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ENGAGING LEADERSHIP AT MARSHFIELD CHRISTIAN CHURCH

A THESIS PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DEGREE
IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP

BY

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ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

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ABSTRACT

This project addresses the dwindling number of people active in leadership roles at Marshfield Christian Church. Research focused on four aspects of church leadership: barriers and incentives to assuming a leadership role, characteristics of leaders, models for structuring leadership, and equipping the congregation to participate in leadership.

The researcher conducts a biblical and theological research on leadership in the New Testament, membership in the New Testament and the implications of relational theology on church leadership. A literature review on collaborative leadership, employee engagement, and changes in volunteering adds to the research. The field research for this project comprises surveys and focus groups conducted at Marshfield Christian Church and two other Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregations in southwest Missouri, interviews with the pastors of the two other congregations, and field notes from the researcher's experiences as pastor of Marshfield Christian Church. These data sources were used to create case studies for each congregation and a cross case analysis.

The research shows being directly asked to serve is a major contributor to engaging in leadership. The direct appeal counteracts the largest barrier to leadership, according to this research, the uncertainty about being qualified. The research identifies servant leadership as the primary characteristic of an effective church leader. Following the example set by Jesus and empowering others to participate in ministry are key components in building a culture promoting engagement in the mission of the church.

The research also points to an organizational structure which differentiates between management and leadership, and engages participants in collaborative leadership.

The researcher presents a comprehensive plan for transforming the leadership structures of Marshfield Christian Church and creating an organizational culture which supports current leaders and nurtures future leaders.

DEDICATION

In loving memory of my father, Frank Ruth, Jr. You inspired me to be the man, husband, father, and leader I am today.

CHAPTER ONE: THE NEED FOR ENGAGED LEADERSHIP

The Problem and Its Context

Statement of the Problem

The problem this project addresses is the difficulty Marshfield Christian Church (MCC) has experienced in filling leadership positions on the church board and on the elder board with engaged leaders. In response to this problem the researcher took five steps. First he studied leadership by examining the qualifications for church leadership in the Epistles, studying leadership models in the New Testament, researching membership in the New Testament, investigating the implications of relational theology on leadership. Second, he studied current leadership literature focusing on the trend toward flattened organizational structures and team leadership. During this second step the researcher also studied contemporary church leadership literature and engaged historical models of leadership within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).¹ Third, he explored the reasons congregants take on leadership roles, and why others do not. Fourth, he studied how three churches have addressed leadership engagement. Finally, the researcher used this information to develop a plan to promote engagement of leaders within MCC.

Delimitations

The biblical research focused on pertinent passages in the New Testament which describe biblical models of leadership and membership. The research also engaged texts

¹ The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will be referred to in this paper as “Disciples.”

from the Hebrew Bible related to relational theology. The research of leadership literature was limited to sources pertaining to the specific objectives of this project. The field research was limited to three churches in southwest Missouri which identify as members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). These churches are of similar size to MCC and in similar cultural contexts.

Assumptions

The first assumption is that the Bible informs Christian faith and life. The second assumption is that the Bible contains both descriptive and prescriptive texts. Some texts describe the context at the time of the writing of the Bible, while other texts are prescriptive and apply in the current context. The third assumption is that Christians are called to be a part of a community of faith. The fourth assumption is that being part of that community of faith requires both attendance and participation in the life and mission of the community. The fifth assumption is that the church requires leaders to fulfill its mission. The sixth assumption is that the researcher has a certain set of biases due to his situation in the research. As a married Caucasian male in his forties the researcher brought certain biases to the project. The seventh assumption is that the researcher attempted to remain aware of his biases during the research project and strived to minimize their impact. Where these biases became evident the researcher acknowledged them and attended to their impact on the research.

Subproblems

The first subproblem was to study leadership in the Bible, including the biblical qualifications for church leadership and the implications of a relational theology on church leadership.

The second subproblem was to study the relevant leadership literature, including church leadership literature and historical leadership within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

The third subproblem was to explore the reasons some congregants take on leadership roles and why others do not.

The fourth subproblem was to study how other congregations have addressed leadership engagement.

The fifth subproblem was to develop a plan to promote leadership engagement within Marshfield Christian Church.

Setting of the Project

The setting of the project was MCC. MCC is a small Disciples congregation in Marshfield, a rural, county-seat community in southwest Missouri about 20 miles outside of Springfield, a mid-sized community where many from Marshfield go to work. MCC has an average worship attendance of 80 on Sunday morning.

The 2010 census indicated that Marshfield and rural areas in the same zip code had a population of just over 15,000. The population grew by 18 percent from 2000 to 2010. While still growing, the expected growth rate through 2015 drops to nine percent. There is limited racial diversity, with 96 percent of the congregation identifying as Anglo. Two percent identified as Hispanic. African-American, Asian, Native American, and other racial backgrounds each accounted for less than one percent of the population. The distribution of generations in the community is similar to the national averages. The largest generational group is aged 29 to 49 at 29 percent of the population. The second-largest group, at 27 percent of the population, is those aged 9 to 28. While 76.9 percent of

the population age 25 and over have graduated high school that trails the national average of 80.4 percent. College graduates account for 11.9 percent of those over age 25. That also trails the national average of 24.4 percent. Between 2006 and 2015 the demographics of the congregation have changed and now closely reflect the community.

The researcher was called to be the pastor of MCC in the summer of 2006. During this time the congregation has seen a demographic shift. The researcher was in his early thirties when he began serving the church and his family was one of the youngest in the church. At the time there were several older couples in their eighties and several singles in their eighties and nineties. On any Sunday there could be six members over the age of 90 attending worship.

In the years since, most of those committed members have died. Currently there are no actively attending members over the age of 90. In the last few years there has been a significant growth in the number of younger adults attending the church. The largest areas of growth have been adults in their thirties and forties. These two age groups now represent the majority of those who attend Marshfield Christian Church.

Several individuals in these age groups have not chosen to join the church as members. Two women of the church have been members since being baptized as youth but their husbands are not members. Two other families have become very active in the life of the church but do not want to join because they see no significant reason to do so since they are involved in many church activities.

During this demographic shift finding people willing to serve as congregational leaders has become increasingly difficult. The annual nomination process cannot find qualified candidates to fill the leadership positions on the church board and the elders

over the past two years. The constituting documents of the church specify that one must be a member of the congregation to serve as a member of the board or as an elder.

In 2010, as a response to this growing difficulty, the congregation went through an organizational restructuring that decreased the size of the church board from over 40 to 14. Prior to this restructure all elders and deacons were members of the board. In this new structure the elders and deacons are represented by their chairpersons on the board. The overall number of committees was also reduced by combining the duties of several committees into one.

MCC is structured with three arenas for leadership: deacons, elders and the church board. The role of deacons was not considered in this project, since it is primarily to collect the offering and distribute the elements of communion during worship. Furthermore it has not been as difficult to find congregants willing to serve as deacons. The elders form the spiritual leadership of the church. They, with the pastor, preside at the communion table and are tasked with the spiritual care of the congregation. The pastor is an elder among elders. At times the pastor is called upon to lead the elders' meetings. For the past two years the elders have not elected a chairperson. Instead a more cooperative model has been used to fulfill duties.

The current church board has an executive committee comprising a moderator, vice-moderator, secretary, and treasurer. The pastor is an ex-officio member of the executive committee. The chairpersons of the committees of the church serve on the board. Those committees are: Community Ministry, Congregational Life, Property, Stewardship, and Worship. The remaining members of the board are the chair of the women's ministries, the chair of the elders, and the chair of the deacons.

Importance of the Project

The Importance of the Project to the Researcher

As a pastor serving in the local church, the researcher is deeply connected with and concerned about the ongoing survival of the local congregation. The current lack of engaged leadership within the church has put increasing pressure on the researcher to complete tasks and fulfill roles which consume his time and energy. The researcher believes this time and energy would be better spent ministering to individuals in the congregation and in the community.

The researcher is committed to the idea that a primary role of the pastor is to equip the congregation to minister in the community. However, when members of the congregation do not accept leadership positions in the church, the pastor is compelled to fill those roles. This causes the pastor a great deal of stress. This stress then inhibits the effective functioning of the researcher in both the congregation and his personal life. Gaining a better understanding of the dynamics of leadership within the local church and developing a plan to engage more leadership from within the congregation will help the pastor to reestablish a healthy balance between the vocation of ministry and his roles as husband, father, and community member.

The Importance of the Project to the Immediate Ministry Context

This project is important to MCC because the dwindling pool of eligible leaders is putting a strain on the current leadership of the congregation. With fewer and fewer people willing to serve in a leadership capacity, the missional outreach of the congregation is constrained to only one or two projects which are increasingly harder to sustain. As the leadership vacuum continues to grow within the congregation fewer and

fewer people are asked to complete the same tasks, which leads to an increased likelihood of burn-out among the few congregants willing to assume leadership positions.

As the congregation has become younger, the leadership of the congregation has remained constant. This is creating a growing divide between the perceived needs of the congregation and the actual needs of this younger demographic. Without developing a method to gain more input from the younger adults the congregation will probably continue to lose touch with their needs and lose relevance in their lives. As the situation stands, the congregation is struggling to attract younger families who do not already have ties to the congregation. This trend is disturbing and must be reversed if the congregation hopes to regain and then maintain vitality in the years to come.

The Importance of the Project to the Church at Large

This project will be useful for the larger church as the problem of developing and maintaining engaged leaders is faced by other congregations with whom the researcher has contact. By conducting the research with an awareness of the history and traditions of the Disciples the researcher hopes to develop a course of action which will be adaptable to different local congregations throughout the denomination.

An additional benefit for the larger church will be found in the potential to adapt the lessons of this project and apply them to the larger denominational structures of the Disciples. The middle judicatory and denominational levels of the church have been historically understood as an extension of the local congregation. As leadership has waned in the local church, so has involvement of the local congregations in the larger structures of the denomination. The researcher believes this project provides insight into those larger struggles. The results may provide insight into denominational revitalization.

Church members engaged with the life of the church and who will take on leadership roles are essential to the mission and vitality of the local congregation. Gaining an understanding of the factors that inhibit or promote the development of engaged leaders within the church is vital to the ongoing ministry of MCC. This project combines study of the Bible and theological reflection, study of contemporary literature and Disciples history, and field research to address leadership engagement.

CHAPTER TWO: A BIBLICAL BASIS FOR LEADERSHIP

Leadership in the New Testament

Barton Warren Stone and Alexander Campbell were seminal figures in the founding of the movement that would come to bear their names. One branch of the Stone-Campbell movement eventually developed into the denomination known as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). One of the distinctive attributes of the Disciples is the focus on restoration. The term “restoration” has been interpreted in many ways; however, Stone and Campbell “generally viewed restoration as the reformation of the church in terms of its origin, mission, and hope as set forth in the apostolic writings of the New Testament.”¹ For this reason, this research places an emphasis on the New Testament as the source for understanding leadership principles for the community of faith.

In examining the broad topic of leadership in the New Testament, several subtopics became evident. The first subtopic was to identify the leadership model of Jesus and how that model was lived out in the early church. The second subtopic is the overlap between the model of equipping found in Ephesians 4:12 and the ideal of engagement within the life of the church. Finally, the qualifications for leadership in the New Testament were investigated and the researcher sought to determine whether they are applicable today.

¹ Douglas A. Foster, ed., *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 638.

Jesus' Example of Leadership

There are many models of leadership available to leaders. Christian leaders in the church are wise to look to the example of Jesus, and to follow that example in their own leadership style. Jesus' leadership style was one of empowering service. As Robert Greenleaf detailed in *Servant Leadership*, "The servant-leader is servant first ... It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first*. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (italics in original).² Jesus is such a leader. More than just serving by himself, Jesus empowers his disciples to participate in his mission.

One example of Jesus' leadership through service is found in John 13:1-7. Jesus washes the feet of his disciples as they prepare for the Passover meal. Foot washing was common way of welcoming guests and "was normally performed by the guests themselves, or by servants at the behest of the host."³ The disciples are incredulous that Jesus would take on the role of a servant. Peter speaks for them in protest. He views Jesus as his master and refuses the service of foot-washing, saying, "You shall never wash my feet" (John 13:8).⁴

In her hermeneutical analysis of John 13:1-20, Sandra Schneiders notes that "what sounds like a perfectly understandable expression of embarrassment or even humility is understood by Jesus as a fundamental rejection of the divinely chosen expression of the

² Robert K. Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey Into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness*, 25th ed., ed. Larry C. Spears, Stephen R. Covey, and Peter M. Senge (New York: Paulist Press, 2002), 27.

³ Gail R. O'Day, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 9, *John* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 722.

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations are from *The Holy Bible, New International Version* (Colorado Springs: International Bible Society, 1984).

meaning of salvation.”⁵ Schneiders writes that in stooping to wash the feet of his disciples Jesus prophetically links his suffering and crucifixion with the ideal of service.⁶ Peter does not understand the depth of what Jesus is doing by serving his disciples.

Schneiders claims that “Peter was not merely objecting to having his feet washed by another but specifically to the reversal of service roles between himself and Jesus.”⁷ As he stooped to wash the feet of his disciples, Jesus challenged everything his followers understood about their relationship. Though he was rightly their master, Jesus voluntarily took on the role of servant. Schneiders writes, “In service the server lays aside, temporarily or even permanently, his or her own project, goal, good, or at least convenience for the sake of fostering the good of the other.”⁸ This understanding of service is also seen in Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross.

Despite Peter’s objections, Jesus insisted on completing this act of service. After he washed the disciples’ feet, Jesus dressed and returned to explain his actions of service: “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:13-15). Washing the feet of his disciples, Jesus sets forth a pattern of service that his followers are expected to emulate.

⁵ Sandra M. Schneiders, “The Foot Washing (John 13:1-20): An Experiment in Hermeneutics.” *Ex Auditu* 1, (1985): 139-140.

⁶ Schneiders, 139.

⁷ Schneiders, 139.

⁸ Schneiders, 140.

Servant-leadership is not manipulative. Jesus does not serve the disciples to gain influence as their leader. Rather, Jesus' service flows from a deep love for his disciples. In contrast to Jesus' servant leadership, Greenleaf describes a leader-servant as "one who is *leader* first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive, or to acquire material possessions. For such, it will be a later choice to serve – after leadership is established" (italics in original).⁹ Jesus does not serve because he is a leader; rather he leads because he is a servant. Henry and Richard Blackaby note that servant leadership "flows from the love leaders have for God and their people."¹⁰ John roots Jesus' act of service to his disciples in his deep love for them: "Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love" (John 13:1).

The service of Jesus is rooted in his example on the cross. According to *The Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, "The call to service in love overshadows normal human desires for rank and preference and calls individuals to lay these aside for the sake of Christ and the needs of others."¹¹ This attribute of love-based service is to be the distinguishing mark of the community of faith. As Jesus tells the disciples, "everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35).

Service is not the only important attribute of Jesus' leadership. As Jesus tells the disciples after washing their feet, "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). It is not enough for Jesus to

⁹ Greenleaf, 27.

¹⁰ Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People On to God's Agenda*, rev. ed. (Nashville: B and H Publishing Group, 2011), 199.

¹¹ Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight, *The IVP Bible Dictionary Series*, vol. 6, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 750.

be a servant; Jesus' followers are expected to serve others. Jesus not only serves, but empowers his followers to serve.

Schneiders describes three reasons for serving: requirement, need, and friendship.¹² Requirement-based service occurs when the server is mandated to perform the service for the other, without regard to desire. Slaves and indentured servants must serve their masters. Schneiders writes this model of service is always predicated on domination. She notes that in structures where service is required, exploitation and oppression are inevitable because of a power differential between a superior who may demand service and an inferior whose duty it is to render the service.¹³ In the need-based model the server acts on behalf of the other because they understand that they have the ability and power to meet a need, whether real or perceived. Although need-based service may be preferential to requirement-based service, Schneiders notes the flaw is the service is still based on an unequal relationship. The server acts out of a sense of superiority, of having something that the served needs and cannot obtain on his or her own.¹⁴ This service only continues as long as the server maintains a sense of superiority over the persons being served. Finally she identifies a friendship-based model. Schneiders claims that friendship is based not on a relationship with a power differential but on equality. Service between friends does not have the same inequalities as required or need-based service. Service between friends occurs when the server seeks the good of his or her friend. Ultimately, the relationship between friends means that the server's own good is

¹² Schneiders, 140-141.

¹³ Schneiders, 140.

¹⁴ Schneiders, 141.

achieved, but this is not the goal. The entire focus of service in a friendship is to attain the goal of the good of the other.¹⁵

As Jesus stoops to wash the feet of his disciples he does so out of friendship. In that same evening Jesus will declare “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends” (John 15:15). This focus on friendship transforms the concept of service. Schneiders writes, “Jesus’ self-gift was not, in John’s perspective, the master’s redemption of unworthy slaves but an act of friendship.”¹⁶

Schneiders emphasizes the importance of Jesus’ service to his disciples:

In washing the feet of his disciples Jesus symbolizes his impending death, his love of his disciples unto the end, by an act of menial service. He did not choose an act of service proceeding from his real and acknowledged superiority to them as teacher and Lord. Such an act would have expressed the inequality between himself and his disciples, their inferiority to him. Instead, Jesus acted to abolish the inequality between them, deliberately reversing their social positions and roles.¹⁷

Even slaves could not be forced to wash the feet of another. According to Schneiders, however, “Any act of service is permissible and freeing among friends. By washing his disciples’ feet Jesus overcame by love the inequality which existed by nature between himself and those whom he had chosen as friends.”¹⁸

Jesus’ service of his disciples is made even more important because he instructs them to “wash one another’s feet” (John 13:14). In his article on mentoring, Ron Belsterling claims that in serving his disciples and instructing them to go and do likewise

¹⁵ Schneiders, 141.

