Chaplain, Pastor, Leader: A Biographical Study Of Leadership Transitions In The Life Of Chaplain (Colonel) James E. Wright

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CHAPLAIN, PASTOR, LEADER:
A BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY OF LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS
IN THE LIFE OF CHAPLAIN (COLONEL) JAMES E. WRIGHT

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

BY

BRIAN WRIGHT

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GLOSSARY

The 3rd Air Mobile Infantry Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Airmobile) – during combat operations from 1968 until 1971, the Brigade participated in airmobile combat operations such as Operation Montgomery Rendezvous, which helped destroy North Vietnamese base camps and cut supply lines in the A Shau Valley.

Battalion – 300 to 1,000 soldiers. Four to six companies make up a battalion, which is normally commanded by a lieutenant colonel with a command sergeant major as principle Non-commissioned Officer (NCO) assistant. A battalion is capable of independent operations of limited duration and scope. An armored or air cavalry unit of equivalent size is called a squadron.

Biographical Study – denotes work which uses the stories of individuals and other personal materials to understand the individual life within its social context.¹

Brigade – 3,000 to 5,000 soldiers. A brigade headquarters commands the tactical operation of two to five organic or attached combat battalions. Normally commanded by a colonel with a command sergeant major as senior NCO, brigades are employed on independent or semi-independent operations. Armored cavalry, ranger and Special Forces units these sizes are categorized as regiments or groups.

Company – 62 to 190 soldiers. Three to five platoons form a company, which is commanded by a captain with a first sergeant as the commander's principle NCO

assistant. An artillery unit of equivalent size is called a battery, and a comparable armored or air cavalry unit is called a troop.

CSM – Command Sergeant Major.

Life Experience – refers to a specific type of biographical study that focuses on a defined portion of an individual’s life.

Military Chaplain – a person charged to perform and provide religious support to America's military across the full spectrum of operations. This includes assisting the Commander in ensuring the right to free exercise of religion and by providing spiritual, moral and ethical leadership for the military.

Military Ranks for Chaplains:

SECOND LIEUTENANT (2LT) – this is the entry-level rank for most Commissioned Officers and is the rank assigned to chaplain candidates.

FIRST LIEUTENANT (1LT) – Officers of this rank normally serve as platoon leaders. This is the starting rank for a chaplain entering the army.

CAPTAIN (CPT) – Commissioned Officers of this rank command company-sized units (62 to 190 Soldiers).² Chaplains of this rank serve as battalion chaplains.

MAJOR (MAJ) – Commissioned Officers of this rank serve as Battalion level Executive Officers or Training Officers or serve as primary Staff Officer for

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brigade and task force command regarding personnel, logistical and operational missions.³ Chaplains of this rank serve as brigade chaplains normally.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL (LTC) – Commissioned Officers of this rank typically command battalion-sized units (300 to 1,000 Soldiers).⁴ Chaplains of this rank serve as division chaplains or serve as major command staff officers.

COLONEL (COL) – Commissioned Officers of this rank typically command brigade-sized units (3,000 to 5,000 soldiers.)⁵ Chaplains of this rank typically serve as installation chaplains, corps chaplains or major command chaplains.

Pastoral Leadership – is the entire spectrum of pastoral work providing spiritual, moral and ethical leadership to a church congregation.

Platoon – 16 to 44 soldiers.

Regular Army – a common term used to refer to the permanent organization of the military land forces of a nation or state.

Special Forces – a designated army unit known as the “green berets” assigned the primary tasks of unconventional warfare, foreign internal defense, special reconnaissance, direct action, hostage rescue and counterinsurgency.

USAREUR – United States Army Europe.

USARPAC – United States Army Pacific.


Warrior Ethos – the definition as it is expressed by the current Soldier Creed is:

I will always place the mission first.
I will never accept defeat.
I will never quit.
I will never leave a fallen comrade.\(^6\)

ABSTRACT

A distinct transition occurs when military chaplains return to civilian service as pastoral leaders. This project engaged in a biographical study of (COLNEL) Chaplain James E. Wright in order to understand the effect service as a military chaplain has on the chaplain’s transition to service as a pastoral leader in civilian service. It identified the impact of his military chaplain service on his civilian pastoral leadership, examined the correlation between the pastoral leadership demonstrated by Chaplain Wright and biblical descriptions of pastoral leadership and reviewed literature related to the service of military chaplains as civilian pastors.

Old and New Testaments give us many examples of leaders who were both warrior and shepherd. The warrior shepherd leadership expressions identified in this study were vision, discipline, decision making, courage, zeal, loyalty and a drive to fulfill their unique calling. Additional unique features of the ministry of military chaplains were identified as duality, counseling, concern for the general welfare, humanitarian work, young adult ministry, military mobility, non-building centered ministry and ecumenical ministry. The project also used J. Robert Clinton’s phases of ministry leadership development and Mark McCloskey 4R Model transformational leadership to identify key leadership characteristics.

Chaplain Wright’s life was then examined for evidence of the development of these leadership patterns. This examination involved the review of many personal documents, review of his military record including performance evaluations and
interviews conducted with individuals from four congregations he served as a civilian pastor.

The project concluded that the vision, discipline and counseling that were developed by his time as a military chaplain were employed with great effectiveness in his civilian ministry. An established pattern of doing ministry with the troops flowed into a pattern of ministry that stressed being out with the people through hospitality, visitation and community involvement. Finally, his military experience allowed him to make strong ministry connections with other veterans in his congregations.
CHAPTER ONE: PROBLEM AND RESEARCH DESIGN

The Problem

A distinct transition occurs when, after years of dedicated service and caring for the spiritual needs of the men and women of the United States armed forces, military chaplains return to civilian service as pastoral leaders. This project engaged in a biographical study in order to understand the effects of service as a military chaplain have on the chaplain’s transition to service as a pastoral leader in civilian service.

In response to this need the researcher has examined the life experience of Chaplain (Colonel) James E. Wright as an army chaplain for twenty years and as a civilian pastor for twenty-eight years, identified the impact of his military chaplain service on his civilian pastoral leadership, examined the correlation between the pastoral leadership demonstrated by Chaplain Wright and biblical descriptions of pastoral leadership and reviewed literature related to the service of military chaplains as civilian pastors.

Delimitations

The most significant limitation of the research is that it was a biographical study and was therefore limited to the life experience of Chaplain James E. Wright as it relates to his military chaplaincy and his pastoral ministry. Additionally, the research was limited to the study of the literature focused on the training, experience and transitions of military chaplains to civilian pastoral leadership. Finally, the research was limited to the
researcher’s role as an outside observer focused on recording and interpreting the life experiences which are collected as part of the study.

Assumptions

Several basic assumptions have been made regarding the research for this project. The first is that while certain religious traditions may debate the issue it is assumed for this project that serving as a military chaplain is an appropriate venue for pastoral ministry. Second, it has been assumed that the Bible is an authoritative source for identifying the basic requirements of pastoral leadership. Third, it has been assumed that the ministry work of military chaplains and civilian pastors has distinctive aspects. Finally, it has been assumed that the ministry work of military chaplains and civilian pastors has parallel aspects so that experience in one area can be transferred to another.

Subproblems

In order to gain a clear understanding of how service as a military chaplain impacted the transition to civilian service as a pastoral leader this biographical study needed to explore several areas. First, it had to identify the pastoral leadership skills Chaplain Wright developed during his military chaplaincy. Second, it had to identify what pastoral leadership skills Chaplain Wright demonstrated in his civilian ministry. Third, it had to connect the military skill set with the civilian ministry skill set. Finally, it had to evaluate both skill sets in light of the biblical descriptions of pastoral leadership.

Setting of Project

The life experience of James Wright as a military chaplain and civilian pastor is the setting for this project. Chaplain Wright’s preparation for this ministry began when he entered the Marine Corps as a sixteen-year-old in 1943. He told his mother they were
accepting sixteen-year-olds with their parents’ permission. The form he actually had his mother sign was to verify that he was eighteen. He served with the Marines until he was wounded during the invasion of Iwo Jima.

His preparation continued as he enrolled as a student at the Moody Bible Institute. Chaplain Wright completed his BA degree at Olivet Nazarene College in Bourbonnais, Illinois. He then attended Northern Baptist Seminary where he received a divinity degree. Chaplain Wright entered the US Army Reserve as a chaplain in 1957. He was ordained in 1958 and accepted a call to serve as the pastor of First Baptist Church in Belle Fourche, South Dakota. In November of 1959 Chaplain Wright received an ecclesiastical endorsement to become a chaplain from the American Baptist denomination. In 1960 he received a commission as 1st Lieutenant to serve as a chaplain in the Regular Army.

Chaplain Wright began his service as a battalion chaplain at the headquarters of the 6th Missile Battalion of the 43rd Air Defense Artillery Regiment in Omaha, Nebraska. His next posting was in Germany as part of the 1st Brigade of the 19th Infantry Division and the 1st Brigade of the 24th Infantry Division. It was during Chaplain Wright’s first posting in Germany that his service was intersected by a major geopolitical event.

The conflict between the NATO alliance led by the United States and the Communist Bloc nations led by the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics that was known as the “cold war” influenced events in Europe, Asia, Central and South America. Chaplain Wright’s service coincided with one of the flash points of the cold war as he was serving in Germany when the border between East and West Berlin was sealed in
1961. He was also present to hear President Kennedy speak at the Berlin Wall in June of 1963.

Chaplain Wright returned from Germany and was posted to Fitzsimons Army Medical Center in Denver, Colorado for service as a Protestant chaplain. After two years at Fitzsimons he returned to the USA Chaplain School in New York for training in counterinsurgency. This was in preparation for his assignment with the 101st Airborne at Fort Bragg in North Carolina. There he attended the US Army Special Warfare School for training in internal defense development. All of this was preparation for deployment to the Republic of Vietnam in support of troops involved in combat there.

Chaplain Wright served with 101st Airborne in Vietnam from August of 1968 through July of 1969 as part of the 3rd Brigade Special Forces. During this deployment Chaplain Wright was awarded the Soldiers Medal in April of 1969 for heroism not involving actual conflict with the enemy. He entered a storage bunker where an armed soldier had barricaded himself and persuaded the soldier to exit the bunker peacefully.

Returning from his service in Vietnam Chaplain Wright was assigned to the Post Chapel at Fort Hamilton, New York. While serving in this capacity he was able to find avenues to effectively work alongside civilian congregations in the vicinity of the base as part of the local Clemency and Narcotics Board and as a frequent guest speaker for local congregations. Chaplain Wright’s commander noted in his review that these activities “elicited favorable comment and enhanced the image of the Army.” This work would lay a foundation for his eventual return to civilian ministry.

His final major posting was to the 7th Army Training Center in Grafenwoehr, Germany. Chaplain Wright served as the Post Chaplain of this major European
installation for two years before returning to serve as a chaplain in Fort Carson, Colorado. In 1977 he retired from active military service because of health concerns related to problems with his eyesight.

Before Chaplain Wright had even received his final discharge he had accepted a call to become the pastor of the United Church of Christ in Spearfish, South Dakota. This was a mid-size church that was part of an increasingly liberal denomination. Under the leadership of Pastor Wright the church moved down a more conservative theological path. Pastor Wright next became the pastor at Plymouth Congregational Church (UCC) in Scottsbluff, Nebraska. This was an older declining congregation that Pastor Wright helped to recover to health. After prolonged consideration Pastor Wright chose to accept a call to St. Luke’s United Church of Christ in Columbus, Nebraska. His service there was marked by the opportunity to use counseling skills developed in the military to help several families through some very difficult issues. Pastor Wright then returned to serve Salem Congregational Church in Scottsbluff, Nebraska. His time at Salem would be cut short by health concerns but he would later return to serve two more years at Salem as an interim pastor. Pastor Wright finished his ministry serving in rural congregations in Pillsbury, Colgate and New Rockford, North Dakota. Reverend Wright died in December of 2006.

**Importance of Project**

*Importance of the Project to the Researcher*

The researcher had a deep personal interest in the project as it focused on the study of the life experiences of his father James Wright. Through forty-eight years of ministry James Wright served his God and his country as a military chaplain and civilian
pastoral leader. His twenty years of military service significantly shaped his later approach to pastoral ministry. Understanding this relationship between James Wright’s military chaplain service and pastoral leadership is essential to defining how the strengths and weaknesses of his ministry developed. This has a vital bearing on the researcher who is also a pastor who has modeled much of his pastoral ministry on the work of his father.

The close relationship of the researcher to the subject of the study raised the concern for bias within the project. This concern was answered in two ways. First, the researcher’s perspective has been balanced through the inclusion of the assessment and viewpoints of numerous others. Second, all narrative research carries with it some degree of relational connection between the subject and the researcher. In such narrative work the focus is not on eliminating the researcher’s bias but rather acknowledging that the researcher has shared in the experiences being recorded and is rightly part of the story being told through the narrative. What becomes important then is to identify the portions of the narrative which express the researcher’s own experience.

Importance of the Project to the Immediate Context of Ministry

The researcher is a pastor of a mid-size church in southern Minnesota and in this role often draws upon lessons learned from his father’s ministry which was largely shaped by his father’s time as a military chaplain. As a result the impact of that military service on the development of pastoral ministry style has a direct bearing on the researcher’s current ministry context. The researcher’s effectiveness as a pastoral leader was significantly enhanced through a greater understanding of the influences that have

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shaped his own development and the application of new lessons gleaned through the study of life experiences of Chaplain Wright.

Beyond the immediate church context this study is important within the immediate context of the Evangelical Free Church of America (EFCA) of which the researcher is a member. The EFCA currently has 61 pastors serving as military chaplains and another 50 in process of preparing to enter the military chaplaincy. Insights gained through this study can be passed on to EFCA pastors and churches to help them gain greater effectiveness in their ministry.

**Importance of the Project to the Church at Large**

This topic has a significant importance to the larger church because of the increase in military engagement that has occurred over the past decade. The terrorist attacks on the United States that occurred on September 11, 2001 thrust our nation into a level of military activity that had not been seen in decades. Members of the active duty military and the National Guard were deployed in support of missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. With those deployments came calls for chaplains to meet the spiritual needs of those troops and their families.

In 2008 a study done for the US Army by Col. Martin Hershkowitz, and Chaplain (Captain) Chesky Tenenbaum, found that “the military is short by about 520 chaplains, with 80 Regular Army vacancies and 440 openings in the National Guard and Reserves.” They go on to note that one of the main issues facing a minister considering becoming a National Guard or Reserve chaplain is the manner in which “this minister

becomes a part-time chaplain while remaining a full-time civilian minister. In effect, the chaplain now has two congregations.”

There are an increasing number of pastors who have served as military chaplains serving as civilian pastors. Many of those will be holding those roles simultaneously as part of the National Guard or Reserve. An accurate understanding of the impact of that military service on the leadership of pastors can help the church at large in two ways. First, an understanding of the positive impact of military service on pastoral leadership may encourage more pastors to answer the call to serve as military chaplains. Second, an understanding of the negative impacts of military service will help military chaplains more effectively transition between military and civilian service.

**Data and Methodology**

*Methodology: Narrative Inquiry*

This project is an interpretive biography. It is a sub-category of narrative inquiry which is a unique genre of qualitative research with distinctive methods, tools and standards. The elements of narrative inquiry are distinct from those of other research methods. John W. Creswell identifies the following as aspects of a “good” narrative study:

1. Focuses on a single individual
2. Collects stories about a significant issue related to this individual’s life
3. Develops a chronology that connects different phases or aspects of a story
4. Tells a persuasive story told in a literary way
5. Possibly reports themes that build from the story to tell a broader analysis
6. Reflexively brings himself or herself into the study

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9 Hershkowitz and Tenenbaum, 24.

The primary tools used in narrative inquiry are referred to as field texts.¹¹ For this project the field texts consisted of research interviews conducted with members of churches where Pastor Wright served, family stories about his military and ministry service and variety of personal documents.

Project Overview

The project began by examining descriptions of biblical pastoral leaders. These descriptions began with the very nature and character of God who acts as shepherd with a warrior ethos. These descriptions also come from the lives of Old Testament leaders who were shepherds with a warrior ethos. Finally these descriptions are included in instructions from the New Testament given by Paul to Timothy and Titus as pastoral leaders engaged in a spiritual battle as shepherds with a warrior ethos.

The second step was to review related research for information on the distinctive role of military chaplains as pastoral leaders, the unique challenges of transitioning that leadership from being a military chaplain to civilian pastor and material related to the development of pastoral leaders. The information gathered from that review was combined with the results of the biblical and theological study to establish a set of warrior shepherd leadership expressions that could be identified in the work of military chaplaincy and civilian pastoral ministry.

The third step was to collect information on the life experience of Chaplain Wright as military chaplain and civilian pastor. This began with the collection and analysis of available documents. The researcher also conducted on-site interviews with members of four of the churches that Pastor Wright served after his military service.

¹¹Clandinin and Connelly, Narrative Inquiry, 92.
Family members were also invited to contribute family stories and other family artifacts. This information has been collected and organized into a biographical account of the life experience of Chaplain Wright.

The fourth step was to compare the biographical account with the set of warrior shepherd leadership expressions established in steps one and two. The purpose of this comparison was to examine how those leadership expressions developed in Chaplain Wright and to evaluate which of those expressions were carried over to his civilian ministry.

The final step was to see if there are parallels that exist between the transition experiences of other chaplains and the transition that occurred in life experience of Chaplain Wright. Examination was done regarding what Chaplain Wright’s life experience suggests concerning the transition of current chaplains into civilian ministry.
CHAPTER TWO: BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

Introduction

This research is a biographical study focused on the life experience of James Wright as a military chaplain and a civilian pastor. As a result the appropriateness of pastors serving in the military was assumed in this research process and theological issues surrounding that concern were not addressed as part of the biblical or theological issues examined. Rather the biblical and theological basis explored in this project focused on biblical descriptions of pastoral leadership demonstrated by individuals who served in military and shepherding roles.

A military chaplain serves as a shepherd with a warrior ethos. The soldier’s creed is:

- I will place the mission first
- I will never accept defeat
- I will never quit
- I will never leave a fallen comrade.¹

This can be appropriately applied to military combat and to spiritual warfare. Reading the biblical accounts demonstrates the presence of this warrior ethos in both contexts. God is frequently referred to by the title the “Lord of Armies” or “Lord of Hosts” (Isa. 23:9, Jer. 19:3, Zech. 1:3-4). Many Old Testament leaders engaged in military combat that had a

¹ Gary Riccio, v.
spiritual purpose and the New Testament consistently describes a person’s spiritual experience using military language.

The manner in which those who have been shepherds with a warrior’s ethos demonstrated pastoral leadership can be seen from a study of Scripture. That study can then be used as a comparison for how experience as a military chaplain transfers to ministry as a civilian pastor.

**God as a Warrior Shepherd**

God acts as a shepherd with a warrior ethos. God’s role as a warrior is established in the foundational events of Genesis. The curse of Genesis three is that God will place enmity between the snake and woman and between her offspring and the snake. The identity of that offspring is connected with God’s chosen people in Genesis twelve and anticipates the holy-war motif that is accented in Exodus in particular (between Moses and Pharaoh, thus between God and the gods of Egypt; see Exod. 15:1–18), is carried on further in the conquest of Canaan and its gods (which explains the curse of Canaan in Gen. 9:25–27), and climaxes in the New Testament (in the story of Jesus Christ, and especially in the Revelation).²

The concept of God as warrior is thus present throughout the development of the biblical narrative. It is important to note that as a warrior God, “fought for his people by miracle and not by sword and spear” and that “Yahweh’s warfare was not directed only against Israel’s enemies but at times against Israel herself.”³ God fights not by the sword or by

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the bow (Josh. 24:12) but by means that are “beyond the manipulation of any human agency.”

When Moses rejoices over the deliverance that God had provided for the nation through the parting of the Red Sea it is recorded:

Then Moses and the people of Israel sang this song to the Lord, saying, “I will sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation; this is my God, and I will praise him, my father's God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is his name.” (Exod. 15:1-3)

God is frequently described as the divine warrior present to either defend Israel from her foes or at times to bring defeat upon the nation as a means of discipline and correction.

God is again seen in the role of warrior fighting in a holy war as Joshua prepared to enter the Promised Land. He was visited by God and was told “See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor” (Josh. 6:2). God then gave Joshua the plan he was to employ for the battle to come. The plan included breaching the vaunted walls of Jericho by the blasting of trumpets and the shouting of the people (Josh. 6:5). Such tactics were clear evidence that it was God himself that brought about the victory.

