appel explain a fact that this pastor has often been unable to accept or has ignored in the name of change. They argue,

> Sometimes, even after laborious effort, improvement plans need to be scrapped. Whether it is incompetent leadership, improper timing, the size of the change suggested, or a strong unwillingness within the congregation to adopt a change, there are times the chemistry is just not right. Good leadership knows when the risks are too great for a church and willfully concede without losing face or diminishing the validity of the need for improvement.[3]

This pastor has often found it extremely difficult to "scrap" an idea, especially when he feels strongly that it is God's leading. Whether it is adding a contemporary service, calling for a Charge-wide board meeting, designing a foreign mission trip, or starting a new ministry, this pastor has often simply jumped ahead with the leadership that have caught the vision and found himself at odds with a portion of the congregation who either

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[1] Nelson and Appel, *How to Change Your Church*, 286.

[2] Nelson and Appel, *How to Change Your Church*, 286.

[3] Nelson and Appel, *How to Change Your Church*, 287.

do not agree or have not had time to process the change. This lack of patience has often led to broken relationships.

James C. Hunter points out, "Effective leaders understand that everyone is important and adds value to an organization." He goes on to ask,

> Are we going to love (the verb) the people entrusted to our care? If the answer is 'Yes!' then we must get prepared to serve and sacrifice because one cannot love people (by definition) without serving and sacrificing for them. When we serve and sacrifice for others, we build authority (influence), and when we build authority with people, we begin earning the right to be called the leader. The greatest leader is the greatest servant, the one most dedicated to meeting the needs out there in a hurting world full of needs.[4]

The pastors interviewed all spoke of the importance of building relationships. There have been times when this pastor took a step forward in creating a new ministry or starting a contemporary service, but in the process stepped over several individuals who attempted to block the change. This pastor has often been quick to allow those individuals to leave or simply sit disgruntled in the congregation. Moments considered success may have been just the opposite as implementing the change caused relationships between pastor and parishioner to break down.

Jean Lipman-Blumen recognizes that "toxic leaders" do exist in the church and other organizations. She writes, "toxic leaders do … have poisonous effects that cause serious harm to their organizations and their followers."[5] There will always be congregates that cannot be reasoned with or convinced that changes suggested are warranted. These individuals are called "Hold Outs" by Rev. Herr and are termed "Foundationals" by Nelson and Appel. They describe "Foundationals" as those in the

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[4] James C. Hunter, *The World's Most Powerful Leadership Principle* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2004), 125.

[5] Jean Lipman-Blumen, "Toxic Leaders: They're Plentiful," *Leading Organizations: Perspectives for a New Er*a, ed. Gil Robinson Hickman (Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2010), 377-390.

church that prefer to keep things the same. Another group Nelson and Appel discuss are "Anchors," those who are focused on heritage, tradition, routine and rituals. Both these groups can be beneficial to the church in helping one not lose sight of past history and values, as well as helping the church not implement changes too quickly or without much thought. At the same time, according to Nelson and Appel, this group can sink any new ideas very quickly. They write, "More static and long-term churches and organizations tend to have more Foundationals and Anchors. When a disproportionate number of opinion leaders are Foundationals and Anchors, slim is the chance of inaugurating an aggressive improvement program."[6]

There were times in this researcher's tenure as a pastor that toxic leaders, Foundationals, or Anchors fought the change being introduced, did not seek God's desired direction, and were unfair in their assessments and behavior. Jesus had men and women leave and walk away when they could not accept His teachings. Every leader or pastor will have individuals who cannot agree, who cannot share the vision, and who cannot stay and be part of the change that is needed. This should not stop the leader from continuing to move the church forward in the direction the leadership feels God is guiding them. The questions this project raised for this researcher and pastor are: (1) Are there times when this pastor's impatience was the catalyst for broken relationships? (2) Are there times when this pastor could have connected with individuals who later became the opposition by focusing more on the relationships than programmatic changes? (3) Are there ways this pastor could have still implemented the changes needed while keeping relationships intact?

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[6] Nelson and Appel, *How to Change Your Church*, 76-78.