¹⁶ Schneiders, 142.

¹⁷ Schneiders, 142.

¹⁸ Schneiders, 142.

Jesus is instructing the disciples in a way of life.¹⁹ The emphasis is not on knowing Jesus or knowing how to love others. Jesus' instruction to the disciples to serve one another demonstrates his desire that his followers express their love through acts of service. Jesus casts his vision of how the disciples are to live when he is no longer with them, emphasizing that knowing him or how to love others is not enough; one will be blessed when love is expressed through service. Belsterling emphasizes that Jesus intends for his disciples to love one another through serving one another, even being willing to die for one another. Not only was Jesus a servant-leader, he anticipated that his disciples would participate in that same form of leadership. Belsterling claims that "Jesus used the foot washing as an object lesson to teach his disciples that loving others meant humbly serving them."²⁰ This inclusion of the disciples in his ministry is another important aspect of Jesus' leadership style.

Another example of Jesus' empowering leadership is found in the sending of the seventy (Luke 10:1-16).²¹ Jesus gathers seventy of his disciples and instructs them on the mission they are to undertake. He provides guidelines for how much they are to rely on others, what they are to do, and even what to do if they are not welcomed. In these brief verses Jesus embodies a model of leadership that engages others in ministry.

In *The New Interpreter's Bible* commentary on Luke, Alan Culpepper claims that Jesus' commissioning of his disciples is a guide for contemporary ministry. He identifies

¹⁹ Ron Belsterling, "The Mentoring Approach of Jesus as Demonstrated in John 13." *Journal of Youth Ministry* 5, no. 1 (2006): 83.

²⁰ Belsterling, 84.

²¹ Manuscripts differ in the number of disciples who are commissioned and sent on this mission. Some manuscripts have the number at seventy, while others have seventy-two. Although the NIV has chosen seventy-two, seventy will be used in this paper for consistency and simplicity.

ten principles in the commissioning. The third principle is the insistence “on the active participation of each disciple.”²² According to Culpepper, “The work of the church is not merely the calling of a select few. Believers can contribute to it in their own way and in the context of their own spiritual journey.”²³ John Queen in “A Biblical Theology of Leadership as Seen in the Gospel of Luke” echoes these attributes of service and empowerment. He writes that the qualities of a spiritual leader, “Include genuine humility, effectual prayer, realistic and stimulating vision, a balanced sense of authority, and the secure, courageous ability to confront sin.”²⁴ Queen notes, “All of these qualities come together for the distinctive purpose of serving others.”²⁵ The balanced sense of authority displayed by the spiritual leader demonstrates an understanding that the servant is not greater than the master (John 13:16), while simultaneously promoting the involvement of the servant in the work of the harvest (Luke 10:2).

Robert Menzies ties the sending of the seventy to missionary work in the contemporary church. Menzies writes, “The sending of the seventy anticipates the mission that every post-Pentecost disciple of Jesus is called and empowered to carry forward.”²⁶ He claims that the sending of the disciples into the countryside to participate in ministry is a precursor of the founding of the church at Pentecost: “The sending of the seventy foreshadows the outpouring of the Spirit upon all the Lord’s people and their

²² R. Alan Culpepper, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 9, *Luke* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995), 222.

²³ Culpepper, 222.

²⁴ John Wesley Queen, Jr. “A Biblical Theology of Leadership as Seen in the Gospel of Luke” Masters Thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1984, 73.

²⁵ Queen, 73.

²⁶ Robert P. Menzies. "The Sending of the Seventy and Luke's Purpose." in *Trajectories in the Book of Acts*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2010), 100.

universal participation in the mission of God. In Luke's view, every believer is called to take up Israel's prophetic vocation and be 'a light to the nations' by bearing bold witness for Jesus."²⁷ This shows the expectation of participation in the life and work of the community of faith.

Menzies claims there is no such thing as a lone Christian. He notes that "Luke seeks to remind the Christians in his church of their true identity – they are a community of prophets called to be a 'light to the nations.'"²⁸ The identity of the Christian is tied up with his or her existence and participation within community.

In his work on mission and the sending of the seventy, Sam Mathew comments on the qualifications of leaders. He claims, "It is significant that there is no mention of any special apostolic authority or approval for mission. Mission is entrusted to all the disciples of Jesus or followers of Jesus. All the citizens of the Kingdom must be involved in the mission of Jesus."²⁹ This underscores the empowering leadership of Jesus and the breaking down of hierarchy. This dismantling of power structures is of particular importance today as society in the United States moves away from hierarchical structures. The sending of the seventy is important because "there was no gradation of mission. All hierarchy in Christian mission is demolished by this incident. All the disciples of Jesus had equal responsibility and authority in the mission of God."³⁰ According to Mathew, the sending of the seventy requires and empowers Christians to

²⁷ Menzies, 112.

²⁸ Menzies, 113.

²⁹ Sam P. Mathew, "Jesus' Way of Doing Mission: Christian Mission Revisited (Luke 10:1-11)." *Religion and Society* 56, no.1 (March 1, 2011): 9.

³⁰ Mathew, 9.

engage in the mission of the church. The sending of the seventy, therefore, supports collaborative structures for the church as opposed to prevalent hierarchical models.

The sending of the seventy is a very egalitarian move. Jesus does not send the disciples to do menial tasks but engages them as equal participants in ministry. Mathew explains, “The seventy disciples were called to do precisely what Jesus did and to go where Jesus intended to go. The arena and the task of mission are the same as that of Jesus’ mission. The seventy disciples were sent instead of Jesus. They were expected to be like Jesus in every manner.”³¹ The seventy, however, were not expected to accomplish their task alone. Besides being sent in pairs, the limited resources Jesus instructs them to take for the mission force them to depend on others for their survival and their mission. This is a powerful demonstration of the communal nature of faith and service.

Mathew claims God’s mission is to involve the whole of the faith community and should not rest wholly in the hands of the apostles, pastors, and church leaders. According to Mathew, authentic Christian mission requires the involvement of the whole community of faith. He concludes, “Jesus in the Gospel of Luke gave the mission mandate to all the disciples to be messengers of *shalom* and healing, ushering in a new community of love, service and humility” (italics in original).³² The sending of the seventy illustrates three themes in the leadership of Jesus: service, sharing of ministry, and the emphasis on community.

Jesus’ leadership style of service and empowerment is also evident in John 14:12-14. As Jesus is preparing the disciples for his death and departure he makes a bold claim

³¹ Mathew, 9.

³² Mathew, 16.

of empowerment. Jesus tells his disciples they cannot carry on the work he has been doing but that they will do even more: “Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12). This verse is another indicator that believers are participants in the work and mission of Jesus. Throughout his ministry Jesus declares the works he does are not his own but God’s. John, according to Gail O’Day, “Includes those who believe in Jesus in the mutuality of work; the disciples’ works will be Jesus’ works in the same way that Jesus’ works are God’s.”³³

Jesus tells the disciples they will go beyond participation. Jesus says they “will do even greater things, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12). The final portion of this phrase is important. Because Jesus is going to be with God, the disciples are able to “reveal the completed story of the Word made flesh and hence the fullness of God’s love.”³⁴ By the nature of our faith Christians also participate in revealing the completed story of Jesus as Word made flesh, both as individual Christians and as members of the community of faith.

Equipping the Saints for Ministry

In *Leading the Team-Based Church*, George Cladis claims church leadership practices and structures must be consistent with how the church understands the nature of God. According to Cladis, “The biblical and theological model for team-based ministry ... is based on the triune nature of God.”³⁵ For Cladis, God’s existence as Trinity

³³ O’Day, 746.

³⁴ O’Day, 746.

³⁵ George Cladis, *Leading the Team-Based Church: How Pastors and Church Staffs Can Grow Together Into a Powerful Fellowship of Leaders* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 3.

compels churches to embody a plurality of leadership. Many texts within the New Testament point to a plurality of leadership. What is less clear is whether those texts are prescriptive or descriptive.

In *Doing Church as a Team*, Wayne Cordeiro writes these biblical texts are more than descriptive of the way church was done in the early centuries; they are prescriptive for how churches are to function now. He asserts that “doing church as a team is merely a return to the way God designed the church to function. The ministry of the church is not the responsibility of a few professionals; it is the divine responsibility of every one of us.”³⁶

Cordeiro asserts the call to evangelism and ministry is not limited to pastors. All Christians are responsible for sharing the gospel. He bases his argument on Acts 17: “He marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him” (Acts 17:26-27). Cordeiro asserts that each person of faith is uniquely designed and placed by God to minister to others.

Cladis and Cordeiro have not developed a new case in supporting a distributed leadership in the church. The Apostle Paul promotes a similar message in Ephesians. He instructs the church, “Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-13). The role of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers is

³⁶ Wayne Cordeiro, *Doing Church as a Team*, rev. ed. (Ventura, CA: Bethany House Publishers, 2004), 37.

not to do the work of ministry on their own. Rather, they are to equip God's people to participate in the ministry of Christ. Judith Marie Gundry-Volf writes, "Although the particular offices refer to those who are in charge of guiding the church after the apostle's death, Ephesians assumes that all Christians are part of the building process."³⁷ She notes that "maturity involves the community as a whole, and not merely particular individuals."³⁸ This indicates the models of shared leadership in the New Testament are prescriptive for the church.

Note the difference between participatory leadership and the empowering, shared leadership of the New Testament. In his study "Decentralization and Shared Leadership in the New Testament" Justin Irving notes:

In contrast to purely directive forms of leadership behavior, participative leaders seek to consult with followers by utilizing subordinate suggestions prior to making decisions. While participatory leadership is helpful in that it may lead to a greater sense of subordinate involvement, it is important to note that it differs from more collaborative forms of shared leadership.³⁹

Shared leadership structures flatten organizational structures and elevate the ideal of teamwork. Shared leadership does not require everyone on the team to participate in every task. Individuals will still have specific tasks to complete. However, instead of reporting to a supervisor the individual reports to the team of which he or she is a part. Cladis turns to the image of the Trinity to explain the flattening of structures, especially within the church. According to Cladis, "The divine community of the Trinity provides a

³⁷ Judith Marie Gundry-Volf, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 11, *Ephesians* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 422.

³⁸ Gundry-Volf, 422.

³⁹ Justin A. Irving, "Decentralization and the Shared Leadership of the New Testament" (paper utilized in a course on team leadership, Bethel Seminary, St. Paul, February 2015), 4, accessed August 6, 2015, http://people.bethel.edu/~irvjus/PDF/Irving_Decentralization_Shared_Leadership_of_the_NT.pdf.

helpful image for human community that reflects the love and intimacy of the Godhead. Hierarchical distinctions in human community give way to a sense of the body of Christ, with each part equal and important.”⁴⁰ These biblical texts provide a framework for collaborative models of leadership in the church.

Qualifications for Leadership

MCC has two leadership structures, the elders and the church board. The elders are primarily responsible for the spiritual leadership of the congregation and the church board is tasked with the programmatic administration of the church. The qualifications for these leaders are defined in the by-laws of the congregation and roughly follow the qualifications set forth for elders in First Timothy.

First Timothy provides a detailed list of qualifications for elders and deacons. There is no description in the New Testament of the qualifications for leaders on a church board as that structure was not in place. The qualifications can, however, be extended to the board members. The church board members are stewards of the resources of the congregation. Therefore, they play a significant leadership role in the life of the church.

An extensive list of qualifications for overseers in the church is found in the third chapter of First Timothy. Overseer, according to James Dunn, “Derives from the idea of a ‘visitation’ to bring about good ... but already it had been extended to denote the regular function or office that had such oversight as its function.”⁴¹ Dunn notes that Paul links the role of elders with that of overseers in Acts 20:28. Whether the title is overseer or elder, these leaders of the church are expected to meet certain qualifications.

⁴⁰ Cladis, 5.

⁴¹ James D. G. Dunn, *The New Interpreters Bible*, vol. 11, *1 Timothy* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000), 805.

The qualifications for eldership in First Timothy support the qualifications for leadership at MCC. According to the text, “The overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect” (1 Timothy 3:2-4). One marked difference between this list and the leadership practices at MCC is the inclusion of women as deacons, elders, board members, and potentially pastors.

The NRSV translates “faithful to his wife” as “married only once.” MCC has barred no one from leadership based on his or her divorce. This demonstrates the emphasis on the context surrounding biblical texts in MCC’s interpretations. Ed Glasscock writes that “these are requirements, not ideals toward which an elder might hope to strive.”⁴² Richard Mayhue agrees that the list of virtues in First Timothy is not negotiable.⁴³ Furthermore Mayhue asserts, “Every man being considered for a leadership role in the church should be evaluated on the basis of . . . spiritual qualities, *not* on his success in the marketplace alone” (italics in original).⁴⁴

Other scholars allow for a broader interpretation of these qualifications for leadership. Benjamin Merkle writes that “the qualifications given to Timothy and Titus are general in nature in the sense that they are basic characteristics that were valued in

⁴² Ed Glasscock, "The Biblical Concept of Elder." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 144, no. 573 (January 1, 1987): 74.

⁴³ Richard L. Mayhue, "Authentic Spiritual Leadership." *Master's Seminary Journal* 22, no. 2 (2011): 219.

⁴⁴ Mayhue, 215.

society and expected of all Christians.”⁴⁵ According to Merkle, the author of the epistles used an existing list and adapted it to meet the context of the situations to which he was writing. Merkle writes that “regardless of whether Paul created a list *ex nihilo* or borrowed and adapted a somewhat standardized list of virtues, he offered a list that was applicable to the particular situation of his audience.”⁴⁶ In his article on the qualifications for leadership in the Pastoral Epistles, John Goodrich notes that the lists of leadership qualifications “resemble and were perhaps influenced by the Hellenistic convention of the duty code.”⁴⁷ Goodrich writes:

Because the vice and virtue lists prescribed for Christian overseers also contain general characteristics suitable for non-leaders and even non-Christians, many scholars have argued that the overseer lists were not originally, or entirely, crafted for ecclesial officers, but were adopted from an existing duty code with minimal adaptation for a specifically Christian context.⁴⁸

Goodrich further explains distinct similarities between the biblical description of a qualified elder and the attributes desired in a steward.⁴⁹ These similarities illuminate the role of congregational leaders as stewards of the community of faith. Leaders are, therefore, stewards of not only the financial resources of the congregation, but the human, physical, spiritual, and emotional resources.

One of the difficulties experienced at MCC is several potential leaders have not formally become members of the church. The constituting documents of the congregation

⁴⁵ Benjamin L. Merkle, "Are the Qualifications for Elders or Overseers Negotiable?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 171, no. 682 (April 1, 2014): 175.

⁴⁶ Merkle, 176.

⁴⁷ John K. Goodrich, "Overseers as Stewards and the Qualifications for Leadership in the Pastoral Epistles." *Zeitschrift Für Die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft Und Die Kunde Der Älteren Kirche* 104, no. 1 (2013): 77.

⁴⁸ Goodrich, 78.

⁴⁹ Goodrich, 85.

state that elders and board members must be members of the congregation. This issue is not directly addressed by the list of qualifications for overseer in 1 Timothy. However, the admonition that the candidate “must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil” (1 Tim. 3:6) provides insight. Glasscock emphasizes that a candidate for leadership “would need to be of sufficient age to have manifested [the] characteristics”⁵⁰ presented in 1 Timothy. The impetus for requiring membership as a prerequisite for leadership helps to ensure the candidate has sufficient experience with the congregation. MCC has participants who have been active in the life of the church for a decade or more and have not chosen to become members. The membership requirement silences their voices in the leadership of the congregation. Because the participation of all voices is an ideal for MCC, it is important to investigate a biblical understanding of membership in the church.

Membership in the New Testament

Identifying Jesus’ style of leadership and a biblical understanding of shared leadership requires determining who is a member of the church community. In *I Am a Church Member* Thom Rainer describes two ways of conceptualizing church membership. He describes a biblical model which focuses on the concept of covenant. Rainer claims that “many churches are weak because we have members who have turned the meaning of membership upside down.”⁵¹ Rainer calls this “country club membership.”⁵² In this understanding “membership is about receiving instead of giving,

⁵⁰ Glasscock, 75

⁵¹ Thom S. Rainer, *I Am a Church Member: Discovering the Attitude That Makes the Difference* (Nashville, TN: B and H Books, 2013), 6.

⁵² Rainer, 11.

being served instead of serving, rights instead of responsibilities, and entitlements instead of sacrifices.”⁵³ He continues, “This wrongful view of membership sees the tithes and offerings as membership dues that entitle members to a never-ending list of privileges and expectations, instead of an unconditional cheerful gift to God.”⁵⁴ Rainer writes this view of membership is at odds with the biblical ideal detailed in 1 Corinthians 12.

First Corinthians 12:12-31 is a lengthy description of how the members of the community of faith are to relate to one another. Paul uses the image of the human body to describe the different abilities and responsibilities of each person in the church. He also emphasizes the unity between Jewish and Gentile believers, “Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many” (1 Cor. 12:12-14). In his article on the analogy of the body of Christ, James Breed notes as Paul extends the image of the body to the church, he moves beyond analogy. According to Breed, “Paul seems to be pushing his own analogy to its logical limits when he says that the Church does not merely appear to be a body, nor merely function like a body, but actually is in some real sense a body – the body of Christ.”⁵⁵

Because of the emphasis on membership in the community of faith, understanding the requirements for membership at MCC is important. At MCC membership requires expressing a desire to become a member of the church, making or affirming a profession

⁵³ Rainer, 11.

⁵⁴ Rainer, 11.