Indeed, in the ethos of the Old Testament, a large army and superior weapons technology are a liability. Israel cannot boast in its own strength, but only in the power and might of the Lord, who gives victory in spite of overwhelming odds. It

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4 Lind, 24

5 Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, (Wheaton, IL Crossway, 2001).
is better to go into battle with a small, poorly equipped army than with a large, well-trained one.6

Repeatedly the metaphor of God as warrior is used to describe his work as the one who protects and delivers Israel. After a comparative study of the metaphor in Psalms Martin Klingbeil states,

We would suggest that the notion of Yahweh fighting from heaven on behalf of Israel lies at the core of the God of heaven and warrior metaphors but the imagery is not limited to this notion and often goes beyond it in surprising fashion. Yahweh as the warrior from heaven is always depicted as being in ultimate control and his supremacy is continually emphasized. He is not engaged in a struggle against the chaos or against the enemy but his victory is an anticipated fact and his dominion over the chaotic forces a fait accompli.7

Yet God as the warrior may also bring about the defeat of Israel. God was a warrior who had promised to defend Israel from their enemies if they were faithful to their covenant promises. This arrangement is reflected in the blessing and cursing passages of the law. In Deuteronomy 28 God describes a series of blessings that will be the result “if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today” (Deut. 28:1). Among those blessings is the promise that, “The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you. They shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways” (Deut. 28:7). God also details what will happen “if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you” (Deut. 28:15). Those curses include the consequence that “the Lord will cause you to be defeated before


your enemies. You shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them. And you shall be a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth” (Deut. 28:25).

God’s concern then, as warrior, is not for the conquest of nations and the building of empires but it is for the spiritual health and vitality of his chosen people. God’s holy war is intended to defend his people from enemies who would not only harm them physically but also spiritually by the bringing of false gods and idols. God brings defeat to his people as a way to discipline them and return them to faithful covenant obedience. It is also significant that it is God’s role in spiritual rather than physical warfare that is carried forward in the New Testament.

Continually God affirms that he is the one who fights for his people and God is repeatedly described as shepherd. The earliest reference to the role of God as shepherd comes in Jacob’s blessing (Gen. 49:24). This image is then developed by other Old Testament passages where God’s role as shepherd is to lead (Ps. 77:20), protect (Ps. 78:52), save (Ezek. 34:22) and gather (Jer. 31:10).8 Psalm 23 gives the classic picture of God as comforter and shepherd. Isaiah uses the image of a shepherd to describe God’s tender care:

He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young (Isa.40:11).

While the roles of warrior and shepherd may at first seem antithetical they in fact go hand in hand. David recounts how as a shepherd he often fought to defend his flock (1 Sam.17:34-35). Further the basic understanding of the warrior was that of a very

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powerful person, either dangerous or comforting depending on whether he was attacking or defending.  

Zephaniah 3:17 brings both facets together as it states “The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves. He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing.” Here God is identified as a Mighty Warrior and as the one who saves, loves and rejoices over his people.

God clearly demonstrates a warrior ethos. He is always about his mission of seeking the spiritual best for his people first. As the very Lord of hosts defeat is never an option as he will always triumph. His faithfulness and love endures forever. God does not leave the fallen but gathers lost lambs into his arms.

**Old Testament Leaders as Warrior Shepherds**

If the God of Israel was a shepherd with a warrior ethos then it should not be surprising that many of those who were called to lead God’s people also functioned as warrior shepherds. In fact it was quite common for Near Eastern kings to be seen in this way. “A common title applied to ancient Near Eastern kings is ‘shepherd of the people’ which shows how they were seen as essential for the wellbeing of their ‘meek’ subjects.”

Abraham led an attack to free his nephew Lot (Gen.14). Moses led Israel through many conflicts during their exodus from Egypt and time in the wilderness (Exod. 17; Num. 21, 31). Most famous of all is David who was both a man after God’s own heart and the slayer of giants (1 Sam.17).

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For these individuals leading in combat and leading in spiritual matters were not separate functions but were tightly connected. It is part of the continuation of the conflict generated by the enmity between the snake and the offspring of Eve. In *God is a Warrior* there is an extensive treatment of the very spiritual nature of warfare in the Old Testament. The spiritual components of war can be seen before, during and after combat.

Before combat – “Many of the acts that preceded a war in the Hebrew Bible indicate the religious nature of the conflict. Sacrifice, circumcision, vows, oracular inquiries, ritual cleanness--each of these elements announced Israel’s understanding that God was present with them in battle.”11

During combat – Once the army was gathered and spiritually prepared, it marched into battle. In keeping with the relationship between worship and war, 2 Chronicles 20:20–23 describes the army singing praises to God during the march: “Give thanks to the LORD, for his love endures forever.”12

After combat – “If the battles were a divinely willed holy war, the conclusion was certain. God would deliver the enemy “into the hands” of Israel (Josh. 6:2; 8:17, 18; 10:8, 19, 30; 11:8). The only proper response, upon recognition that the victory was God’s gift to his people, was praise.”13 Because God was the source of the victory the spoils rightly belonged to him.14

The concept of leaders as shepherds was well established in the ancient world. “In the ancient world the shepherd was a standard metaphor for a ruler. The Mesopotamian
lawgivers Lipit-Ishtar of Isin and Hammurabi of Babylon were both called shepherds, and the crook held by the pharaoh may have represented the shepherd’s staff.”¹⁵

So it is hardly surprising to see that the Old Testament leaders who directed in combat were also called on to be shepherds to God’s people. They acted to guide, protect, save, gather, comfort and care for the nation. While many individuals could be described as shepherds with a warrior ethos the focus here will be three of the Old Testament’s most prominent leaders: Abraham, Moses and David.

Abraham guided his family to the land that God had chosen for them (Gen. 12). He protected them from internal conflict (Gen. 14). He intercedes seeking a means to save Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18). He is also recognized by the people around him as a “prince of God” (Gen. 23:6). In this role Abraham even “undertook the responsibilities normally associated with the ruler of small state or with that of a provincial governor appointed by a great king.”¹⁶

Moses was a shepherd called to gather God’s people and lead them out of Egypt (Exod. 3). It was also Moses who interceded to save the people when they rebelled and grumbled against God (Exod. 32). It was through Moses that God instructed the people in how to follow and worship (Exod. 19 and following). He guided and protected the people as they wandered in the wilderness (Deut. 34:10-12). Moses was the shepherd God used to provide the most basic needs of the people.


David was undoubtedly a great warrior and king but he was also the caring shepherd. David cared for God’s people to the extent that he would not strike Saul, God’s anointed king, even though Saul was seeking to kill him (1 Sam. 24). David protected Abigail by taking her as his wife after God struck down Nabal (1 Sam. 25). David leads the people in praise as the Ark of the Covenant is brought to Jerusalem (2 Sam. 6) and it is David who desires to build a temple for the worship of God (2 Sam. 7). David shows great tenderness to his friend Jonathan and to Jonathan’s son Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 9). David saves not only those who were attacked from the outside (1 Sam. 23) but also those who rebelled against him as he pardons those who fought with Absalom (2 Sam. 19).

Abraham, Moses and David all led as warriors and as shepherds. They led, protected, served and provided for God’s people. At the same time they placed God’s mission first. Abraham was willing to sacrifice his only son (Gen. 2). Moses trusted God to defeat a king (Exod. 14:13-14). David rejoices in trusting God’s ways (Psa. 21). Each of these continued to follow God and lead their flocks in the face of difficult challenges. Abraham believed in the promise of a son in spite of his advanced age (Gen. 18). Moses persevered in the face of opposition from Pharaoh (Exod. 7:13) and the rebellion of his own people (Exod. 14:11-12). David was first pursued by Saul (1 Sam. 19) and later faced a coup led by his own son (2 Sam. 15). They also shared a desire to see the forgiveness and redemption of the fallen.

**Jesus as a Warrior Shepherd**

The role of God as a divine warrior is carried into the New Testament as Jesus comes to engage not in physical but spiritual combat. Early in Mark the work of Jesus is
already being described in terms of spiritual battle. Jesus is confronted by a man possessed by a demon while at the synagogue at Capernaum. The demon’s response to Jesus indicates the kind of spiritual battle that Jesus has come to wage, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God” (Mark 1:24). It is interesting to observe that the Greek word translated for rebuke is epitimaō which “is regularly used in the LXX to translate the Hebrew gā’ar” and “may be translated as an explosive ‘blast,’ an instrument of Yahweh’s wrath by which Yahweh defeats his enemies, including the Sea (Ps 18:15; LXX 17:16).”

Yet another moment in the life of Jesus that has military tones is that of his triumphal entry to Jerusalem. This military connection of this moment begins with the way it echoes another military triumph recorded in 1 Maccabees 13:51 (Good News Translation) “On the twenty-third day of the second month, in the year 171, there was a great celebration in the city because this terrible threat to the security of Israel had come to an end. Simon and his men entered the fort singing hymns of praise and thanksgiving, while carrying palm branches and playing harps, cymbals, and lyres.” Some of the gathered crowd may have related Jesus’ approach to Jerusalem with the celebration of Simon’s military victory. Mark alludes to the prophecy of Zechariah 14 which “presents us with the figure the divine warrior that has been transformed into an eschatological figure who will vindicate Israel, destroy Israel’s enemies and usher in a new age of blessedness.”

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17 Longman III and Reid, God Is a Warrior, Location 1203-1205.

been seen in traditional Greco-Roman victory processions.\textsuperscript{19} This would include Jesus being escorted by the citizenry, the use of hymns in the procession and the procession ending in ritual appropriation.\textsuperscript{20}

Elsewhere in the gospels Jesus’ mission is presented in terms of military action. For instance, in Luke “in his driving out demons and healing the sick (4:31–44), Jesus, the (humble) Divine Warrior, engages Satan in the holy war on Satan’s own supposed turf (see 4:6; cf. 10:18).”\textsuperscript{21}

Further evidence of Jesus’ continuity with the divine warrior theme can be seen when later biblical authors reflect back upon his life, death and resurrection. In Colossians, Paul writes of Jesus that, “He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him” (Col. 2:15).

The final images of Jesus as divine warrior are found in Revelation. In Revelation 19 Christ is seen as the Divine Warrior who defeats the beast, the prophet, and Satan himself. This final victory then brings a conclusion to the entire theme of holy war in Scripture and the final end to the enmity that the curse of Genesis decreed would exist between the offspring of the woman and the snake.

Jesus is a divine warrior but is also the Good Shepherd who cares for his sheep. This role was foreshadowed in the Old Testament passages such as “My servant David shall be king over them, and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall walk in my rules and be careful to obey my statutes” (Ezek. 37:24). In other passages it is explicitly connected to the coming of the messiah, “And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the

\textsuperscript{19}Duff, 66.

\textsuperscript{20}Duff, 66.

\textsuperscript{21}Fee and Stuart, Locations 5647-5649.
strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth” (Mic. 5:4).

In the Gospel of John Jesus unequivocally adopts this title for himself, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11). Jesus moves the shepherd from being a character in the story to being the one around whom the story revolves.22 John 10, the fullest description of the role of Jesus as shepherd, clearly shows the elements of the shepherd’s work that were part of the Old Testament motif. Jesus leads the sheep who hear his voice and whom he calls by name (10:3). Unlike the thieves and robbers who have come before, Jesus protects the sheep and gathers them into the sheepfold (10:7). When the hired man flees, Jesus is the shepherd who loves the sheep and will stay to protect them (10:12-13). Jesus saves all those who enter by him (10:9).

**New Testament Believers as Warrior Shepherds**

The ministry to which Jesus commissions his followers continues the warrior shepherd role even as it focuses on the spiritual battle that is being waged. In Luke 10 Jesus sends out seventy-two disciples to proclaim that the kingdom was at hand. Upon their return Jesus addresses them in terms that highlight the spiritual battle that they have been called to fight.

The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Lk. 10:17-20).

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The emphasis clearly presents Jesus’ followers as holy warriors who have been
given authority over the enemy. Their authority and protection (“nothing will harm you”) clearly refer to the threat of satanic power.\textsuperscript{23}

The commission that Jesus gives in Matthew 28 also has some suggestion of the spiritual battle in which the followers of Jesus will be engaged. As observed in \textit{God is a Warrior},

Matthew’s use of the divine-warrior motif culminates in a scene suggesting the enthronement of the victorious Christ. Jesus is exalted to the position of universal sovereign (Mt. 28:18), the heralds are sent forth to proclaim his kingship (28:19–20), and the security of his enthronement is assured to the end of the age (28:20). The ancient pattern of the divine warrior’s triumph and enthronement has shaped the turning of the ages.\textsuperscript{24}

Paul spent a considerable amount of time under the guard of soldiers and frequently makes use of military imagery to describe the spiritual life and ministry of Christians. In Romans he calls on believers to “cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light” (Rom.13:12). Paul tells the Philippians that they are “engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have” (Phil.1:30). To the Thessalonians Paul gives the command that they should “be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:8b). Then in Ephesians Paul draws on the image of an armored warrior as he calls on believers to “Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:11-12). So all Christians are to some extent

\textsuperscript{23} Longman III and Reid, \textit{God Is a Warrior}, Location 1253.

\textsuperscript{24} Longman III and Reid, \textit{God Is a Warrior}, Location 1646-1649.
warriors engaged in a spiritual battle. This places those who lead God’s people in the role of warrior shepherds. They are engaged in the work of gathering, saving, leading and protecting the flock under their care while at the same time they are engaged in a spiritual battle against cosmic powers and spiritual forces.

It was noted previously that roles of warrior and shepherd could be seen as being in tension with one another. One might consider this especially true for New Testament believers given the total absence of any call to engage in physical combat that would parallel Old Testament examples. The resolution of this tension is found by again recognizing that even in the Old Testament warrior shepherds fought to defend God’s people from enemies who would not only harm them physically but also spiritually by the bringing of false gods and idols. As Tremper Longman comments,

> The picture of God as a warrior. . .often disturbs modern readers, particularly since God’s command to Joshua to battle Canaanites seems at odds with Jesus’ well-known teaching to “turn the other cheek” (Mt 5:39) and “love your enemies” (Mt 5:44). A careful consideration of the Bible as a whole demonstrates that these pictures of God are not opposites but are part of God’s plan to defeat sin and evil in a fallen world. During the time period between the Old and New Testaments, the expectation of a warring Messiah (anointed king) sent by God grew. The New Testament informs us that Jesus is that Messiah, but rather than leading his people in a physical battle against the Romans, he heightens and intensifies the battle so that now it is directed toward the spiritual powers and authorities. And these enemies are not defeated by swords and spears (notice Jesus’ command to Peter to “put your sword back in its place” [Mt 26:52]), but by his death, resurrection and ascension.25

> There is a natural connection with this kind of spiritual battle and the protective role of the shepherd. As a result New Testament believers were called to adopt the discipline and dedication of the warrior while they acted as shepherds protecting God’s people from false teaching and spiritual attack.

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New Testament Leaders as Warrior Shepherds

New Testament leaders who functioned in this way are Timothy and Titus. Titus was dispatched by Paul to help correct moral and theological issues at the church in Corinth. Timothy received two letters that give guidance to his work with the church in Ephesus.

The military imagery that was present in other parts of the New Testament is abundantly present in Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus. First Timothy opens with Paul describing himself as an apostle “by command of God our Savior” (1 Tim. 1:1) He then goes on as one commanded by God to charge Timothy to “wage the good warfare” (1 Tim. 1:18). At the letter’s end Paul repeats the command to “fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses” (1 Tim. 6:12). In Second Timothy the military imagery continues as Paul reminds Timothy to “share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him” (2 Tim. 2:3-4). Paul’s letter to Titus does not contain the explicit military images of the other pastoral epistles but it does have at its premise the need for order as a response to insubordination (Titus 1:5, 10) which at least calls to mind thoughts of military discipline.

At the same time Paul calls on these two church leaders to fight the good fight, he also gives specific instructions that point them to their role as shepherd. They continue to gather, save, protect and guide the flock that they oversee.

Paul’s opening charge to Titus is to put what remained in order with the churches on Crete (Titus 1:5). The need to place things in proper order would have been part the
experience of Timothy and Titus served at Paul’s side. They would have seen the need for order themselves as they led in Ephesus and Corinth. Finally, they were instructed on this need for order through Paul’s letters to them.

Timothy and Titus needed to have order in their personal life. Timothy and Titus had seen this modeled in Paul. The letters they received all contain instructions on the type of inner character required for pastoral leadership.

Timothy and Titus needed to bring theological order to their churches. Titus had been with Paul at the Jerusalem Council. Titus also confronted error within the Corinthian church. This made him the perfect choice to deal with the Cretans and set things right in those churches. Timothy was also called to the work of defending sound doctrine in Ephesus. Again Paul’s letters stress the need for a pastor’s work in giving sound teaching to the church.

Timothy and Titus needed to bring relational order to their churches. Proper respect, proper care and proper roles were all part of the relational order needed in the church. Timothy and Titus would both have experienced the deep fellowship that Paul shared with the people in the churches he planted. Even when those relationships were strained as they were with the church in Corinth Paul’s love for the people did not diminish and he rejoiced when those relationships were restored. Through Timothy and Titus, pastoral leaders are reminded how they are to treat those they serve and of the kind of relationships that ought to be seen in the body of Christ.

**Warrior Shepherds as Leaders**

It can be seen how dual roles of warrior and shepherd would combine by considering how these elements would be expressed in pastoral leadership. Some of the
expressions that are demonstrated by these warrior shepherds are vision, discipline, decision making, courage, zeal, community, loyalty and a sense of call.

Vision

“Those who have most powerfully and permanently influenced their generation have been seers—people who have seen more and farther than others—persons of faith, for faith is vision.”26 Vision is one way that the warrior shepherd may combine a commitment to place the mission first and to lead the sheep. Part of fulfilling any mission is taking bold action but not unnecessary risks. While others see the difficulties ahead, the warrior shepherd’s commitment to the mission offers the hope required to move forward. He is “one who has never turned his back, but marched breast-forward never doubting clouds would break.”27

Discipline

“A leader is a person who has learned to obey a discipline imposed from without, and has then taken on a more rigorous discipline from within.”28 This is another way a warrior shepherd combines placing mission first and leading the sheep. Leaders who exercise discipline are organized, diligent, personally fit and willing to do the unpleasant. This is without question descriptive of warrior shepherds who would know the discipline of training for battle and the discipline that comes from hardship and struggle. As such these spiritual leaders with a mission first passion for leading God’s people clearly demonstrate discipline in their leadership.


27 Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 57.

28 Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership*, 52.
Decision Making

“When all the facts are in, swift and clear decision is another mark of a true leader. A visionary may see, but a leader must decide.” 29 This is yet another way that a warrior shepherd may combine the commitment to mission with the commitment to lead the sheep. Warrior shepherds are not willing to settle for the status quo but instead are willing to make the decisions needed to complete the mission and lead people forward. A new land, a new freedom, a new temple, a new church, a new covenant all required swift and clear decisions that shook that status quo of the present.

Courage

Courage merges the warrior ethic “never accept defeat” with the shepherd’s desire to protect and save. In moments when the obstacles seem insurmountable—a giant, a king, a cross or a grave—warrior shepherds demonstrate the ability to trust God for a victory where defeat seems inevitable. This is unique in leadership because, “Many spiritual leaders do not lead from courage. They lead from fear …Those who are fear dominated may even suit up for battle each day and visit the battlefield to skirmish. However, they are playing not to lose rather than playing to win.” 30 While they knew fear these warrior shepherds led with courage. “Leaders require courage of the highest order—always moral courage and often physical courage as well. Courage is that quality of mind that enables people to encounter danger or difficulty firmly, without fear or discouragement.” 31

29 Sanders, Spiritual Leadership, 60.


31 Sanders, Spiritual Leadership, 60.
Zeal

Combining of the warrior ethos to never quit and the shepherd’s task of saving the sheep produces the leadership element of zeal. “Great leaders—people who turn the tide and change the direction of events—have been angry at injustice and abuse that dishonors God and enslaves the weak.”32 Warrior shepherds see those in need of saving and are committed to act.

Community/Loyalty

“Leaders must draw the best out of people, and friendship does that far better than prolonged argument or mere logic.”33 The warrior ethos says that you never leave a fallen comrade and the shepherd seeks to gather all the sheep in even if that means leaving the 99 to find the one. Warrior shepherds care for those under their care and this care in turn creates community and loyalty.