This pastor's focus in his early years of ministry was on programs, ministries, and missions. Many resources developed by Willow Creek, Saddleback, and other mega-churches focused on programs centered on Children's Ministry, Small Groups, and Youth Ministry. If this pastor's experience is similar to many who are entering the United Methodist Church today, being appointed to small congregations across our Conference, perhaps many of them are entering ministry focused on programs, church growth, and ministry expansion. These are noble and acceptable goals. Certainly, God wants us to grow our congregations and wants our ministries to be more effective. Yet, what this pastor observed to be most important in creating effective collaborative ministry was focusing on and building relationships. Across the Charges studied, building relationships was seen as being primary, not secondary, in bringing about changes in the small, established congregations served. Glenn Daman explains,

> The most important dynamic of administration in a small church is that leaders must be relational in their approach rather than organizational or programmatic. Small churches function based on relationships; thus, how we perform our administrative tasks must also be relational. As Douglas Walrath observes, 'Their past experience with 'outsiders' makes members of many small churches suspicious of administrators who function 'professionally' and organizationally. Their first concern is not whether an administrator is efficient or effective, but whether he or she is devoted to them…Members of small churches will respond with both energy and faith to the devoted ministry of a relational administrator.' In short, organizational skills are important but our relational skills are far more important. People in a small church desire a pastor and leader who relates well to them, rather than one who can simply run programs effectively."[7]

In an area such as the Peninsula-Delaware Conference where the majority of our congregations are well-established with a small membership perhaps it should be stressed to pastors appointed to these congregations that relationship building is far more important in the first several years than beginning new programs or ministries. Thus, the

[7] Glenn C. Daman, *Leading the Small Church: How to Develop a Transformational Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregal, 2006), 201.

fear of evaluation and the self-imagined pressure to create vibrant and mega-church-like ministries will not tempt one to step over people for the sake of change.

Furthermore, this pastor as researcher learned much about gathering and analyzing data, conducting interviews, and doing research. Many hours were spent in the beginnings of this project understanding qualitative research. Time was spent studying how to conduct interviews, how to formulate research questions, and how to analyze interviews in order to determine "meaning units" or "essences."

Lastly, this pastor was amazed at how affirming, convicting, and encouraging an experience it was sitting across the table from fellow clergy and talking about ministry. It has been stressed to pastors across the Peninsula-Delaware Conference and throughout the literature to have a clergy support group. It is important to have other clergy to lean on, share and discuss ideas, and vent when things happening are getting under one's skin. This pastor was amazed at how similar the stories of those interviewed were to his own story. The stresses, the battles, and the discouragement that those pastors interviewed felt and experienced were right in line with this pastor's own experiences. It helped greatly to talk with them and hear their stories. This pastor has not participated in such a covenant and accountability group with other clergy except on a very sporadic basis. It is an area all clergy should recognize as vital and necessary.

Where Do We Go From Here?

In the Peninsula-Delaware Conference, where we have many multi-point Charges comprised of several small, established congregations fifty years or older in a small geographical radius, there is a great need for competent leadership if the church is going

to see effective and sustained change. Remembering back to first starting in the ministry and being given an appointment to serve a congregation, this pastor went in with many preconceived notions of what a pastor should do and what a pastor would be evaluated on. Seminary classes did not prepare this pastor for the day to day relationships, conflict resolution, administration, organization, worship planning, and other responsibilities that one is immediately confronted with when placed in a first appointment. Many of the ideas this pastor had for expanding the ministry were based on mega-church ideas and programs, conferences attended, and books read. This pastor believed he would be evaluated on new-fangled innovative programs, increased membership, and the acquisition of new resources.

This pastor wonders if many young pastors appointed to serve a congregation, often before their seminary education is complete, may have similar notions of what success is and how one will be evaluated in their ministry. If this is the case, perhaps the Conference should spend time with new pastors on conflict resolution, building relationships, and casting vision, along with helping them to understand that priority should be given to relationship building not increased numbers.

Further research is needed to understand the ideas rookie pastors have concerning ministry and how to help these pastors understand the importance of patience, relationship building, and other non-programmatic skills for caring for the small established congregations. Furthermore, the Conference needs to look at how it expresses and how the evaluation process is received by pastors beginning to serve small established congregations. Perhaps how one defines effective and sustained change should be directly related to the particular congregation being assessed; thus, the pastor is

assessed within his or her context. Lastly, training offered by the Conference may need to shift its focus at times from programmatic issues to relationship issues and crucial conversations, especially since the majority of pastors in the Conference serve small membership congregations for whom relationship building and patience appears to be key.

APPENDIX A

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE VISION

Characteristics of an Effective Vision[1]

- *Imaginable*: Conveys a picture of what the future will look like
- *Desirable*: Appeals to the long-term interests of employees, customers, stockholders, and others who have a stake in the enterprise
- *Feasible*: Comprises realistic, attainable goals
- *Focused*: Is clear enough to provide guidance in decision making
- *Flexible*: Is general enough to allow individual initiative and alternative responses in light of changing conditions
- *Communicable*: Is easy to communicate; can be successfully explained within five minutes

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[1] John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 1996), 72.