⁵⁵ James Breed, “The Church as the ‘Body of Christ’: A Pauline Analogy,” *The Near East School of Theology Theological Review* 1, no.2 (November 1985): 12.

of faith, and undergoing baptism. The prospective member need not be baptized at MCC or by any particular method. All that is required is that the candidate has been baptized. When membership is being announced to the congregation the new member reaffirms his or her faith in God. Some active participants in the congregation have, however, chosen not to become members. This limits the pool of potential leadership candidates.

In 1809 Thomas Campbell published the “Declaration and Address.” This document, along with the “Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery,” formed the foundation of the Stone-Campbell movement. One of the basic principles of the “Declaration and Address” is that “the church of Christ on earth is ‘essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one,’ in which case schism is a ‘horrid evil’ destructive of the visible body of Christ. Local congregations (‘societies’) of Christians are the expression of this one universal church and, as such, should not be divided from one another but exercise the same mind.”⁵⁶ Unity among communities of believers was one of Campbell’s primary concerns. In describing the church Campbell employs Paul’s image of the church as the body of Christ.

Campbell emphasis on one universal church with different local expressions has the potential to dramatically affect the understanding of church membership. When the emphasis is moved from a local community and the individual Christian is primarily seen as a member of the universal body of Christ, the emphasis shifts from membership in the local community to membership in the church universal and being a member of the local congregation takes on a different tone. Following Thomas Campbell’s logic, church

⁵⁶ Douglas A Foster, Paul M. Blowers, Anthony L. Dunnivant and D. Newell Williams, eds. *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian Churches/Churches of Christ, Churches of Christ*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004). s.v. “Declaration and Address”, 264.

membership could be understood as a result of engaged participation and not a prerequisite for it.

In his discussion of engaged membership Rainer proposes a series of pledges for church members to make. Though he does not use the language, he is promoting viewing membership as a covenant. Rainer's description of country-club membership is a contractual metaphor and functioning membership is a covenantal one. The concepts of contract and covenant have been used almost interchangeably. But, understanding the difference is valuable when contemplating the concept of church membership. Scott Hahn writes this about the difference between a covenant and a contract:

Contractual relations usually exchange property, exchange goods and services, whereas covenants exchange persons. So, when people enter into a covenant, they say, "I am yours and you are mine." So, God uses the covenant to enter into a relationship with those whom he created in his own image: humanity and all human persons.⁵⁷

Paul emphasizes this understanding of membership in the universal body of Christ and as a covenantal relationship with God as he continues in 1 Corinthians. He writes, "If the foot should say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. And if the ear should say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' it would not for that reason stop being part of the body" (1 Cor. 12:15-16). Thomas Campbell's argument for Christian unity also emphasizes the body of Christ universal. A broader understanding of the relationship between the individual Christian and the body of Christ holds the potential to transform the understanding of church membership. Instead of concerns about whether an individual has publicly expressed a desire to join a local church, the emphasis is shifted to

⁵⁷ Scott Hahn, "Salvation History: One Holy Family," accessed May 13, 2015, <http://www.star.ucl.ac.uk/~vgg/rc/aplgtc/hahn/m2/slvhst1.html>.

whether that person has expressed his or her covenantal relationship with God through engagement within the localized community of faith.

The need for many parts to ensure the proper functioning of a body is, at first, an empowering image. In her reflection on 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, Carol Troupe expresses an important perspective. She writes:

On the surface, [the idea of unity] creates a comforting ideal where our differences (whatever they may be) do not matter when we come together in Christ, since we all have a part to play. This sense of focusing on unity has its value and validity up to a point, but there is often a sense in which, in our apparent quest to emphasize unity in Christ, we are actually trying our utmost to avoid exploring or even acknowledging an idea of the differences that exist between us.⁵⁸

Troupe questions the concept that each part in the body of Christ is divinely placed in a role. She claims this passage, besides encouraging unity, can also endorse accepting inequality in power and privilege which leads to injustice and marginalization. She explains this text can promote acceptance of the status quo.⁵⁹ Troupe claims Paul's call to unity does not raise concerns for the privileged. For the marginalized, however, it can encourage the acceptance of their status as outsiders by explaining it as a part of God's will.

Paul describes hands, feet, and a head in his analogy. He also discusses that there are stronger and weaker parts in the body. In considering the weaker parts, Troupe asks,

What does this say to those churches where, whether through class, color or gender, people are divided into those encouraged and expected to preach, lead groups and sit on committees and those limited to filling the pews and making the

⁵⁸ Carol Troupe, "One Body, Many Parts: a Reading of 1 Corinthians 12:12-27." *Black Theology* 6, no. 1 (January 1, 2008): 33.

⁵⁹ Troupe, 40.

tea, neither encouraged nor provided with the tools to take on leadership roles within their own churches because they are deemed unsuitable or “unqualified”⁶⁰

Troupe demonstrates how this text can be understood to promote exclusion and hierarchy. Troupe’s liberationist perspective emphasizes the importance of considering the potential for misunderstanding and misusing this analogy.

In her article on how Paul’s ecclesiology can affect the contemporary church, Kathryn Reinhard examines the challenge of holding the ideals of unity and diversity in balance.⁶¹ She claims that “the question of how to respect embodied difference while maintaining communal unity in the church is especially pressing in our contemporary moment, when the cultural and religious pluralisms that characterize our globalized society function more to separate than to interconnect us.”⁶²

She writes this description of unity does not require uniformity in belief or action. Rather, according to Reinhard, “Paul’s theological and pastoral convictions led him to articulate ecclesial principles which attempt to respect diversity in identity and practice, even as he advocates for a robust and dynamic understanding of unity and mutual relationship.”⁶³ Reinhard notes that Paul did not develop a systematic ecclesiology, applicable to every situation, but developed a set of principles that could be applied to many contexts.

Note “that this image is not unique to Paul, but was a common trope in ancient political literature. *Homonoia*, or concord, speeches ... often described the polis or a

⁶⁰ Troupe, 42.

⁶¹ Kathryn L. Reinhard, “Conscience, Interdependence, and Embodied Difference: What Paul’s Ecclesial Principles Can Offer the Contemporary Church.” *Anglican Theological Review* 94, no. 3 (June 1, 2012): 403-438.

⁶² Reinhard, 403.

⁶³ Reinhard, 404.

social group as an interdependent body” (italics in original).⁶⁴ Reinhard addresses the concern raised by Troupe by referring to Dale Martin’s *The Corinthian Body* to note that “Paul’s use of the body metaphor in 1 Corinthians is ‘at odds with the dominant goal of *homonoia* speeches, which is to solidify the social hierarchy by averting lower-class challenges to the so-called nature status structures that prevail in society” (italics in original).⁶⁵

Reinhard’s examination of the body metaphor is informed by the discussion of Jesus’ service to his disciples in the foot washing from John’s gospel. She notes that Paul’s use of the concept of the body subverts the normal understanding of what is more or less honorable and illustrates the differences between God’s values and the values of the world. This bears a remarkable similarity to the role reversal that causes Peter to balk at allowing Jesus to wash his feet.

Far from Troupe’s concerns, Reinhard writes that Paul’s use of the body as a metaphor for the church prizes equality in diversity and emphasizes the need for understanding the nuanced relationships between disparate people of faith. This is evident as he writes, “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it” (1 Cor. 12:26). Although the metaphor could be misused to enforce the status quo, Paul’s vision is focused on creating equality while maintaining a sense of uniqueness. According to Reinhard, “In this vision of interdependence, equal status does not come through erasure or denial of embodied difference because difference is not an indication of value – value to God or value to one another in the community.”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Reinhard, 413.

⁶⁵ Reinhard, 413-414.

⁶⁶ Reinhard, 415.

Both Reinhard and Rainer describe a model for membership based on covenant. Iain Torrance also connects the concept of covenant with the Body of Christ in his article “Membership of the Body of Christ.” He writes that “because the covenant is fulfilled in Christ, covenant-union with God is no longer to be defined in terms of keeping the law, but is fulfilled in union with Christ through the Spirit, which is to say, *in the church*, which is the body of Christ” (italics in original).⁶⁷ This emphasizes participation in a community of faith, which fulfills the covenant between the individual Christian and God. This focus on relationship underscores the need to investigate the concept of relational theology and its application to issues of membership and leadership in the community of faith.

Implications of Relational Theology

The researcher comes to this project with an acknowledged bias toward a relational understanding of God. The importance of the image of the church as the body of Christ and a covenantal understanding of church membership support this theological assertion. Cladis’s focus on the perichoretic nature of Trinity indicates the congruence between a relational understanding of God and the shared leadership within the early church.

Relational theology is based in the story of creation in Genesis 1. As the creation narrative approaches its conclusion God creates humankind.

God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:26-27).

⁶⁷ Iain R. Torrance, “Membership of the Body of Christ.” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 43, no. 1-4: 560.

Humanity is created in the image of God, *imago dei*. Of note in the text is the word “our.” God proclaims, “Let us make mankind in *our* image.” This plural pronoun can be taken to mean that humanity is created in the image of a triune God. Cladis notes that John of Damascus used the image of perichoresis or “circle dance” to describe the Trinity. According to Cladis, John of Damascus drew on the biblical descriptions of God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit and “depicted the three persons of the Trinity in a circle. 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.”⁶⁸ Relational theology centers on the concept that, since humanity is created in *imago de* and God exists in perichoretic relationship, it follows humans are created for relationships with God and with other humans.

This relational nature of humanity, based in *imago dei*, has a deep impact on the understanding of the church, the body of Christ. Stanley Grenz explains:

The New Testament writers declare that ultimately the *imago dei* is Christ and, by extension, the new humanity which consists of those who through union with Christ share in Christ’s relationship with God and consequently are being transformed into the image of God in Christ. For this reason the church emerges in the New Testament as an even more foundational exemplar of the *imago dei* in this penultimate age.⁶⁹

As part of the body of Christ, Christians are gathered into their own perichoretic dance with God and with the community of faith.

Grenz writes that the community of faith, with its ability to foster relationships, enables people to experience a foretaste of the essence of the trinity. Grenz claims participation with a faith community is essential for a Christian. By nature of our being

⁶⁸ Cladis, 4.

⁶⁹ Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: a Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 302-303.

created in God's image, human beings are also created in relationship to others in the community of faith. Grenz points out that "the ecclesial self must not be understood as undermining in any way the importance of the individual or as leading to the absorption of individuality into an undifferentiated collective."⁷⁰

The essential nature of our relationship to other Christians is a critical point within relational theology and ecclesiology. The corporate nature of our existence defines how local communities of faith understand membership. Relational theology claims that believers are not isolated individuals who can choose whether to be a part of a larger community; rather, every Christian exists within the universal body of Christ by nature of their confession of faith. There are no Christians separated from the body of Christ.

This, however, does not reduce the individuality of the Christian. Grenz notes that "the focus on the communal nature of the ecclesial self must not be understood as an undermining in any way the importance of the individual or as leading to the absorption of individuality into an undifferentiated collective."⁷¹ Just as God, Christ, and Spirit exist in *perichoretic* relationship with one another, Christians enter a similar dance within the community of faith. Shirley Guthrie notes, "The oneness of God is not the oneness of the distinct, self-contained individual; it is the unity of a *community* of persons who love each other and live together in harmony" (italics in original).⁷² In its ideal form, oneness in the body of Christ is a human experience and expression of community. Grenz notes

⁷⁰ Grenz, 333.

⁷¹ Grenz, 333.

⁷² Shirley Guthrie. *Christian Doctrine* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 92.

that “the common sharing of the life in Christ through the Holy Spirit in no sense destroys the individuality of its members.”⁷³

Relational theology also points to the necessity of engagement within the life of the church. As Rainer writes, “Biblical church membership is *functioning* church membership.”⁷⁴ To function well, all parts of the body must function. To dance well, all dancers must be in motion. F. LeRon Shults notes that “Jesus’ message centered on the coming presence of the kingdom of God and the early church was consumed by a passion for participating in the reconciling activity of the One who is ‘making all things new’ (Rev. 21:5).”⁷⁵ Functioning, engaged church members are passionate about their participation in the body of Christ.

Jesus modeled servant leadership as he served the disciples. As Schneiders demonstrates, through serving his friends Jesus dismantles the power structures between leader and follower. By sending the disciples out to participate in his ministry and assuring them they would do even greater works, Jesus empowers the disciples to be his partners. When viewed in light of Paul’s image of the church as the body of Christ, the encouragement to equip the saints for ministry and relational theology a model for leadership in the church emerges. These biblical and theological resources emphasize service, ministry, empowerment, and collaboration as the hallmarks of church leadership.

⁷³ Grenz, 333.

⁷⁴ Rainer, 15.

⁷⁵ F. LeRon Shults, *Reforming Theological Anthropology: After the Philosophical Turn to Relationality* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 241-242.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE ON LEADERSHIP AND ENGAGEMENT

Contemporary Team Leadership

Given the emphasis on collaborative leadership models developed in the biblical and theological review, the research into contemporary leadership on a broader scale will also focus on the development of shared leadership models. There are many organizations transitioning from a hierarchical model of leadership to a structure that is more focused on teamwork; however, voices remain that emphasize the need for clearly defined leaders. It is important to interact with both of these viewpoints as a team leadership model is considered.

The traditional views of leadership and leaders have changed. Peter Senge claims, “Our traditional view of leaders – as special people who set the direction, make key decisions, and energize the troops – is deeply rooted in an individualistic and nonsystemic worldview.”¹ This understanding of the leader as a hero supports and encourages hierarchical structures of organizational leadership. There are, however, other ways to imagine leadership. The biblical and theological ideals of servant leadership, empowering leadership, and team leadership are all options that allow for a different way of interpreting leadership and the role of the leader.

¹ Peter M. Senge, “The Leader’s New Work: Building Learning Organizations” in *Leading Organizations: Perspectives for A New Era*, Gil Robinson Hickman, ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 1998), 441.

Peter Senge suggests the creation of learning organizations.² He writes that one of the hallmarks of a learning organization is its ability to adapt to the rapid pace of change. However, a learning organization is about more than adaptability. Learning organizations focus on creating new knowledge and processes, in addition to coping with changes in the culture and marketplace. Leaders in learning organizations must be able to teach and lead. Instead of emphasizing the charismatic leader, learning organizations require leaders to empower their followers to learn and to actively participate in the success of the organization.

Senge discusses the creative tension created by the gap between the current reality and the desired future for the organization or individual. This tension can “be resolved in two basic ways: by raising current reality toward the vision, or by lowering the vision toward the current reality.”³ Barbara Gray proposes collaboration to resolve this tension. Gray claims that by working together, individuals with differing opinions within the organization can develop better solutions than trying to solve the problems on their own. This collaborative leadership style is reminiscent of the shared leadership in the New Testament. Gray notes that the objective of collaboration goes beyond hearing different opinions and then going the direction of the individual or group with the most power. Rather, according to Gray, “The objective of collaboration is to create a richer, more comprehensive appreciation of the problem among the stakeholders than any one of them could construct alone.”⁴

² Senge, 441.

³ Senge, 441.

⁴ Barbara Gray, “Collaboration: The Constructive Management of Differences” in *Leading Organizations: Perspectives for A New Era*, Gil Robinson Hickman, ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1998), 469.

Frank LaFasto and Carl Larson note the increasing complexity of society and the development of more tools for social interaction are at work in the development of more collaborative models of organization. They propose that “as problems become more complex, and as their solutions require the active participation of diverse perspectives, then teamwork and collaboration become increasingly necessary and valued.”⁵ According to LaFasto and Larson, “The movement toward teamwork and collaboration is shaped by two societal forces. It is *driven* by the need to find new and more effective ways of dealing with complex problems. It is *made possible* by the increasing social capacities of individuals and collectives to use collaborative strategies when dealing with common problems” (italics in original).⁶ They also note that relationships between individuals within the organization are key to the success or failure of teams. The importance of relationships in collaborative leadership models emphasizes the significance of building and communicating a theology of relationships in a team-oriented church.

Susan Wheelan describes a four stage model of group development.⁷ At each stage the group moves closer to becoming a team and not merely a group of individuals. At first, team members rely heavily on the leader and are concerned about the safety of sharing ideas and being included in the group. In this first stage, members look to the leader for direction and are focused on their acceptance within the group more than the objective of the group. As a group moves to stage two, conflict becomes inevitable. Conflict is important to the future productivity as a team, as it allows for creative

⁵ Frank M J. LaFasto and Carl E. Larson, *When Teams Work Best: 6,000 Team Members and Leaders Tell What It Takes to Succeed* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE, 2001), xix

⁶ LaFasto and Larson, xx.

⁷ Susan A. Wheelan, *Creating Effective Teams: A Guide for Members and Leaders*, 5th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2016), 24-30.

solutions. But, conflict can also halt the progress from group to team. “If a group manages to work through the inevitable conflicts of Stage 2, member trust, commitment to the group, and willingness to cooperate increase.”⁸ As the group develops into a team its performance and achievements increase dramatically. One of the challenges in developing an organizational structure based on teamwork is the difficult transition from being a group of individuals to a team. An important factor in the transition is James Kouzes and Barry Posner’s ideal of a shared vision.⁹ Kouzes and Posner write, “Every organization, every social movement, begins with a dream. The dream, or vision, is the force that creates the future.”¹⁰ A shared vision allows the members of the group to focus on an external goal and potentially overcome the conflict which often develops in Wheelan’s second stage of team development.

There are limits to the effectiveness of teams as well. One barrier is the size of the team. According to Glenn Parker in *Cross-Functional Teams*, larger teams are not always more productive. He writes, “In the drive for participation and involvement, many organizations have sought to demonstrate their commitment by searching out every last person with some connection to the task and putting them on the team.”¹¹ Parker notes that, “The net result is that teams have grown in size but experienced a decrease in productivity, with members having no real sense of involvement beyond having their

⁸ Wheelan, 27.

⁹ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner. *The Leadership Challenge: How to Make Extraordinary Things Happen in Organizations*, 5th ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 17-19.