Call

Finally, a common theme among leaders is presence of a sense of calling to their position. An examination of the biblical examples of the warrior shepherds shows that, “they feel somehow different from others. This awareness often begins in childhood and continues throughout adolescence and young adult development. The sense of apartness signals part of the heart-shaping activity for leadership. It affords the necessary self-differentiation that one needs to provide effective leadership to others.”34

J. Oswald Sanders refers to this as “the sovereignty principle” in spiritual leadership. Sanders says, “The sovereign selection of God gives great confidence to

32 Sanders, Spiritual Leadership, 67.
33 Sanders, Spiritual Leadership, 70.
34 McNeal, A Work of Heart, 6.
Christian workers. We can truly say, ‘I am here neither by selection of an individual nor
election of a group but by the almighty appointment of God.’”

In relation to the warrior shepherd the sense of call is heightened by the
convergence of two strong themes. It empowers the warrior ethos to “never quit.”
Opposition and hardship are part of the life experience of any spiritual leader and in the
midst of that reflecting upon God’s call gives strength to the “never quit” ethos. Likewise
a shepherd is going to feel deep responsibility to lead the flock even in the face of danger
and adversity. Never does there seem to be a thought of quitting.

Vision, discipline, decision making, courage, zeal, community and call are all
various ways that the combination of warrior ethos and shepherding find expression in
leadership. Before moving on to examples of those expressions in individual leaders there
is one other element that often seems present in the warrior shepherd and that is some
element of personal failure. Thom S. Rainer looked at the stories and records of leaders
who have failed to determine what were the common characteristics of leaders who fail.
His study found seven:

1. They feel they are invincible.
2. They are paralyzed by fear.
3. They fail to grow.
4. They are not passionate about their area of leadership.
5. They fail to dream.
6. They have a sense of entitlement.
7. They have a sense of victimization.

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35 Sanders, Spiritual Leadership, 23.

At the very least it appears that as it relates to a shepherd with a warrior ethos these could all be produced by some distortion of or lack of balance in combining the roles of shepherd and warrior. Too much stress on the warrior ethos could produce invincibility. Too much stress on protecting the sheep could produce fear and inaction. Certainly many other factors are in play for all of these but the reality of these failures is cautionary for all who serve but especially for those seeking to balance being both warrior and shepherd.

**Biblical Leaders as Warrior Shepherds**

*Abraham as a Warrior Shepherd*

Abraham while not called in childhood certainly would have had a sense of apartness from the moment that God called him to leave his home and travel to the land God would show him. This in turn defined his vision of a new nation in a new land. Hershey H. Friedman and Mitchell Langbert affirm that, “Abraham’s vision was to found a new nation – the Promised Land, one where his descendants would live as a unified people believing in monotheism, concern for the helpless, and justice for all.”\(^{37}\) Essential to that vision was the total commitment to his mission. He left his home and led his family to the new land that he had faith in God to provide.

“All when Abraham got orders from his God, he always readily obeyed” is evidence of his discipline\(^{38}\) Gert Kwakkel comments

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Right at the beginning of Abraham’s story in Genesis, the reader is struck by the patriarch’s prompt obedience to God’s order to leave his country and his people and to move to Canaan (Gen 12:4). Abraham likewise obeyed God’s orders when he circumcised every male in his household (17:23) and when he sent Hagar and Ishmael away (21:12-14).  

In Genesis 12 Abraham makes the decision to leave his home and follow God. In Genesis 22 Abraham decides to obey when God commands to present Isaac as a sacrifice. Following through on both of those decisions required him to have great courage and discipline. It is in these two moments that “Abraham was a person who was willing to make a great sacrifice and that is why he proved that he was the right choice as the first patriarch.”

Abraham zealously acted to rescue his nephew when he was captured (Gen. 14). He was also zealous when he bargained with the angel of God in an attempt to save Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18). Abraham though failed to act with zeal and courage when he lied about Sarah to King Abimelech (Gen. 20).

Moses as a Warrior Shepherd

Everything about Moses’ unique birth and childhood would point to a special role for which he was being prepared. As a warrior shepherd he had a vision of seeing God’s people living free in the land promised to them. Critical to that vision was the total commitment he demonstrated to his mission by leading God’s people to the land that God had promised even in the face of rebellion. Shlomo Ben-Hur and Karsten Jonsen noted in their article “Ethical Leadership: Lessons from Moses”: “The visionary role was vital to Moses' leadership; it encouraged the people to maintain their faith that they would arrive

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40 Friedman and Langbert (accessed September 22, 2014).
in the Promised Land despite being pursued by Pharaoh to the Sea of Reeds and later wandering in the desert for 40 years.  

This could not have happened without Moses learning a discipline imposed from without. The former prince of Egypt spent 40 years doing the mundane and routine work of a desert shepherd. He appears to have worked very diligently for Jethro, his father-in-law, in tasks that brought no applause or acclaim. Jethro is also a helpful tutor in the area of organization. In Exodus 18 Jethro admonishes Moses that he is doing too much trying to settle every matter for God’s people. He outlines a division of responsibilities so that only the great issues came to Moses. Moses accepts this guidance and does all that Jethro suggested.

Throughout his leadership Moses made many key decisions but three stand out. Hebrews 11 lists five key moments in the life of Moses and three of those relate to decisions that he made. He made the decision to turn his back on the power of Egypt and identify with his heritage as an Israelite (Heb 11:24-25). He chose to leave Egypt for Midian (Heb. 11:27). Finally, he chose to observe the Passover as God had commanded (Heb. 11:28). Moses did these things in spite of his fears and showed he had the courage to face Pharaoh.

Moses’ zeal first moves him to intervene to stop the beating of a slave by two Egyptians. Scripture says that “one day, when Moses had grown up, he went out to his people and looked on their burdens, and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his people. He looked this way and that, and seeing no one, he struck down the Egyptian and

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hid him in the sand” (Exod. 2:11-12). In this event Moses is seen displaying “a sense of righteousness and justice, a willingness to take responsibility and a commitment to self-sacrifice by casting off his own privileged way of life by killing the overseer and fleeing to Midian to live life as a simple shepherd.” When he arrives in Midian his zeal again moves him to intervene, “Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters, and they came and drew water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. The shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and saved them, and watered their flock” (Exod. 2:16-17) It is perhaps this zeal that also contributes to the failure that prevents him from completing his mission. Moses goes beyond God’s command to speak to the rock and instead strikes the rock twice to produce water (Num. 20).

**David as a Warrior Shepherd**

David was anointed by Samuel early in his life to affirm the call that God had given him. David’s vision was a nation faithfully following God and constructing a temple for the worship of God. That vision would only succeed as it was tied to a total commitment to his mission of following after God’s own heart while leading a nation to do the same.

In the life of David there is perhaps no greater example of discipline in his leadership than what is recorded in 1 Samuel 24 when David had the chance to kill King Saul but did not. Even though David knew that God had called him to be the next king he would not take that role by force. Given the opportunity to harm Saul, David refuses, telling his men, “The Lord forbid that I should do this thing to my lord, the Lord's anointed, to put out my hand against him, seeing he is the Lord's anointed. So David

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persuaded his men with these words and did not permit them to attack Saul. And Saul rose up and left the cave and went on his way” (1 Sam.24:6-7). In these accounts David shows an inner discipline because as Kwakkel observes, “David persistently refuses to take advantage from opportunities to kill his enemy because Saul is the anointed of the Lord. He leaves judgment and revenge to God, and patiently waits for the day when God will deliver him and make him king.”

Another less obvious example of discipline can be seen in the aftermath of a rebellion led by David’s son Absalom. Second Samuel 19 recounts that when the battle was over and Absalom had been killed, David’s first reaction was that of a father: he wept and mourned for his son. This in turn robbed his supporters of any sense of victory, instead filling them with shame. Joab rebukes the king and calls on him to regain his composure and speak kindly to his people. David has the inner discipline to set aside personal grief and go to the city gate to encourage the people. These actions are indicative of a personal discipline that is fed by a mission first commitment to leadership.

David had the courage to face Goliath, Saul and host of other challenges. This courage certainly finds its roots in David’s experience of fighting off bears and lions to protect the flock under his care (1 Sam. 17:36). Just as David would not accept the loss of a lamb to a lion he did not accept defeat in battle (2 Sam. 8) or in his reign.

As a warrior shepherd David also won great loyalty from those around him. While Saul was David’s sworn enemy, Saul’s son Jonathan was David’s faithful friend: “Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David. But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David” (1 Sam.19:1). David’s men were prepared
to take great risks for him. In one instance they risked their lives to satisfy David’s longing for water from the well by Bethlehem’s gate (2 Sam. 23:15-16). David’s combination of warrior and shepherd in seeking to never leave anyone behind and seeking to save even one who is lost is displayed in the way he reaches out to Mephibosheth. Even though he could have been an eventual rival for the throne David provides that, “I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always” (2 Sam. 9:7b). Even in the face of Absalom’s rebellion and David’s forced exit from Jerusalem, “he can feel concern for Ittai; he can be moved by the loyalty of Ziba; he can be touched by Barzillai’s desire to die in his own city.” These actions clearly show the “personal link he feels towards them, and his actions seal that link.”

David’s actions reveal zeal both for God and for righting wrongs. He stands against Goliath not for his own glory but because Goliath was a reproach to Israel and defied the armies of the living God (1 Sam. 17:26). David acts with zeal to rescue his wives and others captured by the Amalekites (1 Sam. 30). It is his own zeal that opens the door for David to admit his failure with Bathsheba. When Nathan describes the injustice of the wealthy man stealing the poor man’s lamb David’s zeal prompts him to demand that the situation be corrected (2 Sam.12:5-6). It is in response to David’s own zeal to right a wrong that Nathan replies, “You are the man.” David’s own zeal convicts him of his greatest wrong.

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45 Kenneth R R Gros Louis, (accessed October 8, 2014).
How Timothy and Titus Led as Warrior Shepherds

In the New Testament Timothy and Titus were both personal protégés of Paul and it is Paul himself who clearly establishes God’s call on them both. Of Timothy he writes, “Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy when the council of elders laid their hands on you” (1 Tim. 4:14). Likewise he says of Titus, “As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. And as for our brothers, they are messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ” (2 Cor. 8:23). Of them both Paul says that they are his true children in the faith (1 Tim.1:2, Titus 1:4). In such affirmations both Timothy and Titus must have sensed their own “set apartness” for the mission to which they had been called.

Timothy and Titus’ vision was of faithful churches that boldly proclaimed the Gospel. Indispensable to that vision was the total commitment they demonstrated by their willingness to lead churches even in the face of opposition and disrespect.

Timothy and Titus also demonstrate discipline. Paul appeals to Timothy’s discipline when he writes, “This charge I entrust to you, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies previously made about you, that by them you may wage the good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience” (1 Tim. 1:18-19). To “remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:3) certainly would have required a discipline forged by a commitment to his mission and a call to lead. Paul would further remind Timothy of the need for discipline in Second Timothy when he writes, “no soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him” (2 Tim. 2:4). This was a reminder to be disciplined because:
The Roman soldier avoided all preoccupation with the daily affairs of the marketplace in order to be free to obey without hindrance the orders of his commander. Engaged in a spiritual battle, the Christian soldier likewise must concentrate on his work; he must not devote his time and interests to a business on the side which hinders his faithful performance of his primary responsibility. Paul is calling on Timothy to exhibit the same mission first commitment as a soldier in the leading of the church.

For Titus there may be little more evidence needed to show his discipline than the fact that Paul sent him to Crete that he “might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you” (Titus 1:5). The challenge of this work is demonstrated by Paul’s own citation that, “One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons’” (Titus 1:12). A mission first commitment to disciplined leadership would clearly be a basic requirement for taking on liars, evil beasts and lazy gluttons.

Paul would have had great confidence in the ability to function in that environment as this was not the first time he had gone into a potentially hostile environment to bring order to chaos. Titus had been one of the leaders who went to the church at Corinth to address the conflict there. Paul commends him to the Corinthians saying, “But thanks be to God, who put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care I have for you. For he not only accepted our appeal, but being himself very earnest he is going to you of his own accord” (2 Cor. 8:16-17). The earnest determination described by Paul is strong evidence of Titus’ inner discipline.

Timothy and Titus had the courage to take on opposition in the church and at the same time they sought to create the kind of community that would honor God. Paul calls

Timothy to encourage older men and women while at the same time calling him to rebuke those who persist in sin. Titus is commanded to silence the insubordinate, deceivers and empty talkers in Crete. At the same time he was to be an example of good works, integrity, dignity, and sound speech so that old and young would learn how to live “so that in everything they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior” (Titus 2:10).

These warrior shepherds had to show great courage to create God-honoring communities. Timothy and Titus are both examples of Christian leaders who had “heard the Lord's call to service and has wholeheartedly aligned himself with the battle of the Lord” and were “willing to accept the hardship and suffering involved in his high calling.”

_Jesus as a Warrior Shepherd_

As in all things pertaining to faith and life Jesus is the ultimate example of a warrior shepherd. Jesus’ comments to his parents show that even at a young age he had a clear sense of his apartness “and he said to them, ‘Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?’” (Luke 2:49). This was affirmed again at his baptism with the pronouncement of God the Father: “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased” (Luke 3:22).

With regard to vision Jesus uniquely balanced both vision and personal care for the flock. He was able to be both a visionary leader and servant leader. Luke expresses this stating that Jesus came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). It is this unique pairing that Jeanine Parolini notes when she writes, “Jesus is an intriguing leader for his

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47 D Edmond Hiebert, accessed October 8, 2014.
ability to cast vision for transforming moral change in the lives of followers and partners while at the same time attending to and caring for people along the way.”

There is no doubt concerning his total commitment to this mission as he prayed, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will” (Matt.26:39).

Jesus again offers the greatest example of mission first leadership expressed by inner discipline. There are many moments from his life that give evidence of this discipline. He was able to resist great temptation (Luke 4). He walked away from pressing ministry needs in order to spend time with the Father (Luke 5:15-16). He even healed the ear of the guard sent to arrest him (John 19:10-11). Perhaps the best description of Jesus’ inner discipline is from Philippians: “And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:8). Such extreme obedience must require great inner discipline.

Jesus was filled with zeal and courage. His disciples saw his zeal when he cleansed the temple and later, “His disciples remembered that it was written, ‘zeal for your house will consume me’” (John 2:17). His courage could be seen in many places such as when he unflinchingly stands against Satan (Matt. 4) or as he boldly stands up to false teachings of the Jewish elites (Matt. 23) and as he confidently stands up to the Romans (Matt. 27).

Jesus demonstrates the warrior’s commitment to never leave a fallen comrade behind and the shepherd’s commitment to gather all the sheep. He was committed to not leaving a fallen humanity behind. For this reason indeed he was willing to enter this

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world as a man and give his life as a ransom for many. As the good shepherd he is committed to gathering all of this flock. “What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray” (Matt.18:12-13). This great love and commitment has in turn inspired fierce loyalty from his followers. Established tradition has it that all but one of the original disciples were martyred as a result of their faith in Jesus. This loyalty continues to be shown by millions of followers to this day.

Old and New Testaments give us many examples of leaders who have followed God’s own example of being a warrior shepherd. In these biblical descriptions pastoral leadership was demonstrated through their vision, discipline, decision making, courage, zeal, loyalty and a drive to fulfill their unique calling. The warrior shepherd leadership expressions identified in this study were used as part of the review of the biographical narrative to identify the skills, ideas and methods demonstrated in the leadership of James Wright as a military chaplain and as a civilian pastor.
CHAPTER THREE: RELATED RESEARCH

The review of related research falls into two categories: the ministry of Army chaplains and pastoral leadership development. Books, journals, dissertations, and previous course work were reviewed.

The Ministry of Army Chaplains

History of Army Chaplains in the United States

Military chaplaincy is a distinctive setting for pastoral leadership. Understanding the special features of that setting requires examination of the historical development of the nature and function of military chaplains in the United States. The connection with the Old Testament warrior shepherds is noted by Parker Thompson in his history of the Army Chaplaincy as he states, “the Chaplaincy of the United States Army has its spiritual roots deep in the pages of the Old Testament.” He adds, “the tradition of a specially appointed clergyman accompanying soldiers into battle dates from the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy 20:2.”¹ That passages states,

And when you draw near to the battle, the priest shall come forward and speak to the people and shall say to them, ‘Hear, O Israel, today you are drawing near for battle against your enemies: let not your heart faint. Do not fear or panic or be in dread of them, for the LORD your God is he who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory.’ (Deut. 20:2-4)

The European tradition of having chaplains serve with military units was established at the Council of Ratisbon in 742 BC which permitted military leaders to have bishops and priests present with the army. The European model was brought to colonial America where the chaplain both fought alongside and ministered to his neighbors in the militia. In those early days “colonial clergymen frequently raised military units from their own congregations or localities and often led them in battle.”

The first recognition of chaplains by an American government was in July of 1775 when the Continental Congress included chaplain in a list of pay grades for various officers. Between 222 and 238 chaplains served in the American cause. Chaplains participated in every campaign and on every battlefield during the Revolutionary War. Their duties included accompanying the soldiers into battle, preaching in camp, visiting and caring for the sick and wounded, and ministering to the dying. They were, however, much more than just shepherds on the battlefield as they continued to play a vital role as soldiers as well.

Washington wanted [chaplains] to be religious leaders … But the chaplains were also to visit the wounded, take care of the dead, write letters home for soldiers who couldn't write, give discourses of a patriotic nature to keep the soldiers from deserting. The chaplain was a very important link between the commander and the troops.

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2 Thompson, xi.


Following the Revolution the presence of chaplains in United States Army was sporadic. At one time from 1818 to 1838 the only chaplain in the Regular Army was the chaplain at West Point. During this time civilian clergy or religiously-inclined officers led services at Army posts. While the Regular Army lacked chaplains during this time, state militias were consistently served by chaplains.

On July 5, 1838, Congress passed legislation which allowed “the officers composing the council of administration at any post … to employ such person as they may think proper to officiate as chaplain, who shall also perform the duties of schoolmaster at such posts.” Frequently during this time chaplains served many other roles in addition to offering religious services. In addition to serving as schoolmasters chaplains were also librarians, gardeners and even legal counsel. At West Point the chaplain was also the professor of history, geography and ethics.

During this time chaplains also served the civilian populations around the forts where they were located. One example of this is Ezekiel Gear who served as chaplain at Fort Snelling for 20 years. He was the first resident Christian minister in Minnesota and ministered to the settlers outside the fort, conducted services in St. Paul, and was active in the establishment of Episcopal congregations throughout Minnesota.

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9 Norton, 57.


11 Norton, 54.
When the Civil War began in 1861, Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 militiamen. He felt that it was important for those men to have chaplains so when the War Department issued General Orders 15 and 16 it included authorization for the “regimental commander to appoint a chaplain on the vote of field officers and company commanders.” This system of appointment soon created problems for the role of chaplain as many who were unqualified were chosen to serve. One of President Lincoln’s private secretaries complained that chaplains “were, for the most part, ‘broken down reverends,’ long since out of the ministry for incompetency or other causes.” This situation prompted changes in the appointment and qualifications for chaplains. These changes included requiring chaplains to be a regularly ordained minister of some religious denomination and to present testimonials of his present good standing, with recommendations for his appointment as an army chaplain from some authorized ecclesiastical body. In addition this new requirement changed the wording from “ordination in a Christian denomination” to “ordained minister of some religious denomination.” This was done to make provision for Jewish chaplains.

The ministry of chaplains expanded greatly during the Civil War as they served as post, hospital and brigade chaplains. While specific duties were not initially prescribed it was noted that “chaplains who generally earned the respect of their men and were able to influence them religiously carried out the expected ministerial functions and at the same

12 Norton, 83.
13 Norton, 87.
14 Norton, 89.
time undertook a multitude of tasks that eased the minds and bodies of the troops.\textsuperscript{16} The duties of these chaplains included leading worship services and evening prayer meetings and officiating at weddings, baptisms, funerals and burials. Chaplains performed pastoral functions by counseling, providing guidance and comforting the sick and wounded.

They formed temperance societies and opened informal schools to teach illiterate soldiers to read and write. Among other chores assigned to chaplains were those of postmaster, writer of letters for wounded and dying soldiers, writer of letters telling of a soldier's death, banker, ambulance driver, defense counselors and Army recruiters.\textsuperscript{17}

Three thousand chaplains served during the Civil War and 66 died in the service of their county.\textsuperscript{18}

Following the Civil War there was again a major reduction in the size of the United States Army and correspondingly to the number of chaplains. During the years from 1869 to 1898, 34 men served as Army chaplains.\textsuperscript{19} Chaplains serving in frontier areas also engaged in mission work with the Indians on the post or in the area. Chaplain Edward J. Vattmann was a Catholic priest who sought to minister to Indians both in religious and secular matters. He not only conducted special church services for the Indians but also assembled a Sioux Soldier's Vocabulary, translated text books into the Sioux language, and started a school for wives of enlisted Indians.\textsuperscript{20}

Beginning in 1899 the Army saw major reforms that impacted the nature of the chaplaincy. President Theodore Roosevelt directed that:

\textsuperscript{16} Norton, 97.