APPENDIX B

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONAIRE *(PERSONALIZED FOR EACH CHARGE)*

Exploring the Principles behind Effective Collaborative Ministry on Multi-Point Charges in the Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Thank you for taking the time to answer the following five questions.
Please share as much detail as possible. Please attach additional sheets if necessary.

Church: _____
Leadership Positions: _____
Ministries Participate In: _____
Years Involved at Church: _____

1. Describe in detail the many collaborative ministries, missions, and committees across the Nanticoke-Westside Parish. How are Nanticoke, Bivalve, and Tyaskin working together?
2. Describe how you believe individuals from Nanticoke, Bivalve, and Tyaskin feel about working together collaboratively.
3. Have you experienced some across the Nanticoke-Westside Charge who have been hesitant or fearful to work together? Give examples.
4. Give examples of how your pastor and other church leaders have encouraged and communicated collaboration on the Nanticoke-Westside Parish.
5. Describe in detail a time Nanticoke, Bivalve, and Tyaskin worked together effectively?
6. Describe in detail a time Nanticoke, Bivalve, and Tyaskin were not very effective in working together?
7. What do you believe are the three (3) most important things that must happen, that need to be in place, for effective collaboration to happen between churches? Explain. Give examples.

APPENDIX C

BELSON'S SIXTEEN CATEGORIES OF DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

Belson's Sixteen Categories Of Difficult Questions[1]

1. Two questions presented as one (e.g. 'Which brand do you use or do you change brands frequently?').

2. Questions with a lot of meaningful words (e.g. 'How many of each sized packet have you bought?').

3. Questions which include qualifying phrases or clauses (e.g. 'Have you bought any chocolate in the last 7 days, not counting today?')

4. Questions with multiple ideas or subjects (e.g. 'Which have you heard of or stopped at?').

5. Questions that contain difficult or unfamiliar words.

6. Questions that contain one or more instructions (e.g. 'Do not include X in your answer').

7. Questions that start with words that are meant to soften them (e.g. 'Would you mind…').

8. Questions with difficult phrases.

9. Hypothetical questions.

10. Questions that are dependent upon prior questions for meaning.

11. Questions with negative elements.

12. Inverted questions (e.g. 'The ones you bought last time – what were they?)

13. Questions including either 'if any' or 'if at all' (e.g. 'Which of these, if any, have you bought?')

14. Questions that are too long.

15. Questions that include both present and past tenses.

16. Questions in which singular and plural cases are used.

[1] William Foddy, *Constructing Questions for Interviews and Questionnaires* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 51.

APPENDIX D

KVALE'S NINE TYPES OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Kvale's Nine Types of Interview Questions[1]

1. Introducing questions – can you tell me about?; do you remember an occasion when?; what happened in the episode you mentioned?; could you describe in as much detail as possible a situation in which learning occurred to you?

2. Follow up questions – mere nod, 'mm', pause, repeating significant words, notices unusual terms, strong intonations.

3. Probing questions – could you say something more about that?; can you give me a more detailed description of what happened?; do you have further examples of this?

4. Specifying questions – what did you think then?; what did you actually do when you felt a mounting anxiety?; how did your body react?

5. Direct questions – directly introduce topics and dimensions – have you ever received money for good grades?

6. Indirect questions – projective questions – how do you believe other pupils regard the competition for grades? – answers may say more about interviewees' own attitude.

7. Structuring questions – break off long answers irrelevant to topic – I would now like to introduce another topic.

8. Silence.

9. Interpreting questions – Is it correct…; does the expression….cover what you have just expressed?

[1] Steiner Kvale, *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research* Interviewing (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1996), 133-135.

APPENDIX E

KEY ELEMENTS IN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION OF A VISION

Key Elements in Effective Communication of a Vision[1]

1. *Simplicity*: all jargon and technobabble must be eliminated

2. *Metaphor, analogy, and example*: a verbal picture is worth a thousand words

3. *Multiple forums*: big meetings and small, memos and newspapers, formal and informal interaction: all are effective for spreading the word

4. *Repetition*: ideas sink in deeply only after they have been heard many times

5. *Leadership by example*: behavior from important people that is inconsistent with the vision overwhelms other forms of communication

6. *Explanation of seeming inconsistencies*: unaddressed inconsistencies undermine the credibility of all communication

7. *Give-and-take*: two-way communication is always more powerful than one-way communication

[1] John P. Kotter, *Leading Change*, 90.

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