¹⁰ Kouzes and Posner, 18.

¹¹ Glenn Parker, *Cross-Functional Teams: Working with Allies, Enemies, and Other Strangers*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994), 151.

names on the team roster.”¹² To effectively implement team-based leadership churches must develop structures in which decisions are made by small groups on behalf of the larger organization.

If collaborative and team-based leadership models are to be fully implemented within an organization, there needs to be a shift in the traditional power structures. Ann Howard notes that empowering leaders must give away power, even though that power could be taken back.¹³ This illuminates one of the challenges of changing leadership structures, the interplay of power and leadership. For those in the Christian tradition, Jesus presents an ideal for how power should be handled. According to the Philippian hymn, Jesus took “the very nature of a servant” and “humbled himself by becoming obedient to death” (Philippians 2:7-8). This ideal of humility and servanthood transforms the traditional leadership structures and roles.

“Traditional leaders,” according to Howard, “maintain strong control over prescribed functions. They depend on rules to get work done and protect the organization and their own turf from outsiders.”¹⁴ In contrast, the empowering leader is a delegating leader. “The *delegator* moves decision making to lower job levels and sees that responsibility and authority accompany job tasks” (italics in original).¹⁵ Howard claims that the empowering leader is an inspirer and a model of trust, a coach and a team builder, a visionary and a change agent, a supporter and a champion, and a facilitator and

¹² Parker, 151.

¹³ Ann Howard, “The Empowering Leader: Unrealized Opportunities” in *Leading Organizations: Perspectives for A New Era*, Gil Robinson Hickman, ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE, 1998), 203.

¹⁴ Howard, 203.

¹⁵ Howard, 204.

a partner.¹⁶ All of these attributes point to a distributed model of leadership that emphasizes the role of the group over the role of the individual.

Empowering leadership does not discount the role of the leader, but emphasizes a leadership style that encourages followers to engage in the mission of the organization. James Burns notes that “leadership, unlike naked power-wielding, is inseparable from followers’ needs and goals.”¹⁷ Therefore leaders are, by definition, concerned with the welfare and needs of their followers; however, those concerns do not have to last beyond the leadership act. James Burns notes that transactional leadership often occurs when there is no shared vision to that holds leader and follower together.¹⁸ In transactional leadership there is nothing to bind leaders and followers together as they strive to achieve a common goal. Burns continues to offer an alternative style called transforming leadership.

In transforming leadership “leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality.”¹⁹ Burns notes that transformational leadership can develop new leaders from within the organization. He underscores the importance of the relationship between leader and follower in transforming leadership. These relationships empower followers to actively engage in pursuing the shared goal and encourage the development of new leaders from within the organization. This emphasis on the relational nature of transformational leadership is important because of relational theology.

¹⁶ Howard, 204.

¹⁷ James MacGregor Burns, “Transactional and Transforming Leadership” in *The Leader's Companion: Insights on Leadership through the Ages* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 100.

¹⁸ Burns, 101.

¹⁹ Burns, 101.

Peter Northouse claims, “Transformational leaders set out to empower followers and nurture them in change. They attempt to raise the consciousness in individuals and to get them to transcend their own self-interests for the sake of others.”²⁰ Jesus was this kind of leader. He sought to empower his followers to change, however, he achieved this goal by being a servant. Therefore, Jesus was both a transformational leader and a servant leader.

These two types of leadership are not mutually exclusive and they share traits. Jeanine Parolini claims both servant leaders and transformational leaders are “benevolent, but have two different angles from which they come at their moral generosity. They care about people equally but from two very different perspectives.”²¹ Parolini recommends a balance between servant leadership and transformational leadership. She defines transformational servant leaders as, “Followers of God ... and others so that they may successfully lead others.”²² A transformational servant leader seeks to equip and empower others to participate in the leadership of the organization. The transformational servant leader’s empowerment is not self-serving, however, because they encourage others to experience the transformative experience of servant leadership.

With all of the benefits of a team-based leadership model, many organizations have yet to adopt it. One reason for this is that structures based on teamwork can be less responsive than their hierarchical counterparts. Speed is prized in the culture of the United States. Organizational models based on hierarchy promote speed and efficiency

²⁰ Peter Guy Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2010), 185.

²¹ Jeanine Parolini, *Transformational Servant Leadership: A Workbook with a Fresh Approach to Leading Well* (Maitland, FL: Xulon Press, 2012), 41.

²² Parolini, 52-53.

because one clearly-defined leader directs the organization in the fast-paced environment. Team-based models are less efficient as more voices are brought into consideration in the decision making process.

John Kotter claims that both the traditional hierarchy and the team-based network structure have their purposes in an organizational structure. He proposes the incorporation of both models into the organization. Kotter describes this model in his book *Accelerate*. In this system, “The network side mimics successful enterprises in their entrepreneurial phase, before there were organizational charts showing reporting relationships, before there were formal job descriptions and status levels.”²³ The hierarchical side of Kotter’s model is similar to structures which include layers of managers and employees. Kotter advises one modification to the traditional hierarchy; shifting work which demands innovation and agility over to the network portion of the organization. According to Kotter these tasks can be accomplished more efficiently in a collaborative environment. He emphasizes the organizational needs for both the stability of the hierarchy and the flexibility of the network to respond to the rapidly shifting environment in business today.

The identified challenge at MCC is filling the leadership roles with qualified and willing individuals. It may be possible to redesign the leadership structure of the organization to be more network-based to engage a wider group of people. Kotter notes that structure alone does not ensure success. He claims that successful entrepreneurial enterprises have a compelling shared vision. This shared vision is a rallying point for

²³ John P. Kotter, *Accelerate: Building Strategic Agility for a Faster-Moving World* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2014), 20.

leaders and employees. Kotter emphasizes that a compelling shared vision is foundational to the success of any enterprise.

Shared beliefs are also essential in the faith community. Nuances in the Disciples tradition emphasize the importance of a shared belief and a common purpose. Disciples congregations traditionally comprise members who hold many beliefs on many topics. Because the congregation is autonomous, the middle judicatory and denominational structures do not have the authority to command the practices or beliefs of the local congregation. This diversity of opinion makes a clear definition of shared beliefs difficult, but essential.

Both contemporary leadership studies and this biblical-theological perspective substantially support collaborative models of leadership. MCC, however, has maintained a hierarchical structure. The field research for this project seeks to ascertain the extent to which this structure inhibits member engagement in congregational leadership.

Employee Engagement

Moving to a model of shared leadership requires leaders to empower their followers to have greater involvement and power in the organization. Kouzes and Posner claim organizations are positively affected when leaders engage in five essential practices. They contend leaders of engaged organizations must: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart.²⁴ In her study of leadership behavior in organizations where both leaders and followers are volunteers, Kristen Bowers identified that volunteer leaders differ from their paid

²⁴ Kouzes and Posner, 15.

counterparts in several practices.²⁵ Her research showed it is highly important for leaders in volunteer organizations to enable others to act. This is important to MCC because the majority of the congregational leaders are laity. The pastor is a leader but the polity places much of the leadership responsibility on the church board and elders.

Even with this emphasis on volunteer leadership, the leadership style of the pastor plays a role in the engagement of lay leaders in the congregation. As Peter Scazzero claims, “the overall health of any church or ministry depends primarily on the emotional and spiritual health of its leadership.”²⁶ Scazzero writes that the health of the leaders is essential to the health of the organization. However, a healthy leadership is not the only necessary component: “The starting point for change in any nation, church, or ministry has always been the leader: As go the leaders, so goes the church. But it is not enough for the leader to change.”²⁷ Scazzero identifies the leader as an essential component in empowering the congregation to take an active role in leadership but notes the congregation must also be willing to take on the responsibility of engagement.

Patrick Lencioni also identifies organizational health as a critical component for successful organizations. He claims that the health of the organization is more important than the intelligence of the members. Lencioni proposes that a healthy organization will become smarter:

Because people in a healthy organization, beginning with the leaders, learn from one another, identify critical issues and recover quickly from mistakes. Without politics and confusion getting in their way, they cycle through problems and rally

²⁵ Kristen M. Bowers, “An exploration of the leadership behavior of volunteer leaders.” (Ed. D. diss., Indiana Wesleyan University, 2012), iv.

²⁶ Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church, Expanded Edition: a Strategy for Discipleship That Actually Changes Lives* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 20.

²⁷ Scazzero, 36.

around solutions much faster than their dysfunctional and political rivals do. They create environments in which employees do the same.²⁸

Lencioni's focus on the health of the organization, beginning with the leaders, comports well with the church, where the health and wellness of both the community and individual are important. Lencioni claims that organizational health hinges on the health of the leader and creates an environment where members become healthier and more engaged in the mission of the organization.

Given the importance of the leader in an organization, it could be concluded that his or her style of leadership will affect the engagement of employees or church members. However, in a study of Baptist churches Tracey Parrish could not find a correlation between the leadership style of the pastor and the activeness of church members. The focus of this study was determining a relationship between transformational leadership and the activeness of church members. Parrish reports that one possible reason for the lack of correlation was the sample size in the study. The results also indicate that "people volunteer for personal reasons and may not always be motivated by the traits of the leader they are working for."²⁹ Understanding the availability and motivation of volunteers provides important information as leaders seek to shape their organizations and leadership style.

Parrish focused on transformational and transactional leadership styles. However, transactional leadership and transformational leadership are not the only options for leaders, especially within the church. By emphasizing the relational aspects of faith and

²⁸ Patrick Lencioni, *The Advantage: Why Organizational Health Trumps Everything Else in Business* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 9.

²⁹ Parrish, Tracey L. "The Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and Baptist Church Members' Activeness: A Correlational Study." (Ph. D. diss. University of Phoenix, 2009) PQDT Open Accessed December 5, 2014, 88.

engaging the congregation as a servant leader, the pastor may create an environment whereby the congregation is encouraged to take a more active role in leadership. Parrish noted that with transformational and transactional leaders “individuals believe the work will be completed by someone else or that there are paid staffers to take care of the bulk of the workload.”³⁰ The model of servant leadership, with an emphasis on empowering and equipping the congregation, is one way in which church leaders can fulfill Kouzes and Posner’s recommendations of modeling the way and enabling others to act.³¹

The leader is not the only one who must make a change. Followers must assume a greater responsibility and an understanding of their agency in the leadership process. Followers must engage in the leadership of the organization, even as leaders must release some of their control and power.

In their work on leadership and workforce engagement, Shawn Serrano and Rebecca Reichard note that “employee engagement, referred to as employees’ investment of physical, cognitive, and emotional energy and their full deployment of themselves into their work roles or tasks is gaining popularity both in academia and practice.”³² Though their focus was on the workplace, the concepts are transferrable to the volunteer organization. They also underscore the importance of a shared organizational vision, and of empowering leadership, in promoting engagement in the organization. Serrano and Reichard point to the same leadership practices identified by Kouzes and Posner. This demonstrates the importance of top-level leaders in creating an environment where

³⁰ Parrish, 90.

³¹ Kouzes and Posner, 16-23.

³² Shawn A. Serrano and Rebecca J. Reichard “Leadership Strategies for an Engaged Workforce” *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research* 63, No. 3 (2011): 176.

engagement is prized and encouraged. According to Serrano and Reichard, leaders influence “resources such as autonomy, rewards, and efficacy; and such resources have been consistently shown to increase individual level engagement.”³³

In a study of how leaders can increase employee engagement, Michelle Tuckey, Maureen Bakker, and Arnold Dollard found that “leaders who empowered their followers by delegating responsibility, encouraging independent action as well as team work, and supporting follower self-development created better working conditions for workers. The end result was an increase in engagement.”³⁴ Their research underscores the importance of creating a church environment where members are involved in ways that enhance their personal growth while benefitting the church. Tuckey, Bakker, and Dollard emphasize that empowering leadership must also operate at the organizational level.

Tuckey, Bakker, and Dollard conducted their research in volunteer fire departments and concluded empowering leadership is of particular importance in departments where there are insufficient numbers of volunteers.³⁵ They found that in many departments the leaders are elected from a group of willing individuals, not carefully selected for their leadership skills and attributes. This is also true at Marshfield Christian Church. Tuckey, Bakker, and Dollard emphasize the importance of a leadership training program, and job descriptions that are clear and encourage practices of

³³ Serrano and Reichard, 180.

³⁴ Tuckey, Michelle R., Maureen F. Dollard, and Arnold B. Bakker. "Empowering Leaders Optimize Working Conditions for Engagement: A Multilevel Study." *Journal Of Occupational Health Psychology* 17, no. 1 (2012), 23.

³⁵ Tuckey, Bakker, and Dollard, 24.

empowering leadership.³⁶ They suggest these structural modifications will promote dedication, commitment, and engagement within the organization.

MCC relies heavily on volunteers to provide leadership. There is not a system in place to train members in the biblical principles of leadership. Tuckey, Bakker, and Dollard's study underscores the importance of developing a culture that encourages engagement. Their research emphasizes the creation and implementation of a training program to foster the development of future leaders.

In his article on enabling collective leadership, James Quigley writes, "The timeless challenge of leadership is to bring together a group of diverse individuals and create an environment where they will work together toward common, shared goals. This is best accomplished through the notion of collective leadership, which brings an organization together as one."³⁷ Quigley emphasizes collaborative leadership as a pathway to creating engagement in pursuing organizational goals. However, he also notes the need for accountability. He proposes a structure similar to that described by John Kotter in *Accelerate*.

Quigley claims that one of the challenges facing leaders today is generational difference.

Leaders are often a part of the Baby Boomer generation whose upbringing by parents who lived through World War II led many to believe in doing things the way Gen. George S. Patton did, with hierarchical style and strict, rigid accountabilities. But when these leaders look at the diverse individuals on their team, they often find a group of Millennials with a much different upbringing. When Millennials are given a task, many immediately think about whom they can

³⁶ Tuckey, Bakker, and Dollard, 24.

³⁷ James Quigley, "The Leadership Cycle: How to Enable Collective Leadership" *Journal of Accountancy* 215, no. 6 (June 2013): 28.

contact in their network to collaborate with to complete that task or solve that problem.³⁸

Quigley highlights the importance of understanding the culture of the organization and the needs of the employees. He writes that “imposing Patton-style leadership on individuals who are more comfortable networking creates a mismatch that leads to a lack of commitment to execute.”³⁹ He claims that the most effective solution to these different work styles is to initiate a conversation within the team to develop a way of interacting that is best suited to their specific desires.

According to Quigley, “The attributes of the organization – its values, culture, or climate – are what’s important, rather than the traits of the leader.”⁴⁰ He proposes that a sense of belonging and shared goals are essential elements of an organization’s culture. Only when such a culture is in place will people put their beliefs into action. Employees or church members must feel connected before they will work toward those shared organizational goals.

In *Leading Change*, John Kotter identifies four barriers to empowering employees to change: “structure, skills, systems and supervisors.”⁴¹ To overcome the barrier of a lack of skills Kotter emphasizes the importance of training. He cautions, however, that the training must be appropriate. Kotter notes that even when training is offered, “it’s not enough, or it’s not the right kind, or it’s not done at the right time.”⁴² He writes that organizations fall into the trap of not offering suitable training is they “often don’t think

³⁸ Quigley, 29-30.

³⁹ Quigley, 30.

⁴⁰ Quigley, 29.

⁴¹ John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 102.

⁴² Kotter, *Leading Change*, 108.

through carefully enough what new behavior, skills and attitudes will be needed.”⁴³ As a result they often misjudge the type and scope of training required. Determining and offering the training to provide team members the needed skills is a key component in empowering greater engagement from more members of the organization.

Terrance Deal and Allan Kennedy contend that the culture of an organization is foundational to its ability to survive and thrive in the marketplace. They state that people are the organization’s greatest resource and people are guided by the culture of the organization. Organizational culture helps employees to know what is expected of them and gives them a sense of pride and fulfillment in completing those tasks. They argue that “culture is *the* barrier to change. Culture causes organizational inertia; it’s the brake that resists change because this is precisely what culture should do.”⁴⁴ Deal and Kennedy emphasize the pivotal role a strong corporate culture plays in all organizations, regardless of the organizational structure.

In a faith community, this idea of belonging is related to the concepts of membership. By defining themselves as members of the church community, individuals take ownership of the shared goals and ideals of the organization. The hesitance of some individuals to officially join the church may, therefore, indicate a lack of clearly defined goals or a disagreement with those goals.

In their work on the quality of Leader-Member Exchange and the impact of differentiation on team effectiveness, Alex Ning Li and Hui Liao highlight the role of leaders in promoting employee engagement. They argue, “Given the importance of

⁴³ Kotter, *Leading Change*, 108.

⁴⁴ Terrence E. Deal and Allan A. Kennedy, *Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life* (Cambridge, MA.: Perseus Books, 2000), 159.

leaders in employees' organizational life, the relationships employees build with their leaders play a critical part in shaping employee role engagement."⁴⁵ Li and Liao suggest that organizations create and offer training programs, develop opportunities for leaders and followers to engage one another on a social level, and implement a process for mentoring followers.⁴⁶ These interventions create a culture of collaboration between leaders and followers, and promote a climate where followers are trained in leadership skills and prepared to assume leadership roles.

Li and Liao note, however, that differentiation can have a negative effect on team coordination and encourage managers to know how their relationships with subordinates are perceived. They emphasize the importance of viewing the relationship from the subordinate's perspective because the employee's perception of the relationship is most important.⁴⁷ In the faith community, these are important considerations.

Pastors in Disciples churches must participate in a boundaries training course every five years to maintain standing with the denomination. The goal of this training is to help pastoral leaders gain awareness of the power differences in their relationships. Due to the nature of ministry, it is vital for pastors to monitor and guard their personal and professional boundaries. This training, with the setting and maintenance of healthy boundaries, should help pastors maintain healthy levels of differentiation.