\textsuperscript{17} US Army Chaplain Corps, \textit{History of the Army Chaplaincy}, 13.


\textsuperscript{20} US Army Chaplain Corps, History of the Army Chaplaincy, 16.
I want to see that hereafter no chaplain is appointed in the Army [and Navy] who is not a first class man—a man who by education and training will be fitted to associate with his fellow officers, and yet had in him the zeal and the practical sense which will enable him to do genuine work for the enlisted men. Above all, I want chaplains who will go in to do this work just as the best officers of the line or staff or medical profession go in to do their work. I want to see that if possible we never appoint a man who desires the position as a soft job.\textsuperscript{21}

The result of these changes was that “between 1899 and 1920, the chaplaincy grew from an ill-organized adjunct of the Army, into a small professionalized branch.”\textsuperscript{22} A large part of this was creating “a coherent methodology for screening and selecting candidates for the chaplaincy, and the creation of a Board of Chaplains (1909).”\textsuperscript{23} Other steps were still to come such as having a school to train chaplains and having a Chief of Chaplains but “the process by which the chaplaincy would evolve into an effective, professional branch of the Army had begun.”\textsuperscript{24}

On April 6, 1917 the United States entered World War One and the U.S. Army Chaplaincy would see significant changes during this time. At the beginning of the war there were a mere 74 Regular Army chaplains and 72 National Guard chaplains but by war’s end 2,363 had served.\textsuperscript{25} Twenty-three chaplains died in the service of their country during this conflict.\textsuperscript{26}

During the war chaplains were responsible for leading worship, preaching, performing funerals, performing grave registration duties, visiting the wounded and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21}US Army Chaplain Corps, \textit{History of the Army Chaplaincy}, 18.
\item \textsuperscript{22}US Army Chaplain Corps, \textit{History of the Army Chaplaincy}, 18.
\item \textsuperscript{23}US Army Chaplain Corps, \textit{History of the Army Chaplaincy}, 18.
\item \textsuperscript{24}US Army Chaplain Corps, \textit{History of the Army Chaplaincy}, 19.
\item \textsuperscript{25}US Army Chaplain Corps, \textit{History of the Army Chaplaincy}, 22.
\item \textsuperscript{26}US Army Chaplain Corps, \textit{History of the Army Chaplaincy}, 22.
\end{itemize}
sending sympathy letters to families. Additional duties included counseling, holding religious services, writing letters and making weekly reports. 27 A significant part of the ministry of chaplains would again be found in the presence of chaplain with the men he was serving. In his history of the chaplaincy Earl Stover notes, “the chaplain’s best sermon was his own presence and example rather than his preaching.” 28 Unfortunately many chaplains also ended up being ordered to fill other roles apart from their religious duties because a lack of clear definition for their role left commanders to view them as “handymen” who could be used to fill any given need. 29 Some of those roles included mail censor, band director, athletic director and scorer on the rifle range. 30 It was issues such as these that prompted recommendations for change to the organization of the Army Chaplaincy.

Following the war, the National Defense Act of June 4, 1920, reorganized the Army and “for the first time in its 145-year history, the chaplaincy emerged as an organized branch of the Army.” 31 This reorganization included the establishment of the office of the Chief of Chaplains and the re-establishment of a Chaplain School as there was a greater focus on the training of chaplains. “Since seminaries transformed individuals into clergy, it was up to the Army to take these civilian professionals and turn them into Army professionals.” 32 As this move toward professionalization continued, the

29 Stover, 196.
30 Stover, 197-198.
role of the chaplain was more clearly defined. In 1923 Army regulations were revised to define the chaplain’s work as follows:

Chaplains will be employed on no duties other than those required of them by law, or pertaining to their profession as clergymen, except when exigency of the service shall make it necessary. Chaplains are not available for detail as Post Exchange officers or as counsel for the defense in courts-martial.  

Duties that chaplains performed included typical pastoral functions such as Sunday services, Bible studies, evangelistic meetings, baptisms, weddings, funerals and visits to soldiers. Beyond those typical duties chaplains also provided sex hygiene talks, lessons on moral or character-building and classes on many topics such as geography, history, citizenship, current events and even basic reading and writing.  

Key to the organizational development of the chaplaincy at this time was John Thomas Axton who became the first Chief of Chaplains. Among his accomplishments were having insignia of grade returned to the chaplain's uniform, increasing the size of the chaplain branch and seeing growth in numbers of chaplains in the Officers' Reserve Corps.  

Robert L. Gushwa comments, “during his administration chaplains were better trained, equipped, assigned, and administered.”  

A second major development during this time was the establishment of the Chaplains School. The Chaplains School was not to teach students how to be clergy but how to be soldiers.  

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36 Gushwa, 10.
Army schools for chaplains, doctors, lawyers, and other qualified professionals had the responsibility of training civilian professionals to become Army professionals. How to wear the uniform, march, and salute; customs of the service; organization and chain of command; the use of special equipment; responsibility for those of other faiths; functioning within the institution; these were the training tasks of the service school for chaplains.37

Political and economic forces throughout the 1920s and 30s resulted in significant reductions in the number of Army chaplains and in the closing of the Chaplains School for resident studies (correspondence classes remained available).38

The next great challenge to be faced by the Army Chaplaincy would be World War II. When the war began in Europe there were divided opinions about what the response of the church should be. Many supported neutrality and pacifism. Others saw the need to defeat the Nazi threat. All of that changed on December 7, 1941. With the attack on Pearl Harbor,

What was confused became clear. The great debates were over. … The churches shared the national consensus on war. Whether Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish, they showed no reluctance to support the war effort. They provided chaplains; raised money and volunteers for war service agencies; distributed Bibles, prayerbooks, and devotional literature; maintained contact with service personnel and counseled and aided those left behind.39

At the outset of World War II the chaplaincy was not as unprepared as it had been with the start of World War I. At the beginning of the war there were “half as many chaplains already on duty at the start of World War II as there had been at the conclusion of World War I. Nevertheless, the need for nine thousand chaplains during World War II made the prewar figure a mere fraction of what would be needed.”40 Two days after the attack on

37 Gushwa, 16-17.
39 Gushwa, 95.
40 Gushwa, 97.
Pearl Harbor the order was given to reactivate the Chaplain School in order to train the multitude of new chaplains that would be needed.\textsuperscript{41} Topics of instruction included “military organization, customs and courtesies, military law, graves registration, first aid, military administration and chaplain activities, gas mask drills, calisthenics and outdoor map orientation.”\textsuperscript{42}

The work of the chaplains during World War II was driven by a view of the chaplain as “clergy in uniform” as they preached, baptized, performed weddings and baptisms and made pastoral visits to the sick.\textsuperscript{43} It is this “daily service with troops who were uprooted from their families and the settings in which they found themselves” which makes the ministry of chaplains different from the work of civilian pastors.\textsuperscript{44} Chaplains also served behind the lines as they ministered to refugees and prisoners of war and with those liberated from concentration camps.

During the war the role of the chaplain as counselor became increasingly valuable. “The phrase ‘Tell it to the chaplain’ became a familiar response in this war. In every possible setting, officers and troops sought out the chaplain for pastoral advice.”\textsuperscript{45} In 1942, each chaplain conducted an average of 53 personal conferences a day dealing with issues such as homesickness, suicidal feelings, marriage, alcohol, sickness at home,

\textsuperscript{41} Gushwa, 108.


\textsuperscript{43} US Army Chaplain Corps, \textit{History of the Army Chaplaincy}, 29.

\textsuperscript{44} US Army Chaplain Corps, \textit{History of the Army Chaplaincy}, 29.

adjustment to military life and religious problems. John Brinsfield also notes the significant rise in the role of chaplain as counselor:

Chaplains have been counseling soldiers since 1775 on things like trying to stay sober; don't cheat at cards; don't gamble away your pay, send it home; all that sort of thing. But in World War II, because the armies were so big, the chaplains got involved in a major way in trying to counsel the soldiers. We even had chaplains in Nuremberg to try to counsel the German POWs.

During the war 8,896 chaplains served in the U.S. Army with chaplains suffering 478 wounded and 77 fatalities in part as the result of the “be there” philosophy which is an expression of the warrior ethos of Army chaplains. This ministry by “clergy in uniform” had a significant impact on the morale and wellbeing of the soldiers to whom they ministered. “They lived and worked with their troops and provided strength, courage, help and consolation.” The “be there” philosophy also extended to chaplains taking part in the training of specialized units. Among these were “parachute padres” who trained as paratroopers. Chaplain Raymond S. Hall is credited as being the first airborne chaplain:

He took the regular five week training course, and started the practice of having chaplains jump with their troops. In answer to a reporter's “Why?” he replied, “It increases attendance at church, and the men can talk to me now.” There was a bond among those who wore wings. To really belong the chaplain had to jump.

The end of World War II marked the first time in American military history that the size of the military was not dramatically reduced following the end of hostilities. The reason for this was a new global political reality: the Cold War. This change and the

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47 Lawrence, (accessed October 10, 2014).
50 Gushwa, 112.
nature of the wars fought during this time would continue to shape the training and ministry of Army chaplains. Some Army chaplains transferred to the newly created Air Force. Also a new chaplaincy division was created to minister with the newly created Veterans Administration. The training offered by the Chaplains School was expanded to give the chaplain “a picture of his peacetime job and its many opportunities.”

This period of peace was short as North Korean forces invaded South Korea on June 25, 1950, involving the United States in a war which would last until an armistice in 1953. By 1951 there were 1,448 chaplains serving in Korea and by the end of the war 13 had died in service to their country.

This new war would present new challenges to Army chaplains. One of those challenges would be the changing nature of how the war would be fought. Fixed fronts were replaced by constantly changing fronts and rapidly moving troops. These changes required chaplains to travel as much as 2,000 miles a month to provide counseling and religious services. Another change was that the war eventually became a stalemate making it unpopular at home and degrading the overall morale of the soldiers.

The training of chaplains was restructured to address these new realities. Chaplains could now attend other military schools which “increased the technical knowledge necessary to deal with an increasingly technological Army.” Course work was also expanded to better train chaplains as counselors. “Clinical Pastoral Education

52 US Army Chaplain Corps, History of the Army Chaplaincy, 34.
53 US Army Chaplain Corps, History of the Army Chaplaincy, 34.
54 US Army Chaplain Corps, History of the Army Chaplaincy, 35.
(CPE) was established for chaplains. Training in emotional distress, marriage and family problems, human relations and drug and alcohol abuse also became prime areas for chaplain training."\textsuperscript{56} At the end of the Korean War the ministry focus of chaplains shifted to ministry to soldiers and their families living on Army posts. Lay ministries were expanded and post Sunday Schools were formed.\textsuperscript{57}

This history of the Army Chaplaincy establishes some of the unique features of this kind of pastoral ministry. In the midst of changing circumstances they consistently offered spiritual care through preaching, worship, prayer, counsel and comfort. This is the ever present work of the shepherd. At the same time the presence of the warrior ethos can be seen. From colonial chaplains who actually led combat regiments to the “be there” mentality of chaplains in World War II, these pastoral leaders did indeed function as “clergy in uniform” or shepherds with a warriors’ ethos. Over time training was developed that would better equip chaplains in both areas. Chaplain James Wright would develop his leadership skills as chaplain in this environment of chaplains formally trained in skills from counseling to calisthenics, skills that would be put to use as he ministered to soldiers fighting in Vietnam.

\textit{Chaplains in the Vietnam War}

From its very start, the Vietnam War was a different kind of conflict. As Rodger Venske writes, “The United States glided into the fury with little fanfare. … There were no beachheads to storm, no conventional invasions to repel, no discernible front lines of

\textsuperscript{56} US Army Chaplain Corps, \textit{History of the Army Chaplaincy}, 36.

\textsuperscript{57} US Army Chaplain Corps, \textit{History of the Army Chaplaincy}, 36.
combat, and no easily-identified enemy.” The entry of chaplains into the conflict was also incremental and haphazard. The first chaplains to arrive were diverted while in route to other postings and arrived with little support and no supplies. At the beginning of the war there were only eight chaplains assigned to Vietnam and they had to cover the 600-mile length of the country. This reality caused a major shift in the approach of Army chaplains to their ministry in Vietnam. They ended up with the concept of “area coverage” as opposed to the more traditional “unit coverage.” Additionally, chaplains from different branches of the military were “encouraged to coordinate their ministries by serving all U.S. personnel within their geographical areas, regardless of service or unit connection.” This created more challenges to the ministry of chaplains as it was impossible to connect with soldiers from multiple units and service members from other branches in the same way they would with members of specific units.

In spite of those challenges chaplains sought to show the same care and commitment to those they served as had the warrior shepherds of conflicts past. They would be committed to fulfilling the charge that was embodied in the words of Brigadier General A. O. Connor to the chaplains graduating from the Basic Chaplain Course on March 14, 1962:

Your first and most important step [as a chaplain] is associating yourself closely with your troops. This can be done most effectively by participation in the things that they are doing, and that means … getting into the field with them. You must

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60 Venzke, 142.
share their misery, their burdens, their victories and their defeats, and be one of them.61

The living out of that commitment can be heard in comments of chaplains themselves. In the words of one chaplain, “The men I attend are each day faced with the ultimate reality, the final physical reality of death. I know now what every priest must know: the full meaning of compassion.”62 Chaplain John H. Herrlinger commented, “Usually I move right with the battalion and dig foxholes along with the men. Our altar is the front of a jeep, our pews Vietnamese soil and our roof the burning Oriental sky. Men grow up in a minute over here.”63

The impact of that commitment can also be heard in the comments of the soldiers themselves. While not part of a body of published literature, the collected memories of those who served do form as a valuable reference for understanding the role of the chaplain during the Vietnam War. For that reason a confidential interview with a Marine Corpsman who served in Vietnam was included as part of the related research. In the interview the corpsman highlighted the important role of the chaplain.

The corpsman noted at the beginning of the interview that many of the chaplains he interacted with were in fact Army chaplains as there were not as many Marine chaplains available. The accounts of the corpsman regarding his view of the chaplains fall into two areas. First was the role of the chaplain in helping men deal with the stress and fatigue of combat. Second was the role of the chaplain in personally assisting this corpsman in dealing with his own moral dilemmas in relation to the war.


62 Venzke, 152.

63 Venzke, 152.
The corpsman said that when he would have to send men to the rear because of battle fatigue he would send them to the chaplain first as a way to avoid having them written up on report by a commanding officer. He went on to add that when many of those men returned to action their mental state had been dramatically improved and they credited the change to the influence of the chaplain.

In describing his personal interaction with chaplains, the corpsman recounted two specific instances when he sought a chaplain’s counsel. The first was after the first time he had killed someone in combat. During a battle the corpsman saw an enemy combatant running toward the command post with a grenade in each hand. Knowing the only way to stop the attack was to shoot the enemy, he picked up the rifle of one of those he was treating and killed the enemy soldier. This created a great struggle for the corpsman. He was trained to save lives yet had taken a life and he turned to the chaplain for counsel and guidance. He was extremely grateful for the chaplain helping him work through those issues especially as it related to the commandment “thou shalt not kill.”

A second instance involved a situation where the corpsman was ordered to provide treatment to a captured North Vietnamese soldier ahead of treating the wounded from his own company. The corpsman at first refused but then did follow the order, however in the process and out of anger at being forced to treat the prisoner ahead of his own men he deliberately contaminated the dressings he used on the North Vietnamese. The corpsman said, “He lived but I gave him one hell of an infection.” Afterward he

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64 Interview with a Vietnam veteran, October 2, 2014.
65 Interview with a Vietnam veteran, October 2, 2014.
66 Interview with a Vietnam veteran, October 2, 2014.
67 Interview with a Vietnam veteran, October 2, 2014.
felt great remorse for his actions and knew that they were wrong. To deal with this he said, “I had to go and have a talk with the chaplain to get that straightened out” and did not add any detail regarding the nature of that conversation. The interview concluded by the corpsman again stressing that the chaplain was just as important as he was in bringing the healing needed to restore men impacted by the trauma of combat.

Not every soldier had a positive view of chaplains. Still the chaplains’ steadfast commitment to be with the men and care for them did make a deep impression on many of the soldiers they served. It was observed that soldiers “have a high regard for the churchmen who share the dangers of war with quiet heroism that wins affection and awe rather than medals.” In light of that comment it is noteworthy that for the first time since the Civil War two chaplains were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for courage under fire. Charles J. Watters was awarded his posthumously. He was killed in November 1967 while recovering wounded men during an assault near Dak To. Angelo J. Liteky received his in December 1967, for personally carrying more than 20 men from a battle site near Phuoc-Lac to a helicopter landing evacuation site. The actions of both chaplains reflect their commitment to carry out the charge to “share their misery, their burdens, their victories and their defeats, and be one of them.” Perhaps the impact of the ministry of chaplains might best be captured by the words of one soldier when he was

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68 Interview with a Vietnam veteran, October 2, 2014.
69 Venzke, 152.
72 Ackermann, vi.
asked about his chaplain, “I can't talk about him. You just wouldn't understand. You haven't been with us.”\(^{73}\)

Another challenge faced by chaplains was the controversial nature of the war. Was this conflict a civil war with no pressing national interest or was this a vital stand against the expansion of communism in Asia? Most chaplains agreed “with the latter view, although they sought little public attention for their opinions. Their attitudes were influenced, undoubtedly, by a desire to honor the memory of the increasing number of their men who were giving their lives in the conflict.”\(^{74}\) As American involvement grew it was also the case that “criticism directed against the Army occasionally was directed more specifically against the chaplain corps, labeling its members as warmongers. Some chaplains also felt the need to either support or question the military struggle and did so publicly.”\(^{75}\) One chaplain’s comments reflect this struggle: “[Though] our present policy of continuing the military struggle is not a pleasant one, the prospect of giving in to a brutal, tyrannical aggressor is much less attractive.”\(^{76}\) Other chaplains chose to actively promote the anti-communist nature of the conflict through “character guidance lectures.”\(^{77}\) It seems that the general approach for chaplains was to focus on ministering “to their men wherever they were called and to support an attitude of loyalty to one's conscience and religious convictions in the face of the agonizing questions.”\(^{78}\)

\(^{73}\) Venzke, 152.

\(^{74}\) Venzke, 144.


\(^{76}\) Venzke, 148.

\(^{77}\) Venzke, 141.

\(^{78}\) Venzke, 148.
Related to this challenge was the reality that unpopularity of the war was generating more and more men filing as “conscientious objectors” to military service. It became the responsibility of chaplains to evaluate the genuineness of those objecting to military service on the ground of religious beliefs. “Chaplains were required to hold a counseling interview with these individuals and rule on their sincerity and the basis for objection in their religious convictions. Chaplains then submitted reports based on their findings.”

Counseling continued to be an expanding ministry area for chaplains serving in Vietnam. This was in part caused by increasing drug abuse by soldiers. Narcotics were easy to come by in Vietnam and their widespread use by soldiers prompted the need for chaplains to have special training to offer drug counseling, establish antidrug programs and work in treatment centers. However the scope of counseling would extend far beyond that issue,

Chaplains in Vietnam were also heavily involved in the day-to-day counseling of soldiers with a myriad of other decisions and problems ranging from marriage to Vietnamese girls to arrangements for compassionate leaves and reassignments. In a sense, it could be said that the chaplains’ ministry in Vietnam was among the most challenging ever faced in the history of the branch. More than a salve to soothe the effects of battle, the chaplains’ work had begun to penetrate the very depths of human psychology in an attempt to serve the soldier who faced his own inner conflicts.

The significant role of counseling in the ministry of Vietnam chaplains was further confirmed by post-war evaluation. A survey of 685 chaplains who served in Vietnam asked what they spent the most time doing. They responded: a ministry of presence

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81 Venzke, 163.
(being with soldiers in all their activities, to include going on operations with them), counseling, worship and visitation of the sick and wounded. They were then asked what they thought their most important work had been. The top four were presence, counseling, the visitation of the sick and wounded and worship. Clearly chaplains spent time doing what they thought was important and that was being with and counseling soldiers.