In summarizing a 2004 report by The Urban Institute, Jeffery Brudney and Beth Gazley identified "a relationship between organizational support for volunteer

⁴⁵ Alex Ning Li and Liao Hui. "How Do Leader--Member Exchange Quality and Differentiation Affect Performance in Teams? An Integrated Multilevel Dual Process Model." *Journal Of Applied Psychology* 99, no. 5 (2014):, 849.

⁴⁶ Li and Liao, 862.

⁴⁷ Li and Liao, 862.

administration and the perceived benefits gained from volunteer involvement, such as higher quality services, more detailed attention to clients, increased service levels and cost savings.”⁴⁸ They also note organizations are not making significant investments in training and developing volunteer leaders. They indicate this disparity jeopardizes the ability to recruit and retain volunteers. This is another indicator of the importance of developing a culture and strategy for equipping volunteers to participate in organizational leadership.

The literature on employee engagement underscores the importance of developing a culture which encourages collaboration and implementing a leadership training program. This project examines the culture of three Disciples congregations to determine how pastors’ and congregational leaders’ relationships support collaboration and engagement. The case studies will identify the existence and success of leadership training programs in each of the congregations.

Changes in Volunteering

Because MCC relies on volunteers for leadership, it is important to consider the changing trends in volunteering. In their study of data collection and volunteer promotion, Jeffery Brudney and Beth Gazley define two modes of volunteering, formal volunteering, and informal volunteering: “*Formal volunteering* is defined as giving a specified amount of time to organizations such as hospitals, churches, or schools. *Informal volunteering* is performed on an ad hoc basis and involves helping organizations as well as individuals, including neighbors, family, and friends” (italics in original).⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Jeffery L. Brudney and Beth Gazley “Moving Ahead or Falling Behind? Volunteer Promotion and Data Collection,” *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 16, no. 3 (Spring 2006), 260.

⁴⁹ Brudney and Gazley, 262.

Many participants in MCC engage in both formal and informal volunteering. However, how they volunteer has changed throughout the years.

Brudney and Gazley explain a developing trend in volunteering, which coincides with the experiences of MCC. The church is experiencing a shortage of volunteers for the formal positions in the congregation, elders, board members, and committee chairpersons. However, the more informal volunteer opportunities such as church workdays, local mission events, special worship services, and Vacation Bible School are well-supported.

The results of Brudney and Gazley's study confirm this experience. Their study shows that more people are volunteering, but for smaller amounts of time.⁵⁰ This is known as episodic volunteering. Episodic volunteers are more likely to contribute their time for a specific event or for a clearly defined time or season. Episodic volunteers rarely engage in ongoing commitments like committees. Instead, they volunteer for events and specific projects. This coincides with the experience at MCC where people will volunteer for time-limited projects but hesitant to participate in activities where there is not a clearly defined end-point.

This trend toward episodic volunteering has already made an impact in the formal volunteering needed to maintain the current leadership structure at MCC. During the last restructure of the governing board, an attempt was made to address this burgeoning reality. The number of committees was decreased and their responsibilities broadened to limit the number of committee positions and to encourage more event-specific volunteering.

⁵⁰ Brudney and Gazley, 262.

Brudney and Gazley conclude it is unclear whether a rise in short-term volunteer opportunities has caused a surge in episodic volunteering or if it is a response.⁵¹

Regardless of the direction of causality, there is a need for both long-term and episodic volunteering in the church. The changes in volunteering have already affected church leadership structures. Brudney and Gazley's research suggests intentionally designing short-term volunteering opportunities which train volunteers to engage in long-term leadership will be imperative for MCC.

⁵¹ Brudney and Gazley, 263.

CHAPTER FOUR: FIELD RESEARCH IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Data and Methodology

Nature of the Research

The problem addressed by this project was the lack of sufficient volunteers to fill leadership positions at MCC. The project was executed by tackling five subproblems. Subproblems one and two were addressed in the spring and summer of 2015 through literary review and analysis of religious and secular publications. Subproblems three and four were completed during the summer of 2015 by conducting a survey and focus group sessions with three separate Disciples congregations in southwest Missouri, and by interviewing the pastors of the two participating congregations not served by the researcher. These field study methods were then used, with the researcher's field notes, to compile three case studies and a cross-case analysis. Subproblem three, the exploration of reasons some participants in the life of a congregation take on leadership positions and others do not, was addressed in each of the individual cases. Subproblem four, the investigation of leadership engagement at other congregations was undertaken during the cross-case analysis. Creswell defines a cross-case analysis as "examining themes across cases to discern themes that are common and different to all cases."¹ This research method was chosen to identify the barriers and incentives for ministry unique to MCC, and to identify common themes shared among the research locations. This enabled the

¹ Creswell, John W. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, Kindle ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2012), Locations 5454-5455.

researcher to draw conclusions about the impact of the context on the results of the research. The cross-case analysis allowed the researcher to identify ways in which the plan for engaging leadership at Marshfield Christian Church could be adapted for other churches.

Selection of Research Sites

To help select congregations in which to conduct the research, the researcher contacted the middle judicatory minister. The researcher provided preliminary information on the project and requested input on which churches would be similar in size and suitable for case studies. The middle judicatory minister returned a list of several churches. From that list the researcher chose two churches and approached the pastor of each church to inquire about conducting research with the congregation. Neither church could participate. One pastor was leaving the congregation and the other was preparing to go on sabbatical for several weeks.

The researcher chose two other congregations from the list. Both pastors agreed to assist with the project. Online surveys using Qualtrics² were prepared by the researcher and links to the unique survey for each congregation were provided to the congregations using a bulletin insert. The pastor of one of the churches was very helpful to the researcher in promoting the survey and even set up the focus groups for the researcher by directly asking for participation. This congregation is designated as Christian Church A in the case studies. The pastor of the other congregation could not secure as much interest in research and calling people to set up the focus groups fell back on the researcher. After

² <http://www.qualtrics.com>

several failed attempts to set up the focus group meetings, the researcher abandoned the research at this congregation.

The researcher then contacted the original congregation where the pastor was going on sabbatical. Since the initial contact the pastor completed his sabbatical and agreed to help the researcher with the project. The researcher created a new survey for this congregation and prepared a video introduction to be played in worship and a bulletin insert. This congregation is known as Christian Church B in the case studies. In Christian Church B the pastor again agreed to help the researcher by directly asking people to be involved in the focus group meetings. However, the pastor could only gain commitments to participate from church leaders. Although this deviation from the plan decreased the fullness of the case study, the researcher felt the breadth of information for the cross-case analysis was more beneficial and considered the lack of non-leader participation in the case study process.

Research Tools

The surveys for each of the congregations were identical, except for the name of the congregation throughout. In each case the surveys were personalized to the congregation. The survey questions asked the participants to identify whether they currently or had ever served in a leadership role at the congregation. Then they were asked to rank the extent to which several reasons had either positively or negatively affected their participation in church leadership.³ These reasons were developed from the researcher's experience, through conversations with other pastors, and through research into the incentives and barriers to volunteering.

³ Appendix A.

Richard Sundeen, Sally Raskoff, and Cristina Garcia identify several barriers and incentives for volunteering in their article “Differences in Perceived Barriers to Volunteering to Formal Organizations: Lack of Time Versus Lack of Interest.” They studied several “possible explanations for not volunteering to formal organizations, such as lack of resources, a lack of commitment or interest, social isolation, and low skill congruence.”⁴ Sundeen, Raskoff, and Garcia focused their work on the barriers to volunteering in formal organizations, like non-profits and churches. The researcher used their findings as a point of reference in developing the survey.

The researcher listed perceived barriers and incentives and to allow for the survey respondents to add in their own responses. Besides the background gained from Sundeen, Raskoff, and Garcia, the researcher drew from a study by Jeni Warburton, Jessica Paynter, and Andrea Petriwskyj. Their study “Volunteering as a Productive Aging Activity: Incentives and Barriers to Volunteering by Australian Seniors” was focused on seniors, but the researcher felt some barriers and incentives they uncovered apply across generations. Warburton, Paynter, and Petriwskyj identified a lack of time, perceived age barriers, the nature of the activity, exclusionary practices, and unused skills as barriers to volunteering.⁵ They also conclude that direct appeals, flexibility, diversity, and the opportunity to gain more training are incentives to volunteer.⁶ These potential barriers and incentives were included within the choices available to the respondents.

⁴ Richard A. Sundeen, Sally A. Raskoff, and M. Cristina Garcia, “Differences in Perceived Barriers to Volunteering to Formal Organizations: Lack of Time Versus Lack of Interest,” *Nonprofit Management and Leadership* 17, no. 3 (2007): 280.

⁵ Jeni Warburton, Jessica Paynter, and Andrea Petriwskyj, “Volunteering as a Productive Aging Activity: Incentives and Barriers to Volunteering by Australian Seniors,” *Journal of Applied Gerontology* 26 no. 4 (2007): 337-8.

⁶ Warburton, Paynter and Petriwskyj, 339.

Before the survey was opened to responses from the congregations, the researcher asked three other individuals to take the survey. This allowed the researcher to test the flow of the survey and to ensure that the logic functioned properly. The testing also enabled the researcher to see if any questions were confusing or inappropriate. The test pool identified editorial errors which the researcher corrected before submitting the surveys to the congregations.

Each survey was open for two weeks prior to the focus group interviews. The pastors of the congregations, including the researcher, reminded the congregations of the survey, and encouraged their participation. At the end of the survey period the researcher closed the surveys and used the tools within Qualtrics to analyze the data. Table 1 shows the response rates and average worship attendance⁷ of each of the congregations.

Table 1

Congregation	Average Worship Attendance	Survey Responses
Christian Church A	100	31
Christian Church B	120	13
Marshfield Christian Church	80	26

After the surveys were provided to the congregation the researcher met with focus groups in the congregation. The researcher chose the focus group model to gain another source of data from which to build the case studies. The researcher planned on having two focus groups at each location to allow leaders and non-leaders the freedom to voice their honest critique of leadership in the congregation. The case study of Christian Church B was limited by the inability to have two focus groups. With only the leaders'

⁷ As reported in the 2015 Yearbook and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

perspective, the researcher could not answer questions of exclusivity in leadership and was forced to rely on the survey results for that perspective.

Robert Yin describes an inherent challenge in the focus group and interview method. He writes that the conversational nature of these research methods “can lead to a mutual and subtle influence between [the researcher] and the interviewee — sometimes referred to as reflexivity.”⁸ To minimize the reflexivity, in both the focus groups and the pastoral interviews, the researcher developed an interview guide.

John Creswell also notes the importance of an interview guide. He suggests using an interview guide comprised of “five to seven open-ended questions.”⁹ He continues to describe the guide writing that “the questions are often the subquestions in the research study, phrased in a way that interviewees can understand.”¹⁰ The interview guide was the same for both types of focus groups.¹¹ The interview guide for the pastors was similar to the focus group guide with adding a question regarding the demographics of leadership in relationship to the church and a question about the leadership structure of the congregation.¹²

The researcher led the focus group interviews to observe the non-verbal cues from the participants and to ensure that the conversation was not dominated by one individual.

Yin writes that it is important to “deliberately try to surface the views of each person in

⁸ Robert K. Yin. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods (Applied Social Research Methods)*, Kindle ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2013), Locations 2990-2994.

⁹ Creswell, Locations 3213-3219.

¹⁰ Creswell, Locations 3213-3219.

¹¹ Appendix B.

¹² Appendix C.

the group.”¹³ The researcher attempted to achieve this by allowing time for each participant to answer each question and by directly asking for input from each participant. Table 2 shows how many participants were involved in each of the focus groups.

Table 2

Congregation	Leaders	Non-leaders
Christian Church A	4	8
Christian Church B	6	0
Marshfield Christian Church	7	6

The researcher informed the focus groups and pastors that the interviews would be recorded and later transcribed by the researcher. After transcribing the interviews the researcher uploaded the file to Dedoose¹⁴, an online research suite. The researcher used tools within Dedoose to code and analyze the data from the focus groups and the interviews with the pastors. The documents were coded thematically using the survey questions for the initial analysis. As the researcher encountered a response related to a specific barrier to leadership, that section of text was highlighted and assigned a code. This process was then repeated for each transcript and each code. As the research progressed and the researcher noticed additional themes, they were added and the entire data set coded a second time.

Once the coding was completed, the researcher used Dedoose to generate a chart showing the frequency of each code in each document and across all of the interviews. This chart allowed the researcher to determine which codes were emphasized in each research location and to identify themes throughout the research. This information, along

¹³ Yin, Locations 2987-2988.

¹⁴ <http://www.dedoose.com>

with the results of the surveys, and the researcher's notes from MCC were used to develop the case studies and the cross-case analysis.

Case Studies

To develop a robust understanding of leadership in each congregation, the case studies were developed by analyzing the data from the surveys, focus group interviews, interviews with the pastors of the two other congregations, and the researcher's observations at MCC. Robert Yin writes, "Case studies need not be limited to a single source of evidence. In fact, most of the better case studies rely on a variety of sources."¹⁵ By combining data from multiple sources the researcher could observe trends in the responses and help to eliminate biases in the individual research tools.

The researcher followed a multiple case study method described by Creswell. Creswell writes, "When multiple cases are chosen, a typical format is to provide first a detailed description of each case and themes within the case, called a within-case analysis, followed by a thematic analysis across the cases, called a cross-case analysis, as well as assertions or an interpretation of the meaning of the case."¹⁶ The cross case analysis allowed the researcher to identify themes common among the research locations and to use the strengths and weaknesses of each congregation to enhance the plan for engaging leadership at MCC. While the results of the research cannot be universalized, the themes developed in the cross-case analysis allow the researcher to develop a leadership model for Marshfield Christian Church.

¹⁵ Yin, Locations 3041-3042.

¹⁶ Creswell, Locations 2183-2189.

CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS

Christian Church A Case Study

Christian Church A is revising their constitution and by-laws to decrease the institutional structure of the church. The leaders of the church are having a difficult time getting members to commit to taking on leadership positions while the non-leaders view the leadership as cliquish, unwilling to ask new people to fill the needed roles. This differential has led to many committees in the church being committees of one. Both focus groups and the pastor mentioned issues of burnout among leaders.

The church is structured with a representative board structure comprising eleven elders, twelve to fourteen committee chairpersons, three trustees, and nearly seventy deacons. According to the pastor, nearly everyone who has been a member of the church for a year is a deacon. Even with some overlap between those positions, the board is still very large, with over 50 people serving in one or more capacities. The proposal being developed is to reduce the number of committees and to streamline the board. The governance will remain a representative board model, but with fewer people required to be at the board meetings.

Christian Church A has many opportunities for service, worship, and ministry; however, few in the non-leader focus group felt they know what is happening in the ministries if they are not directly involved. Due to the limited number of people involved in these ministries and a perceived lack of communication about what is happening with

the wider congregation, several in the general church focus group indicated the church struggles with cliques.

The sense of an in group and an out group played a large role in the general church focus group reporting negative experiences of leadership in the church. Many in the non-leader group mentioned that they have not been asked to be in leadership. The leaders mentioned that they have repeatedly asked the congregation to volunteer to fill the positions but very few ever respond. Being directly asked was mentioned more than any other incentive for taking a leadership position at the church. The most common barrier was the lack of a personal invitation.

The importance of a personal invitation to leadership is evident in the survey responses of church leaders. One hundred percent reported being directly asked was important in making their decision. However, 100 percent of the leaders responding to the survey also indicated that they responded to a call issued to the congregation. This suggests that the current leaders of Christian Church A are more inclined to respond to a widespread call for volunteers than the congregation. This likely contributes to the lack of response to this method noted in all three interviews at the church.

During the focus groups and in the survey responses uncertainty was the single most mentioned barrier to leadership at Christian Church A. Both focus groups mentioned uncertainty about the role of elders and board members; however, uncertainty about being qualified to be a leader was the dominate expression. This uncertainty has little to do with the age of the individual. Survey responses indicate age is not a barrier to leadership roles at Christian Church A. Only one respondent indicated feeling he or she was too young for leadership was very true.

According to all three interviews, there is ongoing training available for leaders in the church. The elders have an additional meeting each quarter to participate in a video-based training. These training sessions allow the pastor and elders to grow as a team in ministry. Although there is training in place for current leaders, there is no formalized plan for developing new leaders in the church. The pastor and the leader focus group both expressed skepticism about the effectiveness of a leader training program. One participant said that a training could be offered, but that would not guarantee that anyone would show up. The church leaders and pastor did both indicate the possibility of engaging potential leaders in a mentoring process. Although there was excitement about the possibility, there was no plan in place to identify and mentor new leaders.

Over 75 percent of respondents indicated that age, being too old or too young, was not at all a factor in their participation in church leadership. However, the time commitment of leadership is a barrier at Christian Church A. Over 90 percent of the survey respondents indicated that not having time was a barrier to accepting a leadership position. Committing to meetings was a barrier for 75 percent of the survey respondents. Both focus groups discussed their perceptions of a change in church participation over time. The participants cited the growing number of athletic events on Sunday as one cause of a decreased engagement in church activities. They noted that church is no longer the primary place of social connection. These trends affect not only church leadership but membership and attendance.

Besides the resistance to attending more meetings, over 80 percent of the respondents indicated they were happy with their current involvement. These individuals may be active in worship and serving in ministries, but they are not looking for greater

responsibilities. Another barrier to church leadership is a hesitance to become involved with the politics of church leadership. Sixty-six percent of the respondents indicated that church politics was somewhat of a barrier to their participation in church leadership. An additional 25 percent indicated that a desire to remain out of church politics was a barrier to engaging in a leadership role in the church. This high level of response points to an adversarial perception of church leadership. A few members of the general focus group mentioned a history of discord in the leadership of Christian Church A. They did, however, note that under the leadership of the current pastor those tensions have subsided.

Those active in leadership positions at Christian Church A overwhelmingly cited the importance of a sense of call in their decision to participate. Besides being mentioned during the focus group interview, 100 percent of leaders responding to the survey indicated a sense of calling to leadership was a reason for serving. The church leaders identified the example of others as another incentive to take on a position of leadership in the church. Ninety percent of the leaders surveyed indicated the example of someone else played a role in their taking on a leadership position. This indicates mentoring is a viable method of nurturing future leaders.

The interviews at Christian Church A surfaced several descriptors of a good church leader: committed, will follow through, able to build good relationships, someone you can respect, and spirituality. One participant in the focus group of leaders voiced frustration with a perceived lack of follow-through saying, “The board, or an individual, will come up with an idea of what they want to do, and sometimes it will be months before anyone starts on it, and that bothers me.” Coming from a military background, the

participant identifies with a more proactive model where a plan is made and action taken. The delay between planning and implementation gives the impression that the project is not important. Commitment and follow-through are important considerations for churches when choosing leaders.

The task of identifying leaders at Christian Church A is fulfilled by a nominating committee. It is helpful for whoever is to select leadership to have a list of criteria by which those decisions can be made. The descriptors of a good leader identified at Christian Church A are in line with the biblical qualifications for elders found in First Timothy. The biblical list of qualifications identifies an elder as one who is, “above reproach, . . . self-controlled, respectable . . . He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect” (1 Timothy 3:2-4). Developing a clear set of qualifications for church leadership will allow the people in charge of nominations to discern the strengths and weaknesses of candidates.

The vice-chairperson of the board is the chair of the nominating committee at Christian Church A. As is the case with other committees, the nominating committee often functions as a committee of one. This makes identifying new leaders difficult. Expanding the number of people charged with identifying leaders would build a sense of teamwork in this process and allow more contact throughout the congregation. This greater contact may help minimize the perception of a leadership clique by allowing the nominating team to directly ask a wider group of people to participate in leadership in the church. A diverse nominating team would also enhance the ability to detect future leaders and mentor and nurture their leadership skills.

Christian Church B Case Study

The average weekly worship attendance at Christian Church B is higher than that of Marshfield Christian Church. However, like the other churches in this study, Christian Church B is a county seat church in a predominately rural community. At the time of this research project the church was governed by a representative board. The pastor said that the church is in the early stages of transitioning to a governance board model.

The current leadership of the church comprises elders, deacons, committee chairpersons, and executive committee members. There are 15 elders and 24 deacons who are all members of the board. A few of the committee chairs are not elders or deacons, which increases the number of board members. According to the pastor, there are 40 to 45 people on the board. Christian Church B has intentionally selected co-chairs for the committees in the church. After one year of serving as the co-chair, the individual is promoted to chairperson and a new co-chair is appointed. This allows for continuity among the leadership of the committees. However, according to the pastor, several times the co-chair has decided not to chair the committee. This has limited the success of this model.

The pastor of Christian Church B could not convene a group of church members not involved in leadership at the church. Furthermore, only one survey response was from an individual not involved in church leadership. This limits the ability to understand the barriers to leadership. However, in the surveys, focus group, and interview with the pastor some barriers to leadership became evident. The barrier mentioned the most in the surveys and interviews was uncertainty. One survey respondent wrote, "Many people are

reluctant to start new responsibilities for which they have not been trained.” Another complained about being worthy of leadership in the church.

Uncertainty was also the most mentioned barrier during the focus group. Several participants recounted they felt unqualified for leadership before finally accepting a position. One participant cited confidence in the person asking her to participate as the reason for finally accepting a leadership position. This is one way for current leaders to prepare others to assume leadership roles. If the current leader is respected, he or she can encourage others to use their leadership gifts and abilities.

The uncertainty of not being trained for a particular position emphasizes the importance of providing training to nurture and develop future leaders. Christian Church B offers training for elders and deacons already serving. However, the only training for other leadership positions is the co-chair model described by the pastor. The focus group participants suggested mentoring as a good way to train future leaders and fondly recalled being mentored by former leaders. However, they also noted that they have not been actively mentoring a new generation of leaders.

The focus group expressed difficulty in finding enough people to serve in church leadership. One focus group participant recalled a time where the committees were displayed in the fellowship hall on pieces of paper and the congregation was encouraged to sign up for the committees where they would like to serve. Many committees were left open and the process was not tried again. Seventy-two percent of the leaders responding to the survey said that an appeal to the congregation was partly responsible for their involvement in leadership. However, 100 percent responded that being specifically asked to fill a leadership role was important to serving as a leader in the church. This

demonstrates the importance of directly asking individuals to serve in leadership as opposed to making a general appeal for volunteers from the congregation.

Another barrier to leadership expressed in the survey responses was the time commitment. Several of the focus group participants noted that they fill several leadership roles in the church. They serve as elders, and some are on multiple committees.

A sense of calling is an important factor in taking on leadership at Christian Church B. Ninety percent of the survey responses indicated a sense of calling as important to becoming a leader at the church. The pastor spoke at length about the importance of shared ministry with the elders in the church. He said that “one of the remarkable things that I have had here, that I have never encountered any other church, is there have been multiple occasions I arrived at the hospital to see somebody and one of my elders was there already.” He emphasized the importance of viewing leadership as a ministry in the church. He expressed the importance of understanding the budget, the building, the worship, and all aspects of the church as ministries. This focus on ministry changes the way individuals think about leadership positions at the church.

When asked to describe the qualities of a good leader in the church, the focus group highlighted being a servant leader. Several participants commented on the importance of leaders being enthusiastic about their positions because they can serve others. They expressed the importance of humility in leadership and the need to use the power of leadership for bettering the community. The focus group and pastor also discussed qualities of commitment, enthusiasm, respect, and spirituality. These qualities are in agreement with the biblical qualifications for leadership.

Marshfield Christian Church

When the researcher was first called as the pastor of MCC, the church board comprised an executive committee, the chairperson of each functional committee, all the elders, all the deacons, and the pastor as an ex officio member. In total this could have been, with no overlapping positions, 40 individuals on the board. With an average weekly attendance in worship of 75, this structure was excessive. Less than 15 members regularly attended the board meetings. In response to this lack of engagement, in 2010 the pastor and several members of the congregation embarked on a revision of the constitution and by-laws.

The revised constitution and by-laws reduced the number of individuals serving on the board to twelve. This was accomplished by reducing the number of standing committees and only having the chairpersons of the elders and deacons on the board. However, many committees never meet and several board members have multiple responsibilities on the board. The nominating committee has also faced difficulties securing enough elders to fill the open positions over the past three years. The same people fill leadership positions perennially.

The limited turnover in leadership, however, did not surface as a problem in the focus groups. Several participants in the general church focus group indicated that they appreciated the variety of leadership they experience during the weekly worship services. They appreciated how Sunday school teachers share teaching duties. The survey responses confirm that most people not in leadership positions are happy with their current level of involvement with the church. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents

who have not served in leadership roles at the church indicated they are satisfied with their current involvement.

Survey respondents who have served in leadership positions in the past reported a desire to be involved in the life of the church but not in leadership roles as a reason for not being in leadership. Insufficient time was also a factor for 60 percent of those who had been in leadership but are not currently serving. When asked to provide their own reasons for not participating in leadership at the time of the survey one respondent expressed a desire for meetings to be more concise and for better follow-through. Following through on decisions and promises was also cited as a leadership quality in the focus group with current and former leaders.

One participant in the leaders focus group brought up leadership training as one area where follow-through has been lacking. The elders have discussed implementing training for current and future leaders often during the researcher's time at the church; however, no plan has ever been made and no training offered. Training was also mentioned during the non-leader focus group. One participant noted an experience at another congregation where training was not provided. He described being uncomfortable because he was uncertain about how to complete the task. The expectations of the position were unclear. Though there has been training offered for other roles within the church, training in leadership has been non-existent during the researcher's time at the church.

Several individuals in the leadership focus group mentioned the importance of mentors in their willingness to serve in a leadership capacity at the church. Seventy-five percent of the leaders who responded to the survey cited the example of a former leader

as a factor in their willingness to fill a leadership role at the church. The example of former leaders was also mentioned often in the leadership focus group. Nearly every participant mentioned the impact of a former church leader on their becoming leaders in the church.

Many also expressed a feeling of inadequacy. They discussed their perception of not being qualified to be a leader. Uncertainty about being qualified for leadership was also a major barrier for non-leaders. Of the non-leaders responding to the survey, 87 percent cited not being qualified as a reason for not participating in leadership. When participants do not feel they are qualified for a leadership position, they are less likely to volunteer to serve. If they are asked by someone they admire, however, they are more likely to accept the role.

Being directly asked to participate in church leadership was a factor in 93 percent of the survey respondents serving in leadership. Furthermore, 80 percent of leaders not actively filling a leadership role this year responded that not being asked was a factor. Of the survey respondents who have never held a leadership position in the church, 75 percent replied that they had not been asked to fill that role. These responses underscore the importance of directly approaching potential leaders with the opportunity to serve.

Leadership as service surfaced often in the surveys and in the focus group interviews. One survey respondent wrote that “serving is a privilege, not a job.” Those in leadership roles who responded to the survey expressed the importance of a sense of calling to their acceptance of a leadership position. The sense of calling was very important to 87 percent of the survey respondents. One survey participant wrote, “Encouraging others and being with them in their life’s journey is a passion.”

The notion of the servant leader was discussed during both focus groups and was among the most mentioned descriptors of a church leader. The focus groups also mentioned commitment, enthusiasm, and spirituality. The importance of following through was also mentioned often throughout the focus group meetings. These leadership qualifications are similar to those mentioned in the list of biblical qualifications.

Cross-Case Analysis

For this project, the researcher focused on the lay leadership of the church, specifically the elders and church board. However, in each focus group interview the lay leaders of the congregation expressed the important leadership role played by the pastor of the congregation. Those not in leadership positions at Christian Church A spoke at length about the need for lay leaders to step in and help the pastor with his duties. The leaders at Christian Church B approved of how the pastor engaged with the congregation and commented on how important his approval was in being asked to serve in a leadership role. Both focus groups at MCC commented on the role of the pastor in setting the tone for leadership in the church.

The importance of the pastor in creating leadership opportunities or leadership barriers cannot be ignored. The results confirm Scazzero's claim that "as go the leaders, so goes the church."¹ However, though the pastor plays a role in how leadership functions within the church, some other themes developed through the course of this project. First and foremost is the importance of directly asking individuals to serve as leaders in the church. The importance of developing future leaders through mentoring relationships was also evident in all three congregations. Regardless of the leadership role

¹ Peter Scazzero, *The Emotionally Healthy Church, Expanded Edition: a Strategy for Discipleship That Actually Changes Lives* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 36.

or congregation, participants in the research overwhelmingly expressed a sense of not being worthy to be a leader in the church. While each pastor and each focus group developed their own list of leadership characteristics common themes of servant leadership, spirituality and commitment were evident in each interview. Finally, some themes around leadership structures developed because of the research.

Direct vs. Indirect

The importance of directly asking individuals to participate in church leadership and activities was emphasized at all three research locations. The importance of directly asking people to engage in leadership positions in the church was mentioned in all interviews and confirmed by the survey results. When combining the results of all the surveys, 85 percent of the respondents not in leadership positions cited not being asked as a factor. Of those who have been leaders in the past but are not currently serving in that capacity, 63 percent responded that not being asked was a partially responsible for their inactivity this year. Most telling was the 97 percent of church leaders who responded that being directly asked to serve was a factor in their participation in church leadership.

Each of the churches mentioned insufficient response to church-wide appeals for participation in leadership positions. When discussing the limited involvement in leadership one focus group participant mentioned that a call for volunteers to serve in the church had recently been issued from the pulpit but had gone largely unnoticed. This is potentially due to an effect known as the diffusion of responsibility. In an experiment on the effect of group size on the response to a greeting from a stranger Linda Jones and Natalie Foshay determined there is an inverse relationship between the size of the group

and the likelihood of a stranger receiving a response to her greeting.² Jones and Foshay propose the lower response rate may result from ambiguity. When a stranger approaches the group each individual must determine if the greeting is intended for her or him or for someone else in the group. They propose two possible scenarios: “If you respond and the greeting was meant for someone else, you might feel foolish. If you do not respond and the unfamiliar face is someone you should know, you might appear unfriendly.”³ The results suggest a similar situation occurs when soliciting volunteers for church leadership from the congregation. If the appeal is made to the whole congregation the individual may conclude that someone else will fulfill the role. Because of the diffusion of responsibility very few respond to the request for volunteers. However, when someone is directly approached and asked if they will serve, there is no ambiguity about who is being asked and any insecurity can be raised and addressed.

This insecurity, or uncertainty, was identified as a significant barrier to leadership in every church in this project. The uncertainty about their ability or qualification to fulfill a leadership role was a common response during the focus group interviews with church leaders. One focus group participant noted that she did not feel qualified to be an elder. She declined the position often before relenting. She commented that a major reason for finally accepting the position was being directly asked by someone she respected in the church. Another participant in a different focus group expressed her concerns as she said, “I really question if am I worthy to be an elder. I ask myself, ‘Do I do the things that an elder is supposed to do?’” Another participant replied, “How many

² Linda M. Jones and Natalie Norman Foshay, "Diffusion of Responsibility in a Nonemergency Situation: Response to a Greeting from a Stranger," *Journal Of Social Psychology* 123, no. 2 (August 1984): 155.

³ Jones and Foshay, 156.

[leaders] would we have if we would not accept because of that?” While a certain amount of humility is beneficial, this research points to the importance of working to “equip his people for works of service” (Eph. 4:12).

Mentoring Relationships

Another common theme among the three research locations was the importance of mentors and examples in current leaders accepting their roles. Two of the congregations have implemented a co-leader model for their committee leaders to prepare future leaders. However, none of the congregations in this study have a formalized method for mentoring people into eldership. One participant suggested following the model of Paul’s mentorship of Timothy and Barnabas. While each church expressed a desire to implement mentoring as a model for preparing future leaders there was uncertainty about how to implement mentoring in the church.

One leader at MCC noted the significant role the nominating committee plays in the selection of leaders. He commented that the judgement of the individuals on that committee is important to the future of leadership in the church. Although each of the three churches has a unique model for how leaders are identified, in each case an important component of the process is the recognition of the gifts and charisms for leadership. One participant pointed out that not everyone is called to be a leader. He commented on the importance of a leader inspiring others saying, “I think that as a leader you have to inspire people to get excited about it. I think that is one reason why I avoid leadership in the church. I’m just not that excited by the small tasks.” While not interested in participating in leadership in the church, he was quick to say he would

participate in working on projects, but he did not want to be the one making the leadership decisions.

His insight echoes Robert Kelly's observations in his article "In Praise of Followers." Kelly writes, "In searching so zealously for better leaders we tend to lose sight of the people those leaders will lead. . . . Organizations stand or fall partly on the basis of how well their leaders lead, but partly also on the basis of how well their followers follow."⁴ The researcher began this project with the assumption that the basic problem was a lack of people volunteering to lead. While the research suggests there are leaders in the congregation who have not been identified or allowed to participate in leadership roles, the research indicates that increasing the number of leaders is not the only solution. Ongoing training and nurture of those currently serving in church leadership is equally important. The church must seek to identify and develop new leaders and continue to train and nurture people currently serving as leaders. This ongoing training in a variety of leadership traits will benefit the individual and church.

Responsibility of Leading

The surveys and interviews all emphasize the importance of understanding the responsibilities of leading in the church. Sensing a call to serving as a leader was identified as an important factor in accepting a leadership position by 95 percent of the survey respondents and was mentioned as an incentive to leadership often during the interviews. However, the responsibilities of leadership can also be a barrier to accepting a leadership role. Research participants expressed their hesitance to accept leadership

⁴ Robert E. Kelley, "In Praise of Followers," *Harvard Business Review* 66, no. 6 (November 1988): 142.

positions out of a concern they were not qualified and because they were uncertain of what duties those positions entailed.

The responsibility of leadership most often mentioned in the research was following through. In each of the research locations participants noted a perceived lack of follow-through by church leaders. Part of this difficulty is inherent in the hierarchical structure of church leadership. Eric Eisenberg and H. L. Goodall write in *Organizational Communication* that “the classical management approach ... separates the tasks of making decisions and implementing them.”⁵ Each of the churches in this study operates under this model. The decisions are made by the board or the elders and then are to be carried out by committees, the pastor, or individuals in the church. Eisenberg and Goodall contrast this model with a leadership model based on teamwork. They describe the benefits of team based leadership saying, “Teams get more people involved in the decision-making process and usually generate more information and ideas.”⁶ Furthermore they observe that “the act of participating in decision making makes team members more aware of important issues, more likely to reach a consensus, and better able to communicate about issues with co-workers. Team members are also encouraged to think, to solve problems, and thereby to become more responsible and productive.”⁷ This increased sense of responsibility, coupled with the accountability of reaching the decision as part of a team, encourages a greater level of follow-through desired from church leadership.

⁵ Eric M. Eisenberg and H Lloyd Goodall, *Organizational Communication: Balancing Creativity and Constraint*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin, 1997), 280.

⁶ Eisenberg and Goodall, 280.

⁷ Eisenberg and Goodall, 280.

Characteristics of a Leader

While each congregation in the research project identified a unique set of characteristics of a leader in the church, servant leadership emerged as a common theme. Participants in each congregation spoke about the importance of serving the church and the community through leadership in the church. Church leadership is ministry, though not always expressed explicitly in those terms. Whether or not the person is actively serving in a leadership role, servant leadership dominated the discussion in the interviews. This indicates an understanding that participating in church leadership is one way of serving others and participating in ministry. However, many participants also stated that they felt unqualified to be a leader. This suggests one way of increasing the engagement with leadership is through helping congregation members identify and understand their gifts and talents.