The nature of the conflict also created challenges to the role of the chaplain related to combat. One aspect of this was that these warrior shepherds were sometimes more warrior than regulations allowed. In one instance a chaplain was photographed with a .45 caliber pistol and a fragmentation grenade hanging from his belt. In another instance a chaplain was quoted as saying, “I don’t want to be a drag when the going is hot and heavy. I ought to be able to earn my keep with these men. But I would only use these things in self-defense—my job is to save souls and not to take lives.” More difficult than these instances were the tragic moments when chaplains were made aware of alleged atrocities and war crimes. In the most famous case, at least four chaplains were called to testify in investigations of the attack at My Lai where more than 100 Vietnamese non-combatant men, women, and children were killed. While no chaplains were part of the attack, there was a lack of effective follow up when soldiers who were there reported to their chaplains that civilians had been killed. As a result of this, additional training was provided to chaplains on the matter of legal orders and the means of properly reporting

82 Ackermann, 226.
83 Ackermann, 226.
84 Venzke, 149.
85 Venzke, 159.
alleged atrocities. Incidents like this raised further questions and challenges to the ability of chaplains to effectively serve as both warrior and shepherd.

In Vietnam chaplains were active in many ways outside of combat areas as they actively ministered not only to the troops but to nearby Vietnamese communities. They, with the help of their troops and through their church and civic organizations back in the United States, aided the Vietnamese people by providing clothing, food and money. This reflected their altruism and concern for the less fortunate, especially those whose world was torn apart by war. Some of this work was done in conjunction with the Army’s “Hearts and Minds” campaign aimed at gaining support with the civilian population of South Vietnam, but for the chaplains involved any political impact of this work was secondary. In general chaplains were simply responding to the needs they saw around them. One chaplain summarized by sharing “the people of my refugee village told me that the Protestant minister has much love for them.”

While the beginning of the chaplains’ ministry in Vietnam was haphazard it became highly organized and multi-faceted. Ministry ranged from services in beautiful chapels at stabilized camps; from counseling a soldier about his “Dear John” letter between rocket attacks to participating in drug rehabilitation programs; from informal chats with men while they ate “C” rations in the field to well-planned devotional programs at the new religious retreat center at Cam Ranh Bay. It was a coordinated ministry not only involving chaplains from all the branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, but also those in the forces of the Republic of Vietnam and the variety of other nations represented, such as Australia and Korea.

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86 Venzke, 159.
88 Venzke, 151.
89 Venzke, 170.
Not only did Vietnam impact the nature of the chaplaincy it profoundly impacted the warrior shepherds who served there. It is interesting to note that in one survey 57 percent of the chaplains asked said the Vietnam War had positively changed their ministries.\textsuperscript{90} For example, one chaplain said, “My theology and approach to faith became far more practical and grace/forgiveness based. The judgmental edge was completely blunted and became more ecumenical.”\textsuperscript{91} An even larger percentage (82 percent) said that their time in Vietnam strengthened their faith.\textsuperscript{92} This is reflected in the comments of a chaplain who said, “The experience of being with young men who are wounded and dying strengthened my faith in the resurrection. In addition, there were many times when their faith strengthened and deepened my own.”\textsuperscript{93} Finally, the survey asked if their experience changed their view of the military and the chaplaincy. The majority answered that it had not or if it had the change was positive. For one, it validated the place of chaplains in the military: “Some novel I read while I was in seminary had a statement in it that declared that a chaplain was a complete misfit in a combat unit. For years I had wondered whether or not that was true. A year with the infantry in combat convinced me that I had as vital a role as the operations officer or even the commander.”\textsuperscript{94}

By the end of the war 13 chaplains had died in the service of their country. They came from different backgrounds but “there was a unity in their devotion, a commonness in their sacrifice, and a oneness in their purpose—to minister to the American soldier

\textsuperscript{90} Ackermann, 227.
\textsuperscript{91} Ackermann, 227.
\textsuperscript{92} Ackermann, 228.
\textsuperscript{93} Ackermann, 229.
\textsuperscript{94} Ackermann, 230.
wherever he was called.”95 It is this common purpose and sacrifice that is embodied in those who are shepherds with a warrior’s ethos. It is this experience that would shape the ministry of James Wright as a chaplain and as a civilian pastor.

Unique Features of Military Chaplaincy

The logical starting point for examining the unique features of the ministry of chaplains is Army Regulation 165-1 which establishes the Army Chaplain Corps Activities. Revised in 2009, this document lays out numerous regulations that guide the work of Army Chaplains. Section 3-2 defines the roles and responsibilities of a chaplain as a professional military religious leader. In general,

All Chaplains provide for the nurture and practice of religious beliefs, traditions, and customs in a pluralistic environment to strengthen the spiritual lives of soldiers and their families. Chaplains conduct the religious programs and activities for the Command and provide professional advice and counsel on religious, moral, and ethical issues.96

More specifically, “Chaplains are required by law to hold religious services for members of the command to which they are assigned, when practicable. Chaplains provide for religious support, pastoral care, and the moral and spiritual wellbeing of the command.”97 This is to accomplish “the free-exercise rights of all personnel, regardless of religious affiliation of either the Chaplain or the unit member.”98 Chaplains are required to perform their professional military religious leader ministrations in accordance with the tenets or faith requirements of the religious organization that certifies and endorses them.”

95 Venzke, 170.
97 U.S. Army. Army Regulation 165-1, 12.
98 U.S. Army. Army Regulation 165-1, 12.
and are explicitly not “required to perform a religious role (such as offering a prayer, reading, dedication, or blessing) in worship services, command ceremonies, or other events, if doing so would be in variance with the tenets or practices of their faith.”

Within those regulations some unique elements are immediately observable. First, the chaplain is required to “provide for the nurture and practice of religious beliefs, traditions, and customs in a pluralistic environment.” This is reinforced by the requirement to offer spiritual care to everyone “regardless of religious affiliation.” So the Army chaplain’s context is far broader and more ecumenical than pastors would experience in a local church context. Second, chaplains are not required to perform any religious function that would be “in variance with the tenets or practices of their faith” which requires a level of discernment in practice that is again outside the experience of typical pastoral service. Finally, these regulations give some indication of the broad scope of settings for ministry. From just what is stated in these requirements chaplains will perform services, plan religious education, provide prison ministries, provide counseling, work with soldiers and families, perform weddings and funerals and do all of these things keeping within military regulations and applicable local law in a variety of settings including overseas locations. While the ministry of pastors is always diverse, the scope of the chaplain’s work is certainly unique.

Of the other works that describe the unique work of chaplains the one that is consistently referenced in this regard is *The Churches and the Chaplaincy* by Richard G. Hutcheson Jr. In this work he provides an excellent outline of some of the unique aspects that are part of the shape of military ministry. Those aspects include:

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Duality

Chaplains must function within two different institutions. Hutcheson gives an interesting observation that while many outsiders perceive that this means the chaplain has left the church and entered the military, chaplains themselves do not believe this. Research indicates that rather than chaplains placing military expectations ahead of church expectations most chaplains see themselves as clergy first and military officer second. He attributes this to the reality that while serving in the military the chaplain does not fully leave the church. While the structures and settings are different the ultimate objectives of chaplains are the same as those in the civilian pastorate; that is, the chaplain’s goals are spiritual goals and not military goals.

Counseling

“Probably the best known and most widely appreciated aspect of the chaplain’s ministry to the entire military community, rather than to his denominational constituency alone, is personal counseling.” This is consistent with the “tell it to the chaplain” tradition and extends the ministry of the chaplain to the entire military community.

Concern for General Welfare

“Service to the whole institution has from the earliest days involved chaplains in educational and humanitarian activities.” This is work that was not expressly spiritual but sought to improve the overall state of the soldiers with whom they worked. Teaching

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101 Hutchenson, 21.

102 Hutchenson, 22.

103 Hutchenson, 74.

104 Hutchenson, 79.
reading and writing, providing health education and developing post libraries are a few examples. Hutcheson notes that it was this kind of concern from chaplains that brought an end to the use of flogging as a punishment for sailors.\textsuperscript{105}

**Humanitarian Work**

“The charitable activities of soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines all over the world have frequently been sparked and led by chaplains.”\textsuperscript{106} From outreaches to Native Americans on the frontier of the American West to providing aid packages to the Vietnamese, chaplains have traditionally responded to the needs they saw around them.

**Young Adult Ministry**

An observation that seems obvious but may easily be over looked is that the ministry of chaplain is primarily to “single young adults, in a setting isolated from family influences.”\textsuperscript{107} While many of the soldiers are married, they often face long periods of time in which they are functionally single. This creates challenges for chaplains in addressing the many family issues that arise from this separation. It also means that chaplains need to develop the ability to understand and relate to young adults which is an area where civilian churches have often struggled.

**Military Mobility**

Military personnel are transferred on a regular basis and often spend only very short periods of time at a given location.\textsuperscript{108} So while there is always some degree of turnover in the congregations of civilian pastors, the military chaplain faces this to a

\textsuperscript{105} Hutchenson, 80.  
\textsuperscript{106} Hutchenson, 81.  
\textsuperscript{107} Hutchenson, 85.  
\textsuperscript{108} Hutchenson, 94.
much greater degree. Adding to this unique element is that military transitions are involuntary. If a company insists that their employees move those employees can always quit and find other jobs. Moves for military personnel come in the form of orders to be followed. Often those orders take a soldier far away from family for an extended period and there is always the reality that those orders may take them into theaters of active combat. All of these facets of military mobility create unique challenges for Army chaplains. They must be skilled at helping young adults find some sense of stability and security in situations that foster great loneliness.

**Non-Building-Centered-Ministry**

While certainly not universally true, the reality is that most civilian pastoral work centers on a church building. Most church plants move toward and plan for the day they will have their own building. Military ministry however frequently does not have this as an option. Certainly many military installations do have chapel facilities but chaplains are just as likely to find themselves holding services in mess halls, make-shift tents or open fields. An interesting implication of this is that “the military chaplaincy has helped the church keep in touch with its times, go where the people are, and say things that are relevant to their needs.” Chaplains live constantly with the truth that what is needed for real worship is people, not a place.

**Ecumenical Ministry**

The ecumenical nature of military chaplaincy is not formal as in the creation of interchurch organizations but it is the functional ecumenism of practical cooperation.

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109 Hutchenson, 95.

110 Hutchenson, 98.
Chaplains remain part of their own endorsing denomination and are responsible for their performance to that denomination’s leadership. However, in the course of performing their duties chaplains must work with other chaplains and soldiers from many different denominations and different faiths. This has produced an increased respect between differing theological traditions and more positive orientation to cooperative efforts.  

As part of what contributes to the distinctive ministry work of chaplains the items from the above list were used to help identify specific structural-objective factors that impacted Chaplain Wright’s development and transition to civilian ministry.

*Transition from Military Chaplain to Civilian Pastor*

Very little has been written on the specific transition from military chaplain to civilian pastor. In fact, as part of this research only one other work on the subject could be located and obtained. A Doctor of Ministry thesis by Chaplain Edwin Arnold Porter titled *A Study of the Transition Process from Military Chaplain to Civilian Pastor* was a valuable resource addressing this area of research. Because chaplains typically retire after 20-30 years of military service, they are usually not at a point in life where they are ready to be done working and they typically seek to transition back to some form of civilian ministry. Porter identified some of the challenges related to that transition. They include resentment from other pastors who view chaplains as not having paid their dues in the church, being disconnected from occupational networks and the negative views some hold because they do not think it is appropriate for clergy to serve in the military.

These challenges can result in former chaplains being placed in positions considered

111 Hutchenson, 102.

below those of others with similar years of experience. Porter also gave what he views as some of the benefits to be gained by having former military chaplains as civilian pastors. Those include their openness to ecumenical cooperation and their experience with multiple staffs and large budgets.\textsuperscript{113}

Porter’s research consisted of interviewing 22 retired chaplains who transitioned to civilian ministry. Distinctive aspects that he found were that:

1. Many chaplains do not invest much time in preparing for the transition from military to civilian ministry.\textsuperscript{114}

2. There appears to be at least some resistance on the part of civilian leadership to embrace former chaplains as pastoral leaders.\textsuperscript{115}

3. A majority did have positions waiting for them when they left the military. However, this was impacted by the way Catholics and Methodists appoint pastoral leaders so they were guaranteed “something.”\textsuperscript{116}

4. Chaplains generally received little or no help from their endorsing agency in the retirement and transition process.\textsuperscript{117}

5. None of the retired chaplains indicated that the responsibilities they had as a civilian pastor were beyond their capabilities.\textsuperscript{118}

6. Most chaplains felt that they had less responsibility as civilian pastors.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{113} Porter, 8.
\textsuperscript{114} Porter, 38.
\textsuperscript{115} Porter, 41.
\textsuperscript{116} Porter, 46.
\textsuperscript{117} Porter, 48.
\textsuperscript{118} Porter, 53.
7. Most chaplains found the transition to civilian pastor to be easy.¹²⁰

This information is valuable to the current research in two ways. First, it gives good insights into some of the challenges that accompany the transition from military chaplain to civilian pastor. Second, these insights are from a time frame that is relatively close in time to the retirement of Chaplain Wright and would be somewhat reflective of the environment in which that transition was made. This material was used in assessing how typical this transition was with regard to others sharing similar experiences.

**Leadership Development**

The second area of literature review for this research was to examine the process of how ministry leadership is developed. In this regard, the work of J. Robert Clinton proved to be very helpful. Clinton’s work *Leadership Emergence Theory* offered a systematic approach to assigning a set of common features which appear in the development of leaders. With regard to ministry leaders, those common phases are ministry foundations, growth ministry, and unique ministry.¹²¹ With each of the phases are additional sub-phases and response patterns that describe how ministry leaders develop and grow.

¹¹⁹ Porter, 56.

¹²⁰ Porter, 57.

Ministry Foundations

This phase encompasses the sovereign foundations God used to prepare the leader for ministry and the transition of the leader into ministry.\textsuperscript{122} Within this phase are foundation patterns, testing patterns and training patterns.

Growth Ministry

This phase would include provisional ministry and competent ministry.\textsuperscript{123} Here the leader transitions toward greater effectiveness as they gain greater understanding of their giftedness.

Unique Ministry

This phase includes role transition and convergence.\textsuperscript{124} This represents the leader moving into ministry roles where their effectiveness is maximized.

Clinton lays those phases out in conjunction with the variable of time to create a standardized timeline through which the reality of leader’s life can be viewed.\textsuperscript{125} These time-lines are non-absolute in nature but they are helpful in identifying patterns and they proved a framework for analyzing the development of a leader.\textsuperscript{126} This timeline approach was used as part of the restorying process which is the biographical narrative portion of the research. The intent of restorying is to identify themes or categories that emerge from the story and Clinton’s timeline phases and patterns were applied as part of that process.

\textsuperscript{122} Clinton, 319.

\textsuperscript{123} Clinton, 319.

\textsuperscript{124} Clinton, 319.

\textsuperscript{125} Clinton, 335.

\textsuperscript{126} Clinton, 335.
A second lens used to examine the process of leadership development came from the 4-R Model of transformational leadership as presented by Mark McCloskey. “The framework of the 4R Model provides a ‘conceptual home’ for the critical variables in the transformational leadership process. These variables are organized in four categories: relationships, roles, responsibilities and results.”\(^\text{127}\) The distinguishing aspect of this model is the way in which it places the virtue of the leader as primary driver of transformational leadership. The model begins with relationships and answers the question, “What characteristics must all organizational leaders possess in order to provide effective, transformational leadership over time and in a variety of situations?”\(^\text{128}\) Those characteristics are captured by McCloskey in the term “DICE +1.” McCloskey defines the elements of that term.

**Dynamic determination**

Is a cluster of virtuous attitudes and behaviors that draw upon the cardinal virtues of faith, hope, fortitude and prudence. These virtues supply the leader with the inner strength to initiate action in the face of obstacles, to not shrink back in the face of resistance, and to sustain constructive activity in the face of adversity.\(^\text{129}\)

**Intellectual flex-ability**

Is a cluster of virtuous attitudes and behaviors, which draw upon the cardinal virtue of prudence and its derivatives, wisdom and humility. Intellectual flex-ability is the capacity to see. Appreciating the dynamic complexity of life, and knowing one’s human

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\(^\text{128}\) McCloskey, 4.

\(^\text{129}\) McCloskey, 5.
and personal limitations, leaders with Intellectual flex-ability possess an attitude of openness and humble teachability, the capacity to see oneself, others and the world clearly and accurately.\textsuperscript{130}

**Courageous character**

Is a cluster of virtuous attitudes and behaviors which draw upon the cardinal virtues of love and fortitude. Courageous character refers to one’s moral integrity, which is the inner strength to live in accordance with high moral standards.\textsuperscript{131}

**Emotional maturity**

Is a cluster of virtuous attitudes and behaviors, which draw upon the cardinal virtues of love, hope and temperance. Emotional maturity speaks of the inner strength of temperance to overcome the negative emotions that threaten to undermine the power of a virtuous life.\textsuperscript{132}

**Collaborative quotient (the + 1 factor)**

This refers to a leader’s virtue-based capacity to initiate, sustain and grow interdependent, collaborative partnerships with a diverse array of people over time and across situations.\textsuperscript{133}

McCloskey states that “the DICE + 1 configuration connects the historic, cardinal virtues (faith, hope and love, prudence, justice, courage and temperance) to characteristics identified in the leadership literature as critical to the practice of

\textsuperscript{130} McCloskey, 6.

\textsuperscript{131} McCloskey, 6.

\textsuperscript{132} McCloskey, 6.

\textsuperscript{133} McCloskey, 7.
transformational leadership.\textsuperscript{134} A parallel was immediately noted between this configuration of characteristics and the portrait of biblical warrior shepherds demonstrating vision, discipline, decision making, zeal, community/loyalty and call. Because of this parallel these characteristics were also used as part of the restorying process to identify what aspects of transformational leadership were developed through service as a military chaplain and transferred to the role of civilian pastor.

The final material on leadership development that was reviewed for this research came from class material presented as part of the class “Theology of Leadership in Community” which was taught in February of 2010 at Bethel Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. There were three elements of leadership that stood out in relationship to the current research subject. First was the application of Titus 1:5-9 to the development of the leader. The point was made that leaders are those who have brought order to the chaos of their own life.\textsuperscript{135} Second was describing leaders who follow Jesus as belonging to the “order of the towel,” a reference to Jesus washing the disciples’ feet. The lesson being taught is that leaders do not do what their followers want leaders to do in their lives—leaders do what their Leader wants them to do in the lives of their followers.\textsuperscript{136} The last of the three was a discussion in Mark 6:30-52 which encompasses Mark’s accounts of the feeding of the 5,000 and Jesus walking on the water. The two events are connected by verse 52 which says, “For they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.” Here the discussion focused on the need for the leader to

\textsuperscript{134} McCloskey, 7.

\textsuperscript{135} William Lawrence and. Joel Lawrence, “Theology of Leadership in Community,” (Bethel Seminary, St. Paul, MN. February 2010).

\textsuperscript{136} Lawrence and Lawrence.
have a radical trust in Christ in which he trades his control for God’s resources and his safety for Christ’s cross. In essence, ministry leaders need to learn that they are called to do what they cannot do with what they do not have for the rest of their lives. Meanwhile they trust God to do what only God can do with what they do have working through them for the rest of their lives.137 As part of the restorying process, evidence was looked for that Chaplain Wright had learned these lessons and applied them both as a military chaplain and as a civilian pastor.

137 Lawrence and Lawrence.
CHAPTER FOUR: THE LIFE STORY OF JAMES E. WRIGHT

The research carried out for this project was in the form of biographical research. Specifically, it focused on researching the life of Pastor James E. Wright and his service as both a military chaplain and as a civilian pastor. This involved the collecting of personal information in the form of stories, documents and interviews. This information included Chaplain Wright’s military record which contains a record of places served, letters of recommendations and performance reviews by his commanding officers. It also included Pastor Wright’s personal files. Finally, it included personal interviews with individuals in four churches Pastor Wright served after retirement from the military. This information was then organized and interpreted.

There are differing approaches to engaging in this interpretive process. In Interpreive Biography Norman Denzin categorizes the methods as either objective formats or interpretive frameworks. The present research uses the interpretive framework approach. This begins with objective experiences which can be organized according to life stages. The narrative that emerges is then carefully read for patterns of meaning and the structural-objective factors that have shaped the life being studied. The story is then presented in a chronological format which includes details about the setting or context of the participant’s experiences while identifying themes or categories that emerge from the story. Once general themes from one life are determined they are then

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often compared to other life stories to arrive at theoretical generalizations. The goal then is to “join biographical experiences with sequences of objectively determined social-structural processes” which moves in the direction of grounded theory.²

For this research the “objectively determined social-structural processes” are derived from Robert Clinton’s study of leadership emergence theory. The theory was developed by examining the lives of numerous Christian and biblical leaders. It is a grounded substantive theory that “flows directly from reflective inductive thinking generated from a comparative study of data.”³ Clinton’s “comparative study has resulted in the identification of common features which relate to the development of the leader.”⁴ Clinton has created a standard pattern to which other unique timelines can be compared. This pattern is defined by the interaction of three sets of variables. The first variable is time which is guided by a generic ministry timeline which moves from ministry foundations to growth ministry to unique ministry.⁵ Each of these phases of the timeline also has distinct sub-phases: sovereign leadership, leadership transition, provisional ministry, competent ministry, role transition and convergence.⁶

The second variable is process. Process items are the critical spiritual incidents in the life of a leader that are key turning points in terms of leadership and that are seen by the leader as the work of God developing them for leadership.⁷ The last variable involves

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² Denzin, 57.
⁴ Clinton, 314
⁵ Clinton, 28.
⁶ Clinton, 28.
⁷ Clinton, 29.
the response of the leaders to these process items. Finally, all these variables are bound together by the concept that, “A leader is developed by God over a lifetime in order to expand leadership capacities to fulfill God’s purposes for that leader.”

Leadership emergence theory presents an effective tool for seeking to understand the effect service as a military chaplain had on the Pastor James E. Wright’s transition to service as a pastoral leader in civilian service.

The research is presented here as a retelling of the life story of Pastor James E. Wright which has been organized according to Clinton’s standard pattern. The research also includes observations regarding how the various structural-objective factors identified as part of the unique ministry of military chaplains impacted the expression of the dual roles of warrior and shepherd in Pastor Wright’s pastoral leadership as both a chaplain and civilian pastor.

**Ministry Foundations**

**Sovereign Leadership**

During this first sub-phase in the life of a leader, “God providentially works through family, contextual background and historical events (including the timing of the birth of each leader) to establish the basic foundation of the leader’s life.”

James Wright was born on May 17, 1927 in Decatur, Illinois to James O. and Marie Wright. His family had a great influence on his character and faith. James’ character was impacted by the example and work ethic from his father.

A second family influence process would come from his family’s faith heritage.

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8 Clinton, 29.
9 Clinton, 314.
James was raised in a traditional Baptist home. His grandfather, W. E. Wright was a Baptist pastor and his parents were active in the First Baptist Church in Kankakee, Illinois. At age eleven James accepted Christ as his Savior and was later baptized at Salem Baptist Church of Decatur, Illinois where his grandfather had been a pastor.

The timing of his birth constitutes a major entry context item in James’ life. Entry context items are related to the historical and cultural setting into which the leader is born that are “used by God to process a leader in terms of strategic guidance, long term convergence and sense of destiny.” James would grow up during the Great Depression and enter adolescence in the midst of World War II.

It was a combination of a sense of responsibility and the impact of the economic pressures of the time that contributed to James’ decision to join the Marines in March of 1944. There was one issue however, James was born in May of 1927 and would not turn 18 until 1945. He informed his parents that he could join if they signed a permission form. In reality the form was to verify his birthday as May 17, 1926. This is the birthdate that is given on his official Marine service record.

With this obstacle removed James enlisted in the Marines on March 24, 1944. He completed his basic training at Camp Pendleton in California. On November 13, 1944

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11 James E. Wright, “Ordination Service” First Baptist Church, Kankakee, IL, June 1, 1958.

12 Clinton, 108.

13 U.S. Marine Corps Service Record Book for James E. Wright, March 24, 1944-November 26, 1945, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, MO.

he joined the 4th Division 1st Battalion 23rd Marines B Company.\textsuperscript{15} James’ service with the 1st Battalion 23rd Marines (1/23) would culminate with his participation in the invasion of Iwo Jima.

James’ experience on Iwo Jima is foundational to his development as a leader. The destiny preparation process item is part of a larger destiny pattern which Clinton describes as beginning with a “destiny experience which leads a person to sense and believe that God has intervened in a personal and special way … toward some purpose of God during that leader’s lifetime.”\textsuperscript{16} Because of the significant role of this experience the research included a detailed examination of the military actions in which James participated as part of the combat operations on Iwo Jima.

James landed on Iwo Jima with the first assault wave on February 19, 1945. The Marines of 1/23 were part of the 4th Division that landed at Yellow Beach One. George Garand and Truman Strobridge in the Marine Corps’ official history of Iwo Jima state that “it was generally agreed that of all the unpleasant beaches on Iwo Jima that day those of the 4th Division were the hottest.”\textsuperscript{17} The 4th Division had 2000 men killed or wounded in the first two days of the invasion.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{15} U.S. Marine Corps Service Record Book for James E. Wright, March 24, 1944- November 26, 1945.

\textsuperscript{16} Clinton, 349.

\textsuperscript{17} George W. Garand and Truman R. Strobridge. \textit{Western Pacific Operations; History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II.} (Washington), Historical Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1971. 597

\textsuperscript{18} Garand and Stobridge, 635.
James’ memory of the landing on Iwo Jima was spending most of the first day laying half on the beach and half in the water being pinned down by enemy fire.19 Another experience he shared was jumping into a crater made by an artillery shell with another Marine and then suddenly feeling something wet on his hand. When he looked over he saw that his friend had been shot through the temple and killed while part of the bullet fragment had hit him in the face.20

On February 25th the 1/23 was part of the assault on enemy defenses that became collectively known as “The Meat Grinder.” James remembered sitting on his poncho cleaning his gun in preparation for battle when what he thought were flies began buzzing around. It took a minute for him to recognize that it was not flies but sand being sprayed up from enemy fire.21 As the fighting continued James became separated from his unit and found himself wandering alone behind enemy lines with a gun that was not working.22 He was trying to find a weapon and came across a dead Japanese officer lying on a sword. James wanted to take the sword but was afraid to move the officer fearing that it would be a booby trap. James said he just kept walking toward the beach until he found his unit again.23

Fierce fighting would continue for days until on March 16th Iwo Jima was declared secured. The cost of the victory was very high. In total the U.S. had suffered the highest single action losses in Marine Corps history with 24,053 dead or wounded.

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19 James E. Wright, interview for North Dakota Veterans History Project, Valley City, ND July 22, 2003, tape 74, North Dakota State Historical Society Archives, Bismarck, ND.

20 Wright, interview.

21 Wright, interview.

22 Wright, interview.

23 Wright, interview.
Of these, a total of 6,140 died which meant that roughly one Marine or corpsman became a casualty for every three who landed on Iwo Jima.\textsuperscript{24}

One of those wounded would be James Wright. On the afternoon of March fourth James was shot in the leg as part of the ongoing combat operations on Iwo Jima. He was evacuated to the medical tent and later to a hospital in Hawaii.\textsuperscript{25} James’ experience on Iwo Jima made a lasting impact. Of his combat experience he said that he did not like to talk about seeing buddies being killed and killing Japanese.\textsuperscript{26} He also said that he would often think about the Japanese that he had killed, wondering if they were married, if they had children or if there was a sweetheart waiting at home for them.\textsuperscript{27} After he was shot he remembers being told that out of the 125 men in B Company that he landed with he was the only one left alive.\textsuperscript{28}

James himself affirmed the nature of these events as a destiny experience when he said that he left Iwo Jima firmly believing “God had his hand in my life.”\textsuperscript{29} James also left Iwo Jima having been deeply impressed by the work of the chaplains he had met.


\textsuperscript{25} Wright, interview.

\textsuperscript{26} Wright, interview.

\textsuperscript{27} Wright, interview.

\textsuperscript{28} Wright, interview.

\textsuperscript{29} Wright, interview.
during that time.\textsuperscript{30} James’ experience on Iwo Jima was an essential part of God providentially laying the foundation for the warrior shepherd that he would become.

After being wounded at Iwo Jima, James was transferred to the Naval Hospital in Great Lakes, Illinois in May of 1945. James was awarded the Purple Heart as a result of his injury and was honorably discharged from the Marines in October of 1945.

During his treatment at Great Lakes James resumed a relationship with Phyllis Smith whom he had met during high school. James and Phyllis were married on August 18, 1945 in Kankakee, Illinois. James was called to the ministry in 1946 while a student at Gallagher Business College.\textsuperscript{31} James’ college transcript contained the following account of this change, “Though he was saved early in life he testified to being a carnal Christian until in the service when he promised the Lord to give his whole life, which promise he forgot when he got home and under deep conviction was led to an earnest dedication of his life.”\textsuperscript{32}

One of the common themes in lives of warrior shepherds was a strong sense of calling and this fits well with destiny pattern described by Clinton. The “destiny experience” was usually followed by a “leadership committal process item” where the potential leader indicated “a willingness to be used in ministry in whatever what God indicates.”\textsuperscript{33} This leadership commitment was the final step of the sovereign leadership sub-phase as God had providentially laid the foundation for James’ future ministry.

\textsuperscript{30} Wright, interview.

\textsuperscript{31} James E. Wright, “Ordination Service” First Baptist Church, Kankakee, IL, June 1, 1958.

\textsuperscript{32} Moody Bible Institute, Unofficial Transcript: James E. Wright, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, IL, May, 1951.

\textsuperscript{33} Clinton, 146.
Leadership Transition

The second sub-phase of ministry foundations typically included either testing or training patterns. In the life of James Wright this phase corresponded with Clinton’s pre-service training pattern. This pattern “involves moving straight into some formal training program with little or no ministry experience.” Clinton noted that this training must have “an excellent experiential track” in order to avoid the weakening of spiritual formation. Entering this phase also moves into the final part of the destiny pattern during which the leader begins to move toward the realization of that destiny.

Having made the commitment to serve in ministry James had two objectives in mind. He wanted to pursue military chaplaincy and he wanted to study the Bible. This led James to begin his formal training in January 1948 at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, Illinois. He completed the Pastor’s Diploma Course in August of 1951. Moody provided the strong experiential track needed to make formal ministry training effective. James served as a Sunday School teacher, youth group leader and the leader of a gospel team during his time at Moody. His supervisor rated the quality of his Personal Christian Work as superior. James also received a superior rating for leadership, judgment, dependability, tact, cooperation and perseverance.

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34 Clinton, 326.
35 Clinton, 327.
36 Clinton, 349.
37 Kathy Wilson, phone call, November 7, 2014
38 Moody Bible Institute, Unofficial Transcript: James E. Wright, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, IL, May, 1951.
39 Moody Bible Institute, Unofficial Transcript: James E. Wright, Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, IL, May, 1951.
The recognition of these areas was the first documented indication of how James’ military experience and formal ministry training were forging the combination of warrior ethos and shepherding that would be expressed in his pastoral leadership. Discipline, decision making, zeal and community were all represented in the comments from James’ evaluations.

James continued his formal training by attending Olivet Nazarene College and completed his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1955. From there he went on to attend Northern Baptist Theological Seminary and received his Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1958. During this time he also served part-time as a pastor at Merrill Avenue Baptist Church in Chicago, Illinois. On June 1, 1958 James was ordained for Christian ministry with the American Baptist Church at First Baptist in Kankakee, Illinois. He had already received a call to serve as the pastor of First Baptist Church in Belle Fourche, South Dakota where he would serve until 1960.

During this same period James was pursuing appointment as a chaplain in the US Army. This had been his ministry goal since 1946 but it was necessary to complete his seminary training, receive his ordination and receive his ecclesiastical endorsement before he could become a chaplain. He initially applied for appointment in the US Army Reserve (USAR) in 1956. On that application he stated his intention to “accept a commission of first lieutenant, USAR, if tendered, upon graduation from seminary and upon ordination.” This application was initially denied for medical reasons which

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40 James E. Wright, “Ordination Service” First Baptist Church, Kankakee, IL, June 1, 1958.

41 James E. Wright, Application for Appointment May 28, 1956, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.

42 James E. Wright, Application for Appointment May 28, 1956.
James appealed.\textsuperscript{43} He was appointed as a Second Lieutenant in the USAR in January, 1957.\textsuperscript{44} In July he reported to US Army Chaplain School to complete the Chaplain Officer Basic Course.\textsuperscript{45} In 1959 he received ecclesiastical endorsement from the American Baptist Convention.\textsuperscript{46} He then submitted his application for appointment as a First Lieutenant in the USAR.\textsuperscript{47} Again there were medical issues that were reversed after an appeal. James’ appointment was approved in July, 1960.\textsuperscript{48} In June of 1960 James had already applied to move to active duty.\textsuperscript{49} In a letter dated July 16, 1960 to Chaplain Roy A. Morden with the Office of the Chief of Chaplains James gave September 1, 1960 as the requested date for his entry into active service and said “I would appreciate having official orders 1 August 1960 or before in order that I may give my church as much notice as possible of my resignation.” On September 1, 1960 Chaplain Wright reported for active duty at Wahoo, Nebraska.\textsuperscript{50}

\textsuperscript{43} Capt. F. H. Roland, Report of Medical Examination: James E. Wright, June 11, 1956, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.
\textsuperscript{44} Secretary of the Army to James E, Wright, Appointment as a Reserve Commissioned Officer, January 4, 1957 Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.
\textsuperscript{46} Marion J. Greeger to Chief of Chaplains, November 9, 1959, US Army, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.
\textsuperscript{47} James E. Wright, Application for Appointment, November 1, 1959, US Army, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.
\textsuperscript{48} R.V. Lee to James E. Wright, Appointment as Reserve Commissioned Office, July 25, 1960, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.
\textsuperscript{49} James E. Wright, Application for Active Duty, June 13 1960, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.
\textsuperscript{50} Secretary of the Army to James E. Wright, July 26, 1960, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.
An important observation from this final transition toward Growth Ministry was the struggle James had to attain the ministry position to which he believed God had called him. James spent 10 years in school developing his ministry skills. This would be followed by two years in ministry at Belle Fourche, South Dakota. He was twice rejected for service in the army. He was also working against time as he was close to missing the age 35 cutoff for admission to active duty in the Army. This reflects a faith check process item. A faith check is “an early challenge by God given to a potential leader concerning some issue in which God’s reality and faithfulness can be tested and seen to be true.”

God was using challenges in training, health and time to develop James into the warrior shepherd he would become. God’s faithfulness in seeing James through these challenges was further affirmation of James’ call to ministry in general and specifically to serve as a chaplain.

**Growth Ministry**

**Provisional Ministry**

The next major phase in Clinton’s ministry timeline is Growth Ministry. It describes a phase when the leader has entered full time ministry but is continuing to have experiences which are shaping the leader they will become. Often this time of transition includes some bi-vocational or part-time ministerial work before moving into full time Christian leadership. For James this phase began at Merrill Avenue Baptist Church in 1957. Following his ordination James became the pastor at First Baptist Church in Belle...

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51 Clinton, 143.
52 Clinton, 155.
53 Clinton, 155.
Fourche, South Dakota. This move was necessary to fulfill the requirement of having a minimum of two years of full-time professional experience in order to become an active duty chaplain.

Part of the provisional ministry sub-phase that is often present is a developing problem with authority. As Clinton states, “leaders in growth ministry processing must learn to submit to authority. Many leaders throughout their ministry have problems accepting authority over them and submitting to it.”54 The fact that by the time Pastor Wright entered ministry at First Baptist he was already serving as chaplain in the USAR is evidence of the absence of this problem in the growth ministry processing of Pastor Wright. Simply put people with authority issues do not generally actively pursue military careers. This being the case it highlights an important impact of his military service on his civilian ministry at a very early time in his development as a leader. It was also another documentation of the discipline created by serving as a shepherd with a warrior ethos.

Competent Ministry

The second sub-phase of growth ministry is competent ministry during which “a leader has a good grasp of his/her giftedness and has developed some competency with it.”55 It is during this phase that “God begins to expand the emerging leader toward yet unrealized potential.”56 Chaplain Wright began this phase with his entry into active duty. Ministry assignments were the process items through which the leader learned “new

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54 Clinton, 177.
55 Clinton, 329.
56 Clinton, 179.
skills, new ideas of what ministry is and how to help those being ministered to.”

Research on this phase consisted primarily of analyzing military performance records and other data contained in Chaplain Wright’s Official Military Personnel File. Other ministry documents and training materials were also reviewed as part of the research on this phase. This review focused on identifying references to the distinctive features of military chaplaincy, the presence of the DICE +1 characteristics of transformational leadership and the biblical descriptions of pastoral leadership by warrior shepherds. All of these collectively were referred to as warrior shepherd leadership expressions.

Table 1. Warrior Shepherd Leadership Expressions

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**Battalion Chaplain, Omaha, Nebraska: September 1960-September 1961**

Chaplain Wright served at the Headquarters of the 6th Missile Battalion 43rd Artillery for just over one year. During that time personnel reviews included references to the following warrior shepherd leadership expressions:

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57 Clinton, 200.
**Decision making.** “He demonstrates an outstanding degree of proficiency resourcefulness, diplomacy, methodical-mindedness, loyalty, esprit de corps, tirelessness and self-confidence.”

**Discipline.** “He possesses an outstanding degree of proficiency, initiative, loyalty and esprit de corps. He willingly works long hours, unhesitatingly accepts responsibilities and conscientiously accomplishes his duties in an outstanding manner.”

**Loyalty.** “This officer has a polished manner, a keen sense of humor and a charming personality that radiates enthusiasm and confidence, Lt. Wright has the loyalty and devotion of the entire command.”

**Zeal.** “Lt. Wright is intelligent, practical, highly efficient and conscientious. His constant effort to improve the welfare and moral standards of this command and his willing self-sacrifice has earned him the confidence, friendship and respect of all personnel.”

**Collaborative quotient.** Chaplain Wright’s most pronounced qualities were identified as being well grounded, getting along with people and strong initiative.

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59 Grady O. White, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright December 16, 1960, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.


Chaplain Wright’s next post would see him assigned to the US Army Europe (USAREUR). His battle group while assigned to USAREUR was geographically stationed at Fort Hamilton, New York a Continental US base between deployments. Reviews from this time again recognize the presence of many of the warrior shepherd leadership expressions His reviewers for this time period observed the following:

_Shepherd with a warrior ethos._ “Chaplain Wright is one of those rare individuals who is both an exceptionally fine minister of the gospel and an exemplary soldier as well. These characteristics combine to make him ideally suited to the role of a troop chaplain.”63

“He possesses to the greatest degree the ability to be a troop chaplain and at the same time the minister you expect in the pulpit. He has a rare ‘touch’ that blends the two together as to work at maximum efficiency with all members of the army community.”64

_Call._ “Chaplain Wright is the best troop unit chaplain I have ever seen. His background experience as a soldier aids him in dealing with the men. He wins their confidence by getting with them and letting them air their thoughts.”65

_Discipline._ When asked to rate Chaplain Wright’s outstanding traits his reviewers awarded above average or exemplary ratings on all 20 traits listed.66

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64 Anthony Wermuth, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, May 11, 1964, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.

Loyalty. “During this period he has been extremely helpful in assisting in solving an unusually large number of soldier and family personal problems. He has the respect, confidence and admiration of the officers, dependents and men of the battalion.”67

Vision. “This is one of the very few outstanding chaplains I have ever encountered. He has been throughout the short period of my observation one of the key figures in the development and maintenance of the high morale of this battalion.”68

Zeal. “His desire and enthusiasm to help members of the Battle Group with their moral and spiritual problems had gained for him the respect and admiration of all members of the Battle Group.”69

Counseling. “Chaplain Wright renders a tremendous counselling service to individuals and family groups in need of spiritual guidance and comfort. He is called on at all hours of the day and night by personnel who know they can depend on him for help.”70

Ecumenical ministry. “In spite of his own particular religious affiliation, Chaplain Wright has consistently met the needs and served all faiths of the battalion in an outstanding manner. Through his untiring service to each member of the battalion he has gained the confidence of every man.”71

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69 Ira A. Palm, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, September 13, 1961, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.


Non-building centered. “He is extremely active in the field and visits troops frequently in their training areas. He is well oriented toward the military and is a credit to Officer Corps.”

Young adult ministry. “He was a most successful counselor for the young inexperienced soldier. I credit him with guiding many to a successful adjustment either by getting them on the right path or talking them out of starting down the wrong one.”72

Dynamic determination. “Men of the battalion soon learned that nothing was too difficult for Chaplain Wright to accomplish on their behalf. It usually never took more than one session by Chaplain Wright to straighten the man out and start him on his way to becoming an effective soldier.”73

Emotional maturity.