The researcher anticipated membership and age, either being too young or too old for leadership, may play a part in the decision to not take on a leadership position. The study, however, did not indicate that age or membership was a factor in deciding to become a church leader. Sixty-seven percent of the survey respondents indicated that their status as a member of the church played no role in their decision. An even greater percentage, 85 percent in both cases, responded that age was not a factor. This suggests that the limited age range of leaders at MCC may have more to do with who is being asked than the perception that leaders are a certain age. If age diversity is to be a priority in leadership an intentional decision to seek participation from older and younger participants must be made and those people mentored and equipped to become active leaders in the church.

Structural Components

This study found that the organizational structures of the three congregations did not support their mission and ministries effectively. One-person committees and monthly board meetings that make no lasting difference lead to unsatisfied leaders. Church leaders feel called to the ministry of supporting the community of faith but become mired in organizational structures that hinder, rather than enhance, the ministry of the church.

Another barrier to engaging in church leadership is the large size of the existing leadership structures. The focus groups and the pastor of Christian Church A all indicated that nearly every person who has been a member of the church for a year is a member of the diaconate. This is large group of people tasked with leadership in the church and has a negative impact on the effectiveness of the group. Glenn Parker writes that, “All research studies on group size show that as the size of the group increases, per person productivity decreases.”⁸ His research shows “optimal team size is four to six members, with ten to twelve being the maximum for effectiveness.”⁹ Larger teams are less effective because more of their time is consumed in communicating with other members.

Large teams also suffer from a phenomenon known as social loafing. Parker explains that social loafing is “the reduction in individual effort as the size of the team increases. The so-called loafing occurs because the more people there are on your team, the less responsible you feel for the team’s success, since there are other people around to pick up the slack.”¹⁰ Participants in all three congregations indicated sharing the tasks of

⁸ Glenn Parker, *Cross-Functional Teams: Working with Allies, Enemies, and Other Strangers*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994), 153.

⁹ Parker, 156.

¹⁰ Parker, 155.

making and carrying out decisions encouraged them to participate. This increased involvement was attributed to the assurance they would not be alone in the responsibility.

However, sharing the workload is not always beneficial. In their research Robert Liden, Sandy Wayne, Renata Jaworski and Nathan Bennett found a relationship between how closely team members must work with one another and the incidence of social loafing. While this research indicates church members are more likely to participate in leadership roles with collaborative leadership, Liden, et al. conclude that it is important to “acknowledge the role that task interdependence might play in encouraging social loafing.”¹¹ They recommend building group cohesiveness and limiting group size as methods of limiting social loafing.¹² In their study on the effect of rewards on social loafing, Philip Mefoh and Chinonso Nwanosike conclude, “Because the group size was too large, it was possible that participants, especially those driven by their individuality felt that their contribution will not be recognized, and this lowered their motivation.”¹³ Their study also demonstrates that participants who anticipate a reward based on the group performance are “motivated to pursue group goals.”¹⁴ As a result successful collaborative leadership structures should take into account group size, task interdependence, and rewards to minimize the negative impact of social loafing.

Given the emphasis on teamwork and effective leadership, any structural changes should consider the work of Patrick Lencioni in *Death by Meeting* and *The Five*

¹¹ Robert C. Linden, Sandy J. Wayne, Renata A. Jaworski, and Nathan Bennett, “Social Loafing: A Field Investigation.” *Journal of Management* 30, no. 2 (2004): 299.

¹² Linden, et al., 299.

¹³ Philip C. Mefoh and Chinonso Nwanosike, "Effects of Group Size and Expectancy of Reward on Social Loafing," *Ife Psychologia* 20, no. 1 (2012): 236.

¹⁴ Mefoh and Nwanosike, 237.

Dysfunctions of a Team. In *Five Dysfunctions*, Lencioni proposes that the absence of trust, fear of conflict, lack of commitment, avoidance of accountability, and inattention to results all hinder the effectiveness of leadership teams.¹⁵ Of specific importance to the results are avoidance of accountability and inattention to results. These two dysfunctions relate to the expressed desire for a greater level of follow-through by church leaders.

In *Death by Meeting*, Lencioni addresses the concern about unproductive meetings as he writes, “Too many organizations have only one kind of regular meeting.”¹⁶ Lencioni suggests one of the difficulties with meetings is trying to cover too many topics in one meeting. He suggests four types of meetings in the life of an organization. The leadership of the church would benefit from holding both monthly strategic meetings and quarterly reviews.¹⁷ He describes the monthly strategic meeting as the place “where executives wrestle with, analyze, debate, and decide upon critical issues (but just a few) that will affect the business in fundamental ways.”¹⁸ In the church, these meetings would replace the monthly board meetings as a place to strategize about the mission and ministries of the church, freeing each committee, or ministry team, to determine their own specific activities which support the overall mission of the congregation. The quarterly review described by Lencioni would, “provide executives an opportunity to regularly step away from the daily, weekly, even monthly issues that occupy their attention, so they can review the business in a more holistic, long-term

¹⁵ Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 195-220.

¹⁶ Patrick Lencioni, *Death by Meeting: A Leadership Fable-- About Solving the Most Painful Problem in Business* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 224.

¹⁷ Lencioni, *Death by Meeting*, 241-248.

¹⁸ Lencioni, *Death by Meeting*, 241.

manner.”¹⁹ In the church setting this quarterly review can be an opportunity for spiritual growth and development among the elders, and the place for determining the long-term planning and strategy needs of the congregation for the church leadership.

¹⁹ Lencioni, *Death by Meeting*, 245.

CHAPTER SIX: A PLAN FOR ENGAGED LEADERSHIP AND PROJECT EVALUATION

The biblical-theological reflections, literature review, and field research into church leadership indicate Marshfield Christian Church should transition their leadership structures from a hierarchal model to a model that emphasizes collaboration and teamwork. However, the church should heed the advice of John Kotter by not jettisoning all of the current structure. By focusing on ministry teams for the work of the church and empowering them through a board structure which focuses on policy and governance, the leadership of the church will eliminate many barriers to leadership identified in this study. The research also suggests the church will benefit from a culture that promotes engagement in church leadership while understanding that not all people are called to fill leadership roles.

Team-Based Leadership

MCC already operates with a small group of leaders. There are several within the congregation who will complete any tasks which come their way. However, there is a difference between a group of leaders and a team of leaders. In “From Group to Team,” Ginny Lee writes, “all teams are groups but not all groups are teams.”¹ According to Lee, teams differ from groups in two main ways; “teams share a common purpose and goal,” and “team members are interdependent; they understand that they need to work well as a

¹ Ginny V. Lee, “From Group to Team,” *Journal of Staff Development* 30, no. 5 (2009), 45.

unit in order to complete their task.”² The leadership at MCC is a group, not a team, because they operate independently, not interdependently. While they may have an overarching goal and purpose in common, often events and ministries are planned with only that subset of the congregation in mind.

The research and field notes of the researcher indicate the church leaders are what Susan Wheelan describes as a “stage one group.”³ She lists several characteristics of stage one groups. A few items echo the results of the research; “the group’s goals are not clear to its members, but members don’t try to clarify them,” “the group assumes that there is consensus about its goals,” and “a lack of group structure and organization is evident.”⁴ Wheelan provides a detailed plan for progressing through her four stages of team development and states the importance of an orderly and diligent approach to moving through the stages.⁵ One of the defining characteristics of the transition from a stage one group into a stage two group is the introduction of conflict. This may seem counter-productive, but conflict is a necessary part of working as a team.

The challenge is to keep the conflict from becoming personal. Kathleen Eisenhardt, Jean Kahwajy, and L. J. Bourgeois III write, “The challenge—familiar to anyone who has ever been part of a management team—is to keep constructive conflict over issues from degenerating into dysfunctional interpersonal conflict.”⁶ In a previous

² Lee, 44.

³ Susan A. Wheelan, *Creating Effective Teams: A Guide for Members and Leaders*, 5th ed. (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2016), 25.

⁴ Wheelan, 26.

⁵ Wheelan, 90-124.

⁶ Kathleen Eisenhardt, Jean Kahwajy, and L. J. Bourgeois III, “How Management Teams Can Have a Good Fight,” in *HBR’s Ten Must Reads on Teams*, (Boston: Harvard Business Review Press, 2013), 165-166.

research project the researcher developed a seminar to train congregational leaders to manage conflict. The training draws from Ken Sande's book, *The Peacemaker*, and was presented to a few church leaders in 2012. Because of the conflict inherent in the transition to team-based leadership, this training must be presented to a larger group of the church leaders. Training the core leaders in conflict management will help smooth the transition into a team-based model. Training in conflict management will also address one of Lencioni's five dysfunctions of a team, the fear of conflict.⁷ Although this training seminar already exists it should not be the topic of the first quarterly meeting suggested by Lencioni in *Death by Meeting*. That first meeting will be dedicated to a discussion about teams as a model for the organization of the church.

An attempt to implement teamwork by the researcher would be incongruent with the ideals of collaborative leadership and teamwork found in the biblical and theological research. Consequentially whether or not to implement the model suggested by the research lies with the congregation and its leaders. After the field research at MCC, the researcher shared some of the preliminary findings with congregational leaders. The church leadership was receptive to moving to a team leadership model. The emphasis on relationship and collaboration in the biblical and theological research, however, suggests education and discussion of the merits of a new model because of that research.

One uncertainty encountered by the researcher centered on the ongoing responsibilities of some committees. Church leaders expressed concerns that tasks will be neglected if there is not a committee structure responsible for oversight. The research suggests a collaborative model will increase accountability; however, Lencioni highlights

⁷ Patrick Lencioni, *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 202-206.

the avoidance of accountability as one of the five dysfunctions.⁸ He suggests one method of increasing accountability is “to clarify publicly exactly what the team needs to achieve, who needs to deliver what, and how everyone must behave in order to succeed.”⁹

Lencioni identifies ambiguity as a major hindrance to accountability.¹⁰ Ambiguity about who handles what tasks is an unanticipated result of the structural changes made in 2010. The decrease in the number of committees should streamline the board, however, which group handles which tasks became unclear. The research indicates the importance of effective collaborative ministry. Therefore, church leaders must be trained in how to function as a team. This will be accomplished through interaction with Wheelan’s process of team development and Lencioni’s materials on the five dysfunctions. The researcher will also train all levels of church leadership in the implementation and use of RACI model. This model uses a matrix to clarify who is responsible, accountable, consulted, and informed about different tasks.¹¹ In his description of the model, Duncan Haughey writes that “without clearly defined roles and responsibilities it is easy for projects to run into trouble. When people know exactly what is expected of them, it is easier for them to complete their work on time, within budget and to the right level of quality.”¹² Using the RACI model at all levels of church leadership will help leaders reduce ambiguity and enhance follow-through.

⁸ Lencioni, *Five Dysfunctions*, 212-216.

⁹ Lencioni, *Five Dysfunctions*, 214.

¹⁰ Lencioni, *Five Dysfunctions*, 214.

¹¹ Duncan Haughey, “RACI Matrix,” Project Smart, accessed January 11, 2016, <https://www.projectsmart.co.uk/raci-matrix.php>.

¹² Haughey, “RACI Matrix”

Another way to address the fears of ambiguity in team-based leadership is to develop a structure based on John Kotter's dual operating system model. Kotter's model differentiates between leadership and management while affirming the need for both in a successful organization. According to Kotter, "Without competent management, the organizations we have created in the last century, and that we continue to create today, could not function. Without management, chaos would reign."¹³ Kotter writes that management is concerned with tasks like planning, budgeting, organizing and problem solving.¹⁴ "But management is not leadership," writes Kotter, "Leadership is about setting a direction. It's about creating a vision, empowering and inspiring people to want to achieve the vision, and enabling them to do so."¹⁵ For Kotter, the tasks of leadership are more long-term and inspirational. Using Kotter's terminology, the current board structure at MCC is not leading, but managing.

John Carver and Miriam Carver describe this leadership as policy governance. They assert that the policy-governance model "is designed to give organizations' true owners competent servant-leaders to govern on their behalf."¹⁶ In this understanding of leadership, the governance board sets policies for the organization and placing the responsibility for management and execution in the hands of the staff. Carver and Carver propose that "just as the corporate board exists to speak for the shareholders, the

¹³ John P. Kotter, *Accelerate: Building Strategic Agility for a Faster-Moving World* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2014), 60.

¹⁴ Kotter, *Accelerate*, 61.

¹⁵ Kotter, *Accelerate*, 60.

¹⁶ John Carver and Miriam Carver, "Carver's Policy Governance Model in Nonprofit Organizations," Policygovernance.com, accessed December 12, 2015, <http://www.carvergovernance.com/pg-np.htm>.

nonprofit board exists to represent and to speak for the interests of the owners.”¹⁷ They explain that for an organization like the church, the owners are the members of the congregation. The members of the congregation are defined by the constitution and by-laws of the church. Given the history of the denomination and the emphasis on the universal Body of Christ, the congregation would benefit from a deep theological reflection on the meaning of membership. This would be a valuable task for the leadership of the congregation.

The policy governance model suggests separating the role of budget and management from governance and leadership. MCC has no group responsible for governance. A transition to team-based structure will not address the needs for both management and leadership. To provide leadership, as described by Carver’s model of governance, the organizational structure of the congregation must be transformed. To achieve this result the researcher will educate the congregation, encourage a cultural transformation, recommend structural changes, and guide the congregation.

Restructuring Church Leadership

Because of the emphasis on collaborative leadership in the research, the first task of the researcher is to educate the congregation. Any attempt to exercise power to implement the change would run counter to the theology of the congregation and to the ideal of teamwork. This education will be accomplished by presenting the findings of this research project to the church board and elders and to the congregation. The congregational presentation will take place in a sermon series on leadership in the Bible. This series will focus on the leadership texts identified in the biblical research to present

¹⁷ Carver and Carver, “Carver’s Governance Model.”

a theologically based understanding of collaborative leadership. By presenting the biblical and theological basis for collaborative leadership structures in the church to the congregation during the weekly sermon the researcher will reach the widest possible group at one time. Choosing to hold town hall meetings or presentations during board meetings would mean that a smaller percentage of the congregation would be exposed to the ideas.

Educating the congregation through the weekly sermon will also transform the culture of the congregation. The shift in organizational culture is essential to the long-term success of collaborative ministry. As Terrance Deal and Allan Kennedy write, “culture is *the* barrier to change”¹⁸ in an organization. In their book *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership* Lee Bolman and Terrance Deal describe four frameworks for understanding an organization. MCC operates under the Human Resource framework where the predominant metaphor for the organization is the family. Besides many members being related to one another, being the “family of God” is a common phrase heard in the congregation. Bolman and Deal merge the four organizational frames with John Kotter and Dan Cohen’s eight stages of change from their book *The Heart of Change*. The eighth stage of change is “Nurturing and shaping a new culture to support the emerging innovative ways.”¹⁹ In the human resource frame Bolman and Deal write this is accomplished by creating “broad involvement in developing culture.”²⁰ By educating the congregation through weekly sermons the

¹⁸ Terrence E. Deal and Allan A. Kennedy, *Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life* (Cambridge, MA.: Perseus Books, 2000), 159.

¹⁹ Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, and Leadership*, fourth ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008), 394.

²⁰ Bolman and Deal, 396.

researcher will involve people in creating the culture to sustain a collaborative organization.

As the congregation is learning about the theology of collaborative leadership the researcher will work with the church board and elders in quarterly retreats to present a new organizational structure and identify the leaders who will be asked to participate in the new model. These retreats will enable the researcher and the current leadership to present a fully developed plan to the congregation. The church board and elders can modify, accept, or reject this proposal. If the elders and church board agree to move forward with a change to the organizational structure, the structural changes will be presented to the congregation who will have the final approval to make any structural changes.

The researcher will present an organizational structure of ministry and mission teams, an executive team, and a church council. These three areas of organizational leadership address the biblical and theological research, the literature review, and the results of the field research through collaborative ministry which supports effective meetings, engages many church participants, and focuses on accomplishing the mission of the congregation through service. Each component of the structure has a unique set of responsibilities and multiple leaders to share the ministry.

To emphasize collaboration and service, the majority of the work of the church will be accomplished by mission and ministry teams. Some teams will be continuous while others will form for a short period to complete a distinct task. This mix of ongoing and episodic ministry opportunities will enable participants to be involved in the ministries which best fit their interests and schedule. For example the Sunday school,

worship, property, and personnel teams will all be continual. Each of these teams will offer their members the opportunity to commit to participate annually. These teams all represent ongoing ministries of the church. Examples of episodic teams that will convene for a specific event would be a Vacation Bible School team, a community outreach team, or a Fall Festival team. These teams would plan and execute a few events before disbanding.

The mission and ministry teams will meet as needed to accomplish their tasks. Short-term teams may have several planning meetings in the weeks before their event, were long-term teams may only need a few meetings each year. To facilitate effective meetings the second Sunday of even months will be set aside for mission and ministry team meetings. Team leaders will also organize special meetings as needed to accomplish their tasks. The worship team may call a special meeting to organize events during Advent and Lent. Because of the emphasis on collaboration, every mission and ministry team must have at least two members.

The elders and deacons will function as ministry teams with specific responsibilities. Initially the deacons will collect the weekly offering and serving communion during worship. However, the role of the diaconate will be a topic of discussion for the church council. The elders will continue to be the spiritual leaders of the congregation. They will handle the ongoing spiritual care and nurture of the congregation.