I have had the opportunity to observe this officer daily under all conditions short of combat and he has always performed in accordance with the highest standards both personally and professionally. In his private life he adheres to a very stringent code of ethics; however he is intelligent enough to recognize human frailties in others.74

Collaborative quotient. “He is an organizer and a leader as well as a chaplain. On several occasions he has been called upon to arrange for theater level religious conclaves and conferences for large groups. He has always done a fine job with this.”75

During this ministry assignment Chaplain Wright requested to remain on active duty after his current obligated tour which would have expired on August 31, 1963. This

retention would be for an indefinite time and could include additional special training, schooling and deployment overseas. This request included the recommendation of approval from Col. Ira A. Palm who said “Chaplain Wright has demonstrated a degree of professionalism seldom found in a person of his rank and experience. He is the most outstanding chaplain, of his rank, that I know in the service today.” In a letter dated October 24, 1963 to Chaplain Charles E. Brown at the Chief of Chaplains office, Col. Ira Palm recommends Chaplain Wright for a Regular Army commission stating:

Chaplain Wright played an important role in the combat realistic training of the battle group in spiritually and mentally preparing the command for the missions at hand. His counseling of the men, his many services in various locations in the field and his personal life as a chaplain and soldier held the respect of the entire command.

This one paragraph gives clear expression to the kind of leadership that Chaplain Wright was developing during this ministry assignment process. The pastoral leadership expressions of vision, discipline, zeal and loyalty were present. The unique aspects of chaplaincy included counseling, general welfare and non-building centered ministry. Finally, these were combined under the dual role Chaplain Wright held as chaplain and soldier. He was leading as a warrior shepherd. His service was recognized by approval of his request for retention on active duty. It was also recognized by Chaplain Wright’s promotion to the rank of Captain in June of 1962.

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78 J.C. Lambert to James E. Wright, June 30 1962, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.
For his service during this time Chaplain Wright was awarded the Army
Commendation Medal on October 10, 1964 for meritorious service from August 7, 1961
to July 30, 1964. The citation for the award states in part,

he discharged his duties with a sensitive concern for the individual and a studied
overview of the Battalion’s mission. His counsel and guidance provided comfort
to the man in the field and actively raised the morale and esprit of the Battalion as
a whole.

79 Department of the Army, Army Commendation Medal Award Certificate, October 10, 1964,
Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.

80 Citation: Army Commendation Medal, October 10,1964, Official Military Personnel File: James
E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.

81 Robert E. Blount, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, July 30, 1966, Official Military
Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.

82 Clinton S. Lyter, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, July 30, 1965, Official Military
Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.

Protestant Chaplain, Denver, Colorado: July 1964-July 1966

Chaplain Wright’s next post would move him in to a new ministry context serving
as a Protestant chaplain at Fitzsimons General Hospital in Denver, Colorado. This new
ministry assignment would further develop the ministry skills of Chaplain Wright as a
warrior shepherd:

Decision making. “Chaplain Wright can always be depended upon, irrespective of
the circumstances and unfailingly brings to his responsibility a cheery spirit. Tact, good
judgment and understanding characterize his daily actions.”

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Discipline. “He constantly strives for self-improvement as evidenced by off-duty
study. He has an unusual grasp of the technical aspects of his profession and is successful
in applying in a way that is productive of immediate results.”

82
Zeal. “The rated officer is without question morally above reproach and does unfailingly set before others the highest example of his profession.”\textsuperscript{83}

Counseling. “He is thoroughly dedicated to his profession and readily wins acceptance from all with whom he comes into contact. He is particularly effective in dealing with the problems of the psychiatrically ill.”\textsuperscript{84}

Chaplain Officer Career Course, Fort Hamilton, Brooklyn New York: July 1966-June 1967

The research did not include much information from this period. Chaplain Wright’s record noted that his training included 30 hours in pure counterinsurgency and 4.9 hours in subjects related to counterinsurgency.\textsuperscript{85} While information on the specific nature of this training was not located it was found that similar training today focuses on how chaplains can effectively help promote communication and understanding that can win the hearts and cooperation of the local populace.\textsuperscript{86} In October 1966 he was promoted to the rank of Major.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{83} Clinton S. Lyter, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, July 30, 1965.

\textsuperscript{84} Clinton S. Lyter, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, July 30, 1965.

\textsuperscript{85} Edward J. Sauders, Academic Record: James E. Wright, August 9, 1967, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.


\textsuperscript{87} Aaron S. Sadove to James E. Wright, October 26, 1966, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.
**Senior Chaplain, Fort Bragg, North Carolina: June 1967-September 1967**

Following his career officer training Chaplain Wright was posted to Fort Bragg, North Carolina to serve with the 6th Special Forces Group. Warrior shepherd leadership expressions observed during this time were:

*Shepherd with a warrior ethos.* “Maj. Wright instituted many programs which greatly enhanced the public image of the Special Forces Chaplain.”

*Decision making.* “The officer is adept at making proper decisions on religious subjects affecting this command and is willing to take charge of a given situation without prompting or supervision.”

*Vision.*

Major Wright was responsible for religious activities and counseling for approximately 1,400 officers and enlisted men. One of Maj. Wright’s many notable accomplishments was that of increasing the participation in chapel services and other religious services. He initiated programs and established activities which stimulated the interest of the personnel of this command.

*Non-building centered ministry.*

During the period covered by this report, this unit was involved in an extensive exercise which covered a several state area in the Western United States. During this exercise Maj. Wright unhesitatingly gave of his personal time and energies in order to visit all of the various sites and see the troops. This characteristic, along with his thorough knowledge of Special Forces requirements and operational techniques made this man an asset to this organization and a tribute to the Chaplain Corps.

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89 Maurice G. Bostwick, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, February 20, 1968.

90 Maurice G. Bostwick, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, February 20, 1968.

91 Maurice G. Bostwick, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, February 20, 1968.
Maj. Wright utilizes his junior chaplains and enlisted assistants with superior effectiveness and his ability to inspire his subordinates is apparent in everything they do. The officer continually strives to increase the services of the Chaplain’s office and during this period was instrumental in the establishment of many activities conducted under the auspices of the Protestant Men of the Chapel.  

Special Forces Officer Training, Fort Brag, North Carolina: September 1967-December 1967

The focus of this training was on internal defense/development which refers to activities that support a host nation’s internal defense and development strategy.  

Group Chaplain, Fort Bragg, North Carolina: January 1968 – August 1968

Chaplain Wright would continue to prepare for service in Vietnam as he trained with the 3rd Special Forces group. Warrior shepherd leadership expressions from this time frame include:

**Call.** “His performance during the nearly eight months in which I have observed him indicate that he is well suited to his calling and can be expected to perform most effectively as a ‘pastor’ rather than a staff chaplain.”

**Courage/courageous character.** “The unusually energetic manner he has employed to develop a close relationship with Group personnel. He has been very active

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93 W.V. Turner, Academic Record: James E. Wright, January 3, 1968, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.

94 John P Arntz, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, August 27, 1968, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.
in participating in all possible field training and operations activities regardless of hardship or hazard.”

An example of this was his participation in parachute training. During one of those jumps the first chute failed to deploy properly and the backup chute also did not properly deploy. As the ground was rushing up Chaplain Wright reports saying simply, “Not like this God, not like this.” He landed in a large forested area and his chute caught in the trees breaking his fall. Chaplain Wright remembered one of his fellow soldiers commenting that he must have had someone looking out for him. The remarks section of his jump book says simply “in trees.” This continues the destiny pattern that began at Iwo Jima because it was a destiny confirmation process item. This confirmation process involves incidents that give an unusual sense of God’s presence working in the leader and through providential circumstances that confirm a future destiny. In this case these events convey the sense that God had again intervened because he had a larger plan for Chaplain Wright.


Part of growth ministry processing is expanding of the leader’s sphere of influence. Clinton has identified three measures for expanding influence. Influence can be measured in extensiveness which refers to quantity, comprehensiveness which refers to the breadth of things influenced and intensiveness which is the depth that influence

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95 John P Arntz, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, August 27, 1968.
96 Wright, interview.
97 Wright, interview.
98 Clinton, 220.
extends. Chaplain Wright’s time in Vietnam was marked by the expansion of both his direct influence by his presence with the soldiers and his organizational influence through his interaction with the command structure. His commanders made many comments that reflect Chaplain Wright’s expanding influence as a warrior shepherd:

Shepherd with a warrior ethos. “He is a dedicated Man of God and also a professional soldier; wherein others may have difficulty in this respect, both professions are quite compatible in this man’s makeup.”

Courage. “Chaplain Wright and the battalion chaplains under his supervision have never hesitated to make frequent visits to the troops at Fire Support bases and on combat operations.”

Chaplain Wright’s courage was appreciated and recognized by his commanders. During this period the brigade was very heavily engaged in combat operations and Major Wright with complete disregard for his own personal safety and welfare assured that the troops constantly received the spiritual guidance and religious services essential to them.

One of those moments was when an American soldier secured himself in the supply room of Battery B, 2nd Battalion, 319th Artillery with an M-16 rifle and threatened to use it against anyone who tried to dislodge him. At which time,

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99 Clinton, 227.
100 Clinton, 228.
104 M.H. Murley, Award of the Soldiers Medal: James E. Wright, April 12, 1969, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.
Chaplain Wright, ‘with complete disregard for his own safety, went into the supply room, calmed the soldier and persuaded him to give himself up. Through Chaplain Wright’s courage the soldier was prevented from committing any serious crime and possibly prevented the injury or death of persons attempting to disarm the soldier. Chaplain Wright’s personal bravery and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect credit upon himself, his unit and the United States Army.’105

In recognition of these actions Chaplain Wright was awarded the Soldiers Medal. In addition to the Soldiers Medal, Chaplain Wright was also awarded the Air Medal (First Oak Leaf Cluster) which was awarded to individuals for sustained distinction in the performance of duties involving regular and frequent participation in aerial flight operations.106 He also received the Bronze Star Medal (First Oak Leaf Cluster) which was awarded to individuals who, while serving in the United States Armed Forces in a combat theater, distinguish themselves by heroism, outstanding achievement or by meritorious service not involving aerial flight.107

*Loyalty:* “He definitely has a positive influence on all personnel he contacts. His prior front line experience as a Marine greatly assists him in gaining rapport with our troopers.”108

Chaplain Wright knows the duties and responsibilities of a Chaplain in combat and accomplishes them. He understands the individual soldier and how to communicate with them. Chaplain Wright is the most dedicated Chaplain I have encountered to date and I would seek him as the Chaplain for any organization to which assigned.109

105 M.H. Murley, Award of the Bronze Star Medal: James E. Wright, June 22, 1969, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office

106 L.M. Lowery, Award of the Air Medal: James E. Wright, March 17, 1969, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.

107 M.H. Murley, Award of the Soldiers Medal: James E. Wright, April 12, 1969.


“Chaplain Wright is one of the most outstanding Chaplains that I have ever served with. He is a great asset to any unit and I would fight to serve with him again.”¹¹⁰

*General welfare.* “In both his personal efforts as a chaplain and in his supervisory capacity as the Brigade Chaplain he has made significant contributions to the morale and welfare of the troops and the overall combat effectiveness of the brigade.”¹¹¹

*Humanitarian work.* “Additionally his charitable activities in the local VN communities made a major contribution to the furtherance of US-VN relations and winning the minds and hearts of the VN people.”¹¹²

“Major Wright worked very closely with his Vietnamese counter parts in the local villages and greatly assisted the civil affairs effort by providing excess food and scrap lumber to the various schools, orphanages and churches within the Brigade area of operations.”¹¹³

*Dynamic determinism.* “Despite extreme personnel turbulence and widely dispersed combat operations Chaplain Wright has been able to work effectively for the improvement of the operational capability of the brigade.”¹¹⁴

“Major Wright performed the duties of Brigade Chaplain during a combat environment in an outstanding manner. In addition to providing religious services for

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¹¹⁰ John J. Hennessey, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, October 14, 1969, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.


several units located at Camp Evans, he spent numerous hours visiting units and troops in the field.\textsuperscript{115}

“An outstanding infantry brigade chaplain whose understanding, compassion and deep attachment for the men of this brigade contributed much for its success. He was the type of combat chaplain who was everywhere at once, was there with the ones who needed him the most and his energy, sincerity and conscientiousness knew no bounds.”\textsuperscript{116}


Upon returning from Vietnam Chaplain Wright was assigned to Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn, New York. While at Fort Hamilton he also provided chapel services at Fort Wadsworth and Fort Totten which were also located in the New York City area. This ministry assignment would allow the opportunity for further training and for participating in some civilian activities. It would continue the expansion of Chaplain Wright’s leadership and allowed for further warrior shepherd leadership expressions:

\textit{Shepherd with a warrior ethos.} “Chaplain (Major) Wright is one of the finest chaplains I know. He has assumed his role as chaplain, soldier and citizen at Fort Wadsworth in an outstanding manner and I would fight to get Chaplain Wright to serve with me at any time\textsuperscript{117}

\textit{Discipline.}

Chaplain Wright is assigned to a position wherein a lesser Chaplain might be satisfied with the attainment of only minimal requirements and would find no

\textsuperscript{115} James C. Smith., Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, June 14, 1969.

\textsuperscript{116} James C. Smith., Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, June 14, 1969.

\textsuperscript{117} Walter M. Higgins Jr., Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, August 24, 1970, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.
great challenge or difficulty. However, CH Wright’s incessant drive for excellence does not permit him to take the easier, self-serving course of action.  

**Loyalty.** “Major Wright is loved and respected by the youth of the Post because of his interest, enthusiasm and devotion to the Youth Program.”

**Vision.** In a letter dated April 12, 1972 to the commanding officer at Fort Hamilton, Brigadier General Louis Schelter writes to call attention to the ministry of Chaplain Wright. He says,

> Since he assumed the duties of Protestant Chaplain at Fort Totten in August 1971 there has been marked improvement in religious services and chapel activities. Attendance at Sunday services has increased, a large children’s choir organized and Ladies Bible Group formed. In addition, Chaplain Wright has assisted the Teen Club, Little League Baseball and taken Post children on three religious retreats.

In another letter dated May 24, 1972 Col. William Bost the commander at Fort Totten writes to the commander at Fort Hamilton:

> I am sure you are aware that when Chaplain Wright learned of the need for leadership and direction in our community, youth and religious activities he volunteered to fit regular chapel services at Fort Totten into his already crowded schedule as Chaplain at Fort Wadsworth. His dedication and experience has been an inspiration to all of us and his enthusiasm in the Lord’s service has challenged each of us to greater efforts.

**Counseling.** One area of counseling that is unique to the chaplaincy is working with individuals claiming Conscientious Objector status. As part of his duties at Fort Hamilton, Chaplain Wright was responsible for conducting counseling interviews to determine the sincerity of the applicant’s conscientious objection. His files contained the

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records of two servicemen affirming what he had determined to be their sincere objections to war.\textsuperscript{120}

\textit{General welfare.} “His interests vary from arrangements for seasonal musicals to coaching of an active basketball team for the chapel youth. He represents the command in the American Legion’s ‘Back to God’ movement and chairs the Command’s Playground Commission.”\textsuperscript{121}

\textit{Humanitarian work} “His burning interests in contemporary social issues resulted in very active participation in the local Clemency and Narcotics Board which enriched his contributions to the Post Teen Club.”\textsuperscript{122}

“He ably represents the Army to the civilian community by serving as a guest speaker or conducting frequent services for local pastors. These activities have elicited favorable comment and enhanced the image of the Army.”\textsuperscript{123}

\textit{Dynamic determinism.} “He knows no limits when asked to help any person in need. The scope of his duties has included ministering to all military services, i.e. Air Force, Navy, Marine, Coast Guard, Reserves and National Guard forces, as well as Army.”\textsuperscript{124}

\textit{Intellectual flex-ability.} “His untiring efforts, exemplary achievements and his intelligent resourceful application of diverse requirements in the New York area and the

\textsuperscript{120} James E. Wright to Commanding Officer Fort Wadsworth, September 30, 1970.
\textsuperscript{121} Thomas L. Merrick., Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, May 7, 1971.
\textsuperscript{122} Thomas L. Merrick., Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, May 7, 1971.
\textsuperscript{123} Thomas L. Merrick., Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, May 7, 1971.
\textsuperscript{124} Thomas L. Merrick., Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, May 16, 1972.
repeated challenges are inspirational and an excellent witness to his calling and the fine traditions of the military.”¹²⁵

“He takes every opportunity to better himself educationally and to advance his academic status.”¹²⁶ This is reflected in that during his time at Fort Hamilton Chaplain Wright completed a Master’s Degree in Counseling from New York Theological Seminary.

*Collaborative quotient.* “The officer’s concern for his subordinates is genuine but occasionally his kind nature causes him to be less strict and demanding in his supervision than is desirable.”¹²⁷

**Post Chaplain, 7th Army Training Center, Grafenwohr, Germany May 1973- November 1975**

In May 1973 Chaplain Wright was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel and assigned to serve as the Post Chaplain at the 7th Army Training Center in Grafenwohr, Germany. Warrior shepherd leadership expressions that were commented on by his reviewers included:

*Call.*

Chaplain Wright’s manner has consistently been outstanding in every aspect. He kept me fully informed on life support problems which enabled me to make practical decisions and thereby greatly enhancing the quality of life within this community. Chaplain Wright is an outstanding individual and the most outstanding Chaplain I have known in over 30 years of service.¹²⁸


Discipline. Chaplain Wright is “an officer who subordinates personal desires to meet the demands of the job. A forward thinker and consistent performer.”

Vision.

Under his supervision a number of new innovations in post religious programs were successfully implemented. These included working retreats for the youth serviceman and his dependents; church sponsored folksmarches, activities designed to involve the youth of the community and other functions such as covered dish suppers and special religious programs designed to increase community awareness.

Counseling. “His counseling in family problems has been in a positive vein and has been very effective.”

“He continues to be extremely effective in dealing with young single soldiers and non-command sponsored dependents. Chaplain Wright has been very effective in the family counseling program.”

Young adult ministry. Chaplain Wright was attuned to the needs of the young married soldier and his dependents. Chaplain Wright has established programs and activities which meet their special needs. His devotion and compassion for his fellow man have made him extremely effective in dealing with young single soldiers.

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129 John L Insani, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, July 8, 1974, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.


133 Clay T. Buckingham, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, December 17, 1975.
Emotional maturity. “A man of integrity, his performance of duty was marked by
devotion and compassion to his fellow man. Chaplain Wright is a man of great warmth
and dignity who lives his religion every day of his life.”

Collaborative quotient. Chaplain Wright “displayed managerial skills which
marked him as a professional capable of assuming broader responsibilities.”

“Chaplain Wright demonstrated outstanding leadership, managerial ability and
initiative in formulating, organizing and directing this installation’s religious
programs.”

Chaplain Wright is “a team player who sets the example by personal
involvement.”


This would be Chaplain Wright’s final military posting. Chaplain Wright was
promoted to the rank of Colonel in May 1978.

Call. Chaplain Wright is “a dedicated and professional chaplain whose services
the Army will surely miss upon retirement.”

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137 Clay T. Buckingham, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, December 17, 1975.
Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.
139 Stephen E. Niches, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, February 2, 1979, Official
Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.
“Chaplain Wright has been a true pastor. He completes 20 years of service marked by true professionalism and true dedication. He has been a model to all chaplains.”

*Decision making.* “Consistently uses good judgment in decision making.”

*Ecumenical ministry.* “Of special note was the outstanding way in which he performed as Project Officer for the visit of Cardinal Cooke to this installation.”

*Dynamic determinism.* “His earnest commitment to mission accomplishment is specifically indicative of his professional nature and reflects that quality of an exceptional man that is able to bring about significant improvements in all chaplaincy areas.”

*Intellectual flex-ability.* Chaplain Wright “ambitiously sought out all positive approaches to ministry and has been a vital instrument in the initiation and the promulgation of new and innovative approaches of service. He endeavors to broaden the scope of each chaplain’s response to people’s needs.”

“When given a mission, he considers all the alternatives before reaching a conclusion and then works within the system for economy of effort and efficiency of time.”

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Emotional maturity. “Chaplain Wright’s honesty, integrity and selfless dedication have inspired the confidence of all. He should be promoted immediately and considered for assignment as an installation chaplain.”

Collaborative quotient. “This officer contributed more than any other chaplain to the development of subordinates through his innovativeness, preciseness and thoroughness of planning and executing training programs.”

“He has coordinated the total staff in a highly effective manner, and has related well to each chaplain and commander. He has initiated and completed staff work in an extremely efficient manner.”

Upon Chaplain Wright’s retirement the following citation was placed in his performance record. It is an effective summary of the warrior shepherd leadership expressions highlighted throughout Chaplain Wright’s career as a chaplain.

Chaplain James E. Wright, Chaplain’s Corps, for exceptionally meritorious service during the period 15 October 1976 through 31 December 1978 while serving as Deputy Command Chaplain at Fort Carson, Colorado. Climaxing a long military career of distinguished service, he displayed unusually sound judgment in discharging his complex and exacting duties. He demonstrated on all occasions a thorough knowledge of his work, exceptional dependability and resoluteness of purpose. The professionalism he exhibited earned for him the respect and admiration of his supervisors and subordinates. His calm and efficient planning, combined with his cooperative manner were instrumental in the swift accomplishment of his varied duties. Through his outstanding accomplishments Chaplain Wright brought great credit upon himself, the Chaplain’s Corps and the United States Army.

149 Citation: James E. Wright, November 15, 1978, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.
Unique Ministry

The final section of the research looked at the churches Pastor Wright served after retiring from active duty. It included documents concerning the circumstances of his retirement, personal documents such as letters or news clippings that related to his ministry during this time and information from interviews with individuals active in the churches Pastor Wright served. As part of the research agreement their comments are to remain confidential. The participants will be identified as follows:

- Spearfish, South Dakota 1, 2, 3 etc. (SSD1)
- Scottsbluff, Nebraska Plymouth 1, 2, 3 etc. (SNEP1)
- Scottsbluff, Nebraska Salem 1, 2, 3 (SNES1)
- Columbus, Nebraska (CNE) – only one member was interviewed from this church.

Role Transition

In October 1977 Chaplain Wright was notified that he was eligible for retirement as of January 1, 1979. Various medical issues made Chaplain Wright unqualified for retention and he officially retired from active service on December 31, 1978.

Pastor, United Church of Christ, Spearfish, South Dakota January 1979 – 1981

On May 9, 2013 an interview was done with six individuals who were part of United Church of Christ, Spearfish during Pastor Wright’s ministry. Two of the

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150 Horace E. Jordan to James E. Wright, October 19, 1977, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.

151 Mary L. Wood to James E. Wright, October 11, 1978, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.
participants (SSD1 and SSD4) were identified as having been part of the search committee that called Pastor Wright. The others were members of the church during his ministry. The interview focused on what stood out about Pastor Wright’s ministry and any impact that they saw from his time in the military.

Ministry observations.

“I remember was that he was very open and visible. I can still remember Jim Wright walking around town and crossing the street. He was out there all the time.”152

“The church really grew under Jim. It was alive. I see things differently now than I used to and I don’t think it was a social thing, like some of the big churches today are a social club, so to speak.”153

“When Jim came it was like a breath of fresh air. He was teaching Scripture, and that really spoke to me and he led Wednesday night Bible studies, which was at the same time as choir, so I made a choice to leave the choir, so I could go to Bible study.”154

“That makes me think back to Bethany. She dearly loved Jim. She was going through some things and he would come take her out to get a Coke, so they could talk. He was so good with her.”155

“After he got here, they started the men’s Bible study on Saturday morning at Merlin’s place.”156

152 Interview with SSD1, May 9, 2013.
153 Interview with SSD1, May 9, 2013.
154 Interview with SSD2, May 9, 2013.
155 Interview with SSD2, May 9, 2013.
156 Interview with SSD3, May 9, 2013.
“The church was very visible to us. So we went and everyone was very friendly. We loved his teaching.”\(^{157}\)

Additional ministry observations were drawn from various letters of recommendation written for Pastor Wright during his time at Spearfish:

I believe that Jim’s strongest point is pastoral and I can speak from a very personal experience in this area. During a recent spiritual crisis and trauma in our family Pastor Jim was a constant source of strength and encouragement. Had it not been for his love and caring, his sound advice, his concern and prayers we would have surely departed from that church with very bitter feelings and an indifferent attitude towards organized Christianity.\(^{158}\)

His concern for the individual as well as the church body is genuine and deep. He has given full measure of his time to his work and has researched and brought into the church many who were unchurched. Especially noteworthy is the amount of time and success given to counseling members of the congregation as well as citizens of the community.\(^{159}\)

Rev. Wright has been in our community a little over a year and a half and we look up to him as a leader and person of high integrity and drive for improvement of both our church and the community. His office is always open for help and council.\(^{160}\)

The salient characteristics of this servant of God are found in his deep commitment to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and in the keen love he expresses to all. He is a shepherd and soul-winner, a fine preacher and teacher. It is my observation that such men as Jim Wright are, indeed, rare among the ranks of ministry today.\(^{161}\)

Since Jim came here to our church, attendance has gone from approximately 140 per Sunday to about 275. More importantly, however, is that our Bible studies have increased, as well as Sunday School, morning prayer breakfast, overall church fellowship and a more intimate involvement with the Word is evident.

\(^{157}\) Interview with SSD5, May 9, 2013.


\(^{159}\) Arthur W. Nelson, Letter of Recommendation (1981?).

\(^{160}\) Ronald B. Rosenau, Letter of Recommendation (1981?).

\(^{161}\) Robert John Nunes, Pastor, Letter of Recommendation (1981?).
Because of his counseling background, Jim spends hours working with hurting Christians in our church and many others from other congregations.\textsuperscript{162}

\textit{Military impacts.}

I don’t recall it [Pastor Wright having a military background] being a concern. What I do kind of recall was that he came from a Baptist background and that was a concern. He was an impressive candidate but frankly a lot of it was financial. Because Jim had a retirement. He had a military retirement and he had the PX and he had all that. He was affordable.\textsuperscript{163}

I remember our personal conversations about the military, both of us were in the Marines and we both saw a lot of death. We can totally understand each other. I talk very little about my military even to my own family. They may not even have heard what I’m saying now. Second Battalion, I was in on Okinawa had 82 percent casualties. That’s dead and wounded. If for no other reason for no other church or religious reason, we understood each other very, very well on account of our experience. It’s maybe that’s all I have say. Outside of that, I don’t know if I knew them all that well. But we could sure understand each other when it came to military when it came to combat.\textsuperscript{164}

He was a little bit military in our meetings. You had Jim coming into a very casual, lackadaisical church, so Jim kind of had to pull it together. As the men’s group got going it solidified a lot of men in the church. So Jim, he brought the church together. The biggest thing I saw from his military chaplaincy was discipline. I think it showed in his worship service. He ran a very structured service, which I think was a good thing. Worship to him was worship.\textsuperscript{165}

What I do remember and this may be his military, what I know is that you spend 20 years doing something and it stays with you. So if you learn all these leadership skills in the military which he did being a chaplain. That’s part of his persona. And that’s not going to change coming in and being a pastor. So he brought those leadership skills with him. Think that may be part of what we wanted in him. We wanted leadership skills and strong ones.\textsuperscript{166}

Not all responses to Pastor Wright’s military service were favorable. A letter from James E. Milord to Pastor Wright dated August 2, 1979 expressed that he was

\textsuperscript{162} Walt Cook, Letter of Recommendation (1981?).

\textsuperscript{163} Interview with SSD4, May 9, 2013.

\textsuperscript{164} Interview with SSD3, May 9, 2013.

\textsuperscript{165} Interview with SSD1, May 9, 2013.

\textsuperscript{166} Interview with SSD4, May 9, 2013.
horrified and saddened with Pastor Wright’s references to his military service. Milord concludes by stating, “I do wish to add that you are losing members of your congregation who for these very reasons—that you cannot get far from military allusions in your sermons to make your point—like myself are both hurt and dishonored by them.”

_Divorce._

During the two years Pastor Wright was at Spearfish he was divorced from his wife, Phyllis. At least some of the issues that caused this divorce were related to the transition out of the military and into civilian ministry. Much of the discussion at the Spearfish interview revolved around this issue. Several people declined to be interviewed because of lingering hurts caused by the divorce.

When the thing blew up Jim really opened up and talked. I don’t know why we were walking maybe we were just walking by the cabin. He said a lot of things and I will never forget that. That marriage was done before they came to Spearfish. What we saw, what we see now was a man who did not want to be home. That’s why you saw him everywhere. That’s why he was in the office every day. So there were a lot of things going on. I never put together until that walk. Not that what he did was right. I’m not condoning it but there is a lot of story there. That’s why he worked so hard to build that church, and it did grow.167

In December 1992 Pastor Wright as part of his application for transfer of ordination to the Conservative Congregational Christian Conference (CCCC) had to provide his explanation for the circumstances of his divorce. He writes,

I spent 20 years in the military as a Chaplain. During that time my previous partner was not involved with any aspects of my ministry. This was due to her residing off post and long term separations.

After retiring and accepting a civilian pastorate, she could not accept the role of a pastor’s wife. She became angry with my responsibility as pastor of a church. This attitude and anger was manifested toward members of our congregation.

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167 Interview with SSD1, May 9, 2013.
After a length of time and much psychiatric counseling for her emotional condition, she gave me the alternative of my ministry or my marriage. After conferring with our children, they felt my first responsibility was to God and to the ministry to which He had called me. Therefore, the marriage was terminated.

The forces that ended Pastor Wright’s nearly 40 year marriage are what Clinton would classify as a flesh act process item. This is described as instances where “guidance is presumed and decisions are made either hastily or without proper discernment.”

While the periods of separation can certainly be blamed for some of the situation, it was not entirely true that Phyllis had nothing to do with his ministry in the military. One supervisor commented, “He is ably assisted in his work by his wife who is also well liked and respected by all. Both Chaplain Wright and Mrs. Wright show great interest in and participate in all functions and activities of the Battle Group.” The ending of his marriage appears traceable to a combination of an extremely strong sense of call and a lack of balance in combining the roles of shepherd and warrior. His understanding of his destiny pattern created by his awareness of repeated divine interventions could not allow the possibility of life apart from ministry. The strong commitment to do whatever was necessary to complete the mission that was so admired by supervisors in the military was at the same time doing irreparable damage to his marriage. Unfortunately Mrs. Phyllis Wright was unavailable to participate in this research.

Negative process items will sometimes spur positive growth by creating discontent with present circumstances. The result of this process item was more detrimental in nature. Pastor Wright’s divorce would remove him from consideration for many churches, thus limiting the scope of what his future ministry would be. He would


never again have the same sphere of influence he had achieved in the military. It would also have consequences in his family: he would in the years that followed seek forgiveness from his wife and family.

Convergence

The final sub-phase of the ministry time line is convergence. This is defined as being moved by God into a role which matches the leader’s giftedness set and experiences so that ministry is maximized.\textsuperscript{170} It is noted that many leaders do not actually experience this.\textsuperscript{171} In Pastor Wright’s case it was difficult to make a definitive statement regarding convergence. It was clear that following his retirement and divorce his sphere of influence was decidedly less extensive and less comprehensive. The research was also clear that his influence was still very intensive for the congregations he served. God did continue to move Pastor Wright into roles where he was able to use his giftedness and experience for a maximum ministry impact with those he served so in that sense he did realize a measure of convergence.

Pastor, United Church of Christ, Scottsbluff, Nebraska July 1981-1985

On May 5, 1991 James Wright was married to Dawn Phillips. Dawn was also divorced and had two children (Brian and Sarah) from a previous marriage. This is the researcher’s personal connection to the life story being presented. Pastor Wright was the researcher’s step-father. Pastor Wright and his family moved to Scottsbluff, Nebraska where he became the pastor at Plymouth Congregational Church.

\textsuperscript{170} Clinton, 316.

\textsuperscript{171} Clinton, 316.
On May 11, 2013 interviews were done with four individuals who had been part of Plymouth during Pastor Wright’s ministry. SNEP 1 was part of the search committee that called Pastor Wright.

Ministry observations.

We spent a lot of time with him, we used to have coffee not quite every day. We would meet Jim down at the coffee shop and we would meet a lot of people there while we were there too and he got acquainted with other people who came in for coffee. So he was reaching out to other people he got to know. He was easy to get along with. Everybody liked him.”172 “He built the church while he was here. We built membership. I wish the good Lord would tell me how he did it because, I don’t know. He made friends real easy, and everybody liked him.”173 “He was a wonderful minister.”174

The thing I remember about it was that there was just a different energy in the church with new people coming in and the ones that were there, sometimes when you are at one place too long, like teachers, you kind of get in a rut and you want something to get you out of that rut. It didn’t seem that we were in a rut, that there was something new going on all the time.175

His interaction was good and I am pretty sure he saw everybody in the church in their home. He was that kind of minister. I remember the dinners. He got people together and talking outside of church. They were jammed in that house. I don’t think anybody else has done that.176

I liked his sermons. His sermons were real biblically based and I like the fact not that he had it memorized but that, well we have had different ministers and he was always prepared, always prepared. You know some ministers you have always shuffling around papers, never prepared but Jim was always prepared, he thought

172 Interview with SNEP1, May 11, 2013.
173 Interview with SNEP1, May 11, 2013.
174 Interview with SNEP2, May 11, 2013.
175 Interview with SNEP3, May 11, 2013.
176 Interview with SNEP3, May 11, 2013.
those sermons out and that was one thing I like too. I can’t think of anything else right now.\footnote{Interview with SNEP4, May 11, 2013.}

I remember that Jim would always, when we had work days, that Jim was always there. We would have work days or clean up days, Jim was probably the first one there. Not comparing him but some pastors don’t even come, or they just stand around and don’t do anything.\footnote{Interview with SNEP4, May 11, 2013.}

“Jim was really involved (in the community) and a lot of pastors don’t seem to do that but I think they should. Jim was really involved. I had forgotten about that, he was in Rotary. So I think Jim was really involved in the community.”\footnote{Interview with SNEP4, May 11, 2013.}

\textit{Military impacts}

SNEP1 Identified that Pastor Wright’s military background was a factor in his call to Plymouth,

One way we got along was because we both had military background. Anyway we talked to him and he seemed to have some interest. I knew he wanted to leave where he was at, so we talked and we got along real well. We sort of spoke the same language.\footnote{Interview with SNEP1, May 11, 2013.}

“He had to have leadership traits because he got people to do things, I mean you know some people don’t want to do anything. All of a sudden people enjoyed what they were doing but he got others involved.”\footnote{Interview with SNEP3, May 11, 2013.}

Stories in his preaching intertwined with what he was doing in church. But it was not every time but just from time to time and I would remember that. But I never thought why does he keep talking about that, he didn’t overdo it, in my opinion. I could see Jim not dwelling so much on the military but it influenced his life I am sure it did. Some of the things you would run up against in the military were not
good. So I don’t know if we ever had a minister who had that background, it was different, it was nice.\textsuperscript{182}

Because I was also former military so we really hit it off. He had been a Colonel and I had been a Captain so we could talk about the military and stuff so we just really clicked. He was planned, I mean if you are in the military, he was an officer, you have to plan things out and you have to think things in advance so he always had things set up. You know he wasn’t shuffling around but he was really organized. That is another word I want to say he was real organized that is a way that military background came through. Good dresser, think that was from the military, he was really always a very sharp dresser and think that was from the military. I don’t think I ever saw him in a pair of jeans and he always wore a tie. I think that was part of that military background especially as an officer you had to dress appropriately.\textsuperscript{183}

What I remember that Jim used to do, how he used to recruit and want to use that word recruit, he would go around to restaurants and meet people. He was so outgoing, he would go out and meet people in the coffee shops and he would just go in and introduce himself to people and they would get to know them and they would just gravitate to him.\textsuperscript{184}

\textbf{Pastor, St. Luke’s Congregational Church, Columbus, Nebraska 1985-1988}

Pastor Wright’s first voluntary non-military transition was a move to Columbus Nebraska in 1985. Only one member from this church was interviewed.

\textit{Ministry Observations.}

We always enjoyed the hospitality them opening up their home and your mom’s homemade pies. And different social events at the house. And he always got a kick out of playing with the kids. The ability to stand up and provide a sermon without any notes. Very passionate about his beliefs and always a good fit, at least for me. Everyone always has different things they look for in a pastor but he fit well for me. He really related well to the older members. They appreciated his ability to know their names and to care about them and to minister to them.

What I remember is we meshed well as far as the leadership styles. He wanted active participation from the lay leadership which fit me because I wanted to make sure were part of developing that church. Very conservative in his approach

\textsuperscript{182} Interview with SNEP3, May 11, 2013.

\textsuperscript{183} Interview with SNEP4, May 11, 2013.

\textsuperscript{184} Interview with SNEP3, May 11, 2013.
in terms of not wanting to get tied into the social agendas and he wanted to increase the size of the church. I always felt he had a sense of frustration we didn’t grow faster but we did grow during that time. He was active in reaching out to the community not just sitting trying to take care of the little section of town but trying to reach out into the community.

He was a member of Rotary, I remember that now, because that was one of his requests regarding his reimbursement package. A lot more of his personal social circle was more outside the church. He made good friends. And as we talk I remember him doing a lot of counseling, he probably did as much counseling outside the church as he did within. There were a couple people he became good friends with from that. And a few that started coming to church.

He worked at getting a men’s prayer group together. I think we met on Saturday mornings 7:00 a.m. at Stack ‘N Steak. There were probably about a dozen that attended that. One of the books we went through it was based on the founding fathers and I can’t remember the name of the book itself but I probably still have it around some place. I remember a belief that to have a strong church you had to have a strong men’s program.\(^\text{185}\)

*Military impacts*

The only military impact raised in this interview was that when it came to those in the church who had served in the military, “I think they related better, I don’t mean that others did not relate but I think it helped them having someone who had that similar background and shared those experiences.”

**Pastor, Salem Congregational Church, Scottsbluff, Nebraska 1988-1992 and 1996-1998**

Pastor Wright’s next ministry assignment saw him return to Scottsbluff but to a different congregation. He served Salem for four years before retiring due to health issues. He would return to Salem to serve another two years as their interim pastor. On May 10 and 12, 2013 interviews were done with individuals who were part of Salem Congregational when Pastor Wright was there. Several were part of the church leadership

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\(^{185}\) Interview with CNE, May 13, 2013.
and SNES1 was part of the search committee that called Pastor Wright to Salem. Their comments are again divided into ministry observations and military impacts.

**Ministry observations.**

What I think of is we had so many problems with our kids being adopted and I would always talk to him. I don’t understand, we taught Sunday School, we went to church and yet they turned out like they did, into drugs and stuff like that. He always reassured us that it wasn’t anything we had done wrong as parents and that was so comforting because so many times I looked at ours and said what did we do wrong, where did we go wrong? What could we have done different as parents because our kids got into drugs and it was so reassuring and that was one thing you could talk to Rev. Wright about anything.186

He was about the only minister we ever had that could preach from the heart and not from a paper, you know not something written up. That was what really impressed me with Rev. Wright. I think he changed a lot of people’s lives because of that. You know our preachers before didn’t preach that you needed to be saved to enter into heaven but Pastor Wright did bring that out, he made a difference in a lot of people’s lives from that aspect.187

I know he did a lot of counseling. He observed a lot, he wasn’t the type who said this is the way it is going to be. There were a few visitors who came in who were pretty vocal from time to time but he never put them down. They tried to put him down but he never took offence to it. He was smooth as how he handled a situation where he wouldn’t degrade anybody and I thought it was pretty nice he was able to control a meeting like that without actually being dominant in the meeting.188

A couple related the following:

SNES3: He kind of saved our marriage. He came up to my office and he said “you know what you’re doing is wrong.” I said yeah. He said, “knock it off”. That was all.

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186 Interview with SNES1, May 10, 2013.

187 Interview with SNES1, May 10, 2013.

188 Interview with SNES2, May 10, 2013.
SNES 4: Then he hugged me and he said you have a marriage worth fighting for, fight for it, but if he doesn’t straighten up kick him out and I think that bothered my husband more than anything.\textsuperscript{189}

Your dad was a jewel. He was so kind and so soft spoken. My dad died and I took care of my mom she lived by herself until the last year and I was there for them. I still think of what your dad talked to me about which was just really awesome. He was such a kind and compassionate man and it was almost like he felt what I was going through. But I will never forget our visits it was awesome.\textsuperscript{190}

As part of an application for transfer of his ordination to the CCCC he had to submit an evaluation survey completed by six members of the congregation. It ranked his performance from one to five with one being always and five never. His evaluation was consistently high with a one or two in most categories. There were only three areas that received a one from all raters. Those areas were:

1. Makes pastoral calls
2. Responds with caring as counselor
3. Seeks to bring new members into the fellowship.\textsuperscript{191}

At the end each rater was asked to list Pastor Wright’s most important strengths. They were:

1. His total dedication to the ministry and to the needs of the people he serves. He is a counselor who is singular in excellence.
2. He is by far the most dedicated person to his Christian faith that I have ever met.
3. Faith in God, care in counseling, contacts in pastoral calls, seeking and bringing in new members, teaching.
4. Teaching God’s Word and spreading the Gospel to his pastorate
5. People love him.
6. Jim makes one aware of their relationship to God and how to grow even more into a closer, more spiritual walk with God.\textsuperscript{192}

\textsuperscript{189} Interview with SNES3 and SNES