The executive team will have budgetary oversight and assist in coordinating the efforts of the mission and ministry teams. Team leaders will report to the executive team on the progress of their projects, request needed funds, and receive the support and

guidance they need to succeed in their ministries. The executive team will be elected each year and will comprise a moderator, vice-moderator, secretary, and treasurer. The pastor will be an ex-officio member of the executive team. The team will meet on the second Sunday of odd months and will hold special called meetings as needed. The executive team is charged with ensuring the mission and ministry teams are furthering the mission and vision of the congregation.

The mission and ministry teams and the executive team already exist in some form in the current leadership structure of MCC. The researcher's proposal modifies and clarifies their roles and responsibilities. However, the research suggests MCC needs an additional leadership structure to focus on long-range planning and governance. This new team will be called the Church Council. The council will comprise six members of the congregation and the pastor. The council will meet quarterly to develop long-term plans for the congregation. The council is accountable to the membership of the church. Members of the council will be elected by the congregation and serve three-year terms. Once the council is organized, two members will be elected each year. This will promote both consistency and the turnover needed to guard against organizational inertia. The council will also serve as the legal directors of the congregation.

Throughout the process the researcher will serve as a guide and coach to the congregation. Richard Hackman and Ruth Wageman describe a theory of coaching teams which employs a different style of coaching at different times in the lifecycle of the team. They propose focusing on motivational coaching as the team is forming, consulting to help the team achieve their task in the middle of the team's work, and learning from the

results of the teams work as they conclude their efforts.²¹ For short-term, episodic, ministry teams the beginning, middle, and end of the team are clearly defined and will be opportunities for coaching. Because of the ongoing nature of the work of the church, however, there are no clear beginning and ending points for some ministry teams. According to Hackman and Wageman, “Even teams with continuous tasks . . . usually have beginnings, midpoints, and ends. They have them because the teams, or their managers, *create* them (italics in original).²² The annual cycle of leadership elections at MCC creates natural beginning and ending points though many team members may continue for multiple years. This cycle will allow the researcher to equip the teams for success through targeted coaching during team meetings.

The congregational leaders and the researcher will annually review the ministry and structure of the congregation during an annual combined off-site review. This review will engage the leaders of the mission and ministry teams, the church board, the elders, and the church council. This annual review will allow the leaders to evaluate the ministries of the past year and plan for the upcoming year. The church will continue to hold two annual congregational meetings and will continue to bring the calling of pastoral leadership and the buying and selling of property to the congregation for a vote. This ensures the congregation will remain the ultimate decision-making body in accordance with the principles of the Disciples. During the first congregational meeting, held in January, the executive team will present the annual budget for the members to approve. The second annual congregational meeting will be held in October and will ask

²¹ J. Richard Hackman and Ruth Wageman, “A Theory of Team Coaching,” *Academy of Management Review* 30, no. 2 (2005): 278.

²² Hackman and Wageman, 279.

the congregation to approve the nominations for elders, deacons, the executive team, and the church council.

The nominations for leadership will be made by a nominating team comprising the Church Council and the elders. Council members and elders should display the characteristics of leadership emphasized by this research. Therefore they should be trusted to nominate leaders who also have those leadership characteristics. The nominating team should also strive to nominate a diverse leadership team. The mission and ministry team leaders will be appointed by the executive team, or they may self-identify by bringing an idea for a mission or ministry project to the executive team.

As the church board begins a transition to team-based leadership, the elders should also modify their interaction with the congregation. The elders, though meeting monthly to share prayer concerns and pray for one another and members of the congregation, have not taken an active role in the ministries of the church for several years. When the researcher was called to the church, each elder had a list of church members for whom he or she was responsible. The elder was to maintain contact with those members and act as a first point of contact for each member. Some elders were effective at this task, while others never contacted the people on their list. This challenge was also mentioned by the pastor of Christian Church A during the research. Several among the elders of the church have expressed an interest in reengaging this ministry. Developing a shepherding ministry would encourage the elders to take an active role in ministry to the members of the congregation. This ministry is one way the leaders of the congregation can demonstrate the ideal of collaborative ministry for the congregation.

Supporting Current Leaders

Lencioni and Wheelan both emphasize the importance of dealing with conflict in teams.²³ During a prior research project, the researcher developed a conflict management and resolution training program for congregational leaders. The researcher will conduct this training program with the leadership of MCC to equip them to deal with the conflict which will arise because of a new leadership focus. The research demonstrated the importance of an ongoing leadership development program. Besides their regularly scheduled meetings, the executive team will also hold quarterly review meetings as recommended by Lencioni.²⁴ These quarterly meetings will provide the researcher and church leaders with a dedicated time to focus on the policy-level decisions and to develop the skills needed to be effective leaders. The researcher and congregation may bring in assistance from the middle judicatory to assist with this training, and utilizing other resources and contacts to train and develop congregational leaders.

The elders will also focus on training and development; however, their quarterly meetings will be more focused on spiritual development and prayer. The pastor of Christian Church A suggested using the *Online Elders Workshop*²⁵ produced by the Mid-America Center for Ministry to train and develop the elders. The elders will work through this material during their quarterly meetings and discuss their work with their shepherding groups. This will allow for the elders to support one another in this new

²³ Lencioni, *Five Dysfunctions*, 202-206 and Wheelan, 96-107.

²⁴ Patrick Lencioni, *Death by Meeting: A Leadership Fable-- About Solving the Most Painful Problem in Business* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 245-248.

²⁵ <http://center4ministry.org/product/elder-training-video-set/>

focus and will enable the elders to hold one another accountable for their commitments to their shepherding groups.

Developing Future Leaders

In his book *Managing the Nonprofit Organization* Peter Drucker recounts a conversation with the pastor of a large church. When asked how the church developed leaders the pastor said, “The church tries to provide four things to young people who show up for services: (1) a mentor to guide him or her; (2) a teacher to develop skills; (3) a judge to evaluate progress; and finally, (4) an encourager to cheer them on.”²⁶ The pastor continued to explain that he viewed his role as the encourager. He expounded by saying, “I want people to make mistakes. They can’t develop otherwise. So when they fall flat on their faces, somebody has to pick them up and say, go on. That’s *my* role” (italics in original).²⁷ The research demonstrates that not all church members are called to be leaders; however, when leadership traits and abilities are identified in a church member, it is important to nurture those gifts and equip those individuals to succeed in leadership. However, Bill Tenny-Brittian suggests leadership development should not be the emphasis. He writes that a focus on ministry and delegation is essential to the growth of the congregation, and that congregational growth will generate more leaders. According to Tenny-Brittian, “great leaders rarely remain in situations where there are limited leadership challenges; and so leaders with great, or even good, potential drift

²⁶ Peter F. Drucker, *Managing the Non-Profit Organization: Practices and Principles* (New York, N.Y.: Collins Business, 2005), 148.

²⁷ Drucker, 148.

away from small churches in search for a greater return on their leadership abilities.”²⁸

Tenny-Brittian urges leaders to focus on ministry rather than leadership development.

This focus enables leaders to witness the leadership candidate over time and develop an understanding of their potential for greater responsibility.

Strengths and Weaknesses in the Project

Strengths

By gathering information from members of three congregations in similar, but unique ministry contexts this project confirmed some of challenges face by MCC.

Though leadership in the church depends on the culture of the congregation, the multiple research sites enabled the researcher to discover the unique resources and challenges of each church and those shared by all three congregations. By conducting the interviews the researcher had access to non-verbal communication. This enabled the researcher to directly ask for input from participants who were less assertive in stating their views. The project also identified some of the researcher’s unexamined biases. As participants expressed their understanding that not all people are called to be leaders, the researcher discovered a preconceived idea that all church members are called to leadership. As this bias was brought to light, the researcher could address it and modify the plan for engaging leadership at MCC.

Weaknesses

One weakness of the project was the researcher’s involvement in the interview process. The presence of the researcher may have influenced the participants’ responses.

²⁸ Bill Tenny-Brittian, “Stop Developing Leaders, Get More Ministry Done, and Grow Your Church,” The Effective Church Group, October 27, 2015, accessed January 11, 2016, <http://effectivechurch.com/blog/stop-developing-leaders-get-more-ministry-done-and-grow-your-church/>.

This weakness could be addressed in future research by having the interviews conducted and transcribed by a third party. Another weakness in the project was the lack of non-leader response from Christian Church B. This could be addressed by engaging more congregations in future research. The selection of the focus group participants by the pastor of the congregation is also a weakness, because of an introduction of bias. This bias may be addressed by conducting interviews with a random sample of congregational participants. Brief individual interviews would lack the group interaction of this project, which may increase the ability to generalize the results.

Suggestions for Further Study

This research project was limited to Disciples of Christ churches in a relatively small geographic area. Conducting similar research in other Disciples churches around the nation and in other denominations would test the general application of teamwork, leader support, and leader development indicated by this study. One nearby congregation made a short-lived transition to team-based leadership which emphasizes the importance of the pastor. As the transition to collaborative leadership was being implemented the pastor accepted the call to serve another church. When the congregation called their next pastor he led the congregation to reverse many of the collaborative changes for a more traditional structure. However, another nearby congregation has been successfully led by a team for over a decade. The importance of the pastor in the process is also evident in this congregation. The pastor has staunchly refused to be forced into an authoritarian role, even when other church leaders have suggested he take on that leadership style.

Adaptations could be made to the survey instrument broadening its application to a wider range of churches. As the research is expanded a paper-based version of the

survey should be developed and provided to those without internet access or limited computer knowledge. This would require a plan to analyze the data received through the paper surveys, but might gain input from a wider participant base. The researcher will track the results of the education and implementation of the plan developed during this project at MCC. This will provide the researcher with more data as the practical application of the research is tested.

Although this research identified spirituality as an important leadership trait in the church, there was a separation between leadership activities and worship. Through the course of this project the researcher understood the importance of understanding leadership as an act of worship. In his book *The Leader's Palette: Seven Primary Colors* Ralph Enlow defines doxological leadership as, “moving people *toward* God and moving people into step *with* God (italics in original).”²⁹ This definition, however, does not capture the sense of leadership as worship. It is reminiscent of what Henry Blackaby and Richard Blackaby call the goal of the spiritual leader, which they define as “moving people onto God’s agenda.”³⁰ The researcher is interested in pursuing an understanding of leadership which encompasses servant leadership, transformational leadership, collaborative leadership, and all work being an act of worship. The concept of doxological leadership is intriguing to the researcher and an area for further study and reflection.

²⁹ Ralph E. Enlow, *The Leader's Palette: Seven Primary Colors* (Bloomington, IN: West Bow Press, 2013), 109.

³⁰ Henry T. Blackaby and Richard Blackaby, *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People On to God's Agenda*, rev. and expanded ed. (Nashville: B and H Publishing Group, 2011), 119.

CHAPTER SEVEN: PERSONAL REFLECTION

I was profoundly affected by changes in the demographics of Marshfield Christian Church during this project. These changes emphasized the importance of this research for the congregation and for me as a researcher. During the project the average worship attendance at the church dropped from 80 to 60, and an already tight budget became even tighter. With so many leaders and potential leaders leaving the congregation in a short time I realized the necessity of discerning my continued call to serve this community of faith. I confronted questions about the continuing effectiveness of my ministry in this church and in this community.

To help with my discernment process I turned to friends and colleagues in ministry. Following much prayer, discussion, and discernment I am confident in my continued call to serve as the pastor of MCC. However, with the budget cuts I am no longer able to rely on the church as my sole source of income. It seems more likely that my continued calling to serve as the pastor of Marshfield Christian Church will lead me to become multi-vocational.

As I realized this reality, I grew to appreciate the emphasis on team-based ministry throughout my research. I also realized my tendencies to absorb all of the ministry responsibilities for the church. As the sole full-time employee, I thought of ministry as my “job” as opposed to a voluntary obligation for everyone else. This research project has emphasized the flaw in that understanding. Collaborative ministry

can only be effective if the pastoral leadership is willing to share the work and blessing of ministry.

The financial and relational struggles of the church have helped me to refocus on the real mission of the Body of Christ, engaging in ministry. This research project and the Doctor of Ministry program have breathed new life into my ministry. The prospect of working with the congregation to develop a culture of leadership which embodies our theology of collaboration and relationship is both exciting and daunting. This new way of doing ministry together will require identifying, developing, and recruiting a cadre of engaged leaders with whom I will share the tasks of ministry. Given the dedication of the caring people who make up the congregation of MCC, I have no doubt that we will not only survive, but thrive because of these changes.

I began this research project with an unrealized expectation that by changing the leadership structure of the congregation more people would fill leadership roles. While the research indicates that a team-based approach follows our theological positions, the research also helped me to realize that the real goal is to empower the congregation to participate in the ministries to which they are called. Rather than the church being the sole locus of ministry, the church instead seeks to support, equip, and encourage the congregation in their own ministries.

This will require me to make a dramatic change in the way I serve as the pastor of the church. Instead of directing and managing the ministries of the church, my role will transition to teaching, coaching, and mentoring others as they pursue their calling as members of the body of Christ. Transitioning to this new style and understanding of ministry will undoubtedly have its share of bumps in the road; however, I am blessed to

serve a supporting and nurturing congregation and I am certain God will guide us as we travel this road together. One congregational leader recently told me she could not think of a better group of people to travel into unknown territory with. I wholeheartedly agree.

APPENDIX A

CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY

CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY

1. Are you currently an elder or board member at _____ Christian Church?
Yes or No -- **If yes, skip to question 8.**

2. Have you ever served as an elder or board member at _____ Christian Church?
Yes or No -- **If yes, skip to question 5.**

3. For you, how true is each of the following reasons for not being an elder or board member at _____ Christian Church? Not true at all, Somewhat True, Very True
 - I have never been asked.
 - I am not interested
 - I do not feel qualified
 - I am not a member of the church
 - I am satisfied with my current involvement
 - I do not have time
 - I am not a leader
 - I don't know how to become an elder or board member
 - I would rather serve than lead
 - I don't want to commit more time to meetings
 - I don't want to be involved in the politics of leadership
 - I am too young to be in leadership
 - I am too old to be in leadership
 - I am not available when meetings are held
 - I am too new to this church

4. What other reasons would you share?

Skip to end.

5. For you, how true is each of the following reasons why you are not currently an elder or board member at _____ Christian Church? Not true at all, Somewhat True, Very True
 - I am taking a planned sabbath from leadership
 - I was not asked to serve this year
 - I am not interested in serving right now
 - I no longer have time to serve
 - I want to be involved in church but not in leadership
 - I don't feel my time was well spent
 - My opinion did not matter
 - I feel leadership is too political

6. What other reasons would you share?

7. Please list some things that would make you more willing to serve as a board member or elder at _____ Christian Church again.

8. For you, how true are each of the following reasons for serving as an elder or board member at _____ Christian Church, either currently or in the past? Not true at all,

Somewhat True, Very True

I was asked specifically

No one else would do the job

I like helping make important decisions

I admire the leaders I saw when I was growing up

I feel God called me to serve in this way

I am passionate about a specific ministry

I want to bring a different perspective to the decision-making process

I responded when the need was brought to the congregation

It is a good way to learn how to be a leader

9. What other reasons would you share?

10. What, if anything, made you hesitant to become an elder or board member at _____ Christian Church?

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW GUIDE

Date and Time: _____
 Location of the focus group: _____
 Digital recorder file name: _____

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group and in this research project. I want to take a few moments to briefly go over the consent forms you have been given.

This research project seeks to explore leadership in the local church. I will be recording our time together today and later will be transcribing this session so I can more fully understand your perceptions on leadership at _____ Christian Church.

I will keep the audio recordings for three (3) years. In the transcription process I will remove any identifying information. Those transcripts will then be kept in both digital and paper form.

You may choose not to participate now, or at any point in the focus group, without affecting your future relationships with myself, _____ Christian Church, or anyone in this room. I do ask that we all agree to hold this time as confidential, and treat one another and what is said here with love and respect.

If you would, please sign and date one copy of the consent form and give that copy to me. The other copy is for you to keep.

Thank you.

Let's begin by telling one another a little about ourselves. I will start. As you know my name is Alex Ruth. I'm 41 years old, married, with two children. I serve as the Pastor of Marshfield Christian Church, and am a Doctor of Ministry student at Bethel Seminary.

- How would you describe a “good” church leader?
- What has been your involvement with leadership at this church?
- What does, or would, encourage you to take on a leadership role at this church?
- What makes becoming, or being, a leader at this church difficult?
- Is there leadership training at this church? If so, how is it accomplished?
- What else should I know about leadership at this church?

Thank you again for your time. I appreciate your willingness to share with me today. And I want to emphasize one last time, that I will handle this focus group confidentially, and I hope that you will as well.

APPENDIX C

PASTOR INTERVIEW GUIDE

PASTOR INTERVIEW GUIDE

Date and Time: _____
 Name of Pastor & church: _____
 Digital recorder file name: _____

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project. I want to take a few moments to briefly go over the consent form. This research project seeks to explore leadership in the local church. I will be recording our time together today and later will be transcribing this session so I can more fully understand your perceptions on leadership at _____ Christian Church.

I will keep the audio recordings for three (3) years. In the transcription process I will remove any identifying information. Those transcripts will then be kept in both digital and paper form.

You may choose not to participate now, or at any point, without affecting your future relationships with myself, _____ Christian Church, or anyone else.

If you would, please sign and date one copy of the consent form and give that copy to me. The other copy is for you to keep.

Thank you.

- How would you describe a “good” church leader?
- What does church leadership look like at this church?
 - What are the structures?
 - What are the demographics?
 - How do those compare to the church as a whole?
- What encourages people to take on a leadership role at this church?
- What discourages people from taking on a leadership role at this church?
- Is there leadership training at this church? If so, how is it accomplished?
- What else should I know about leadership at this church?

Thank you again for your time. I appreciate your willingness to share with me today. And I want to emphasize one last time, that I will handle this focus group confidentially, and I hope that you will as well.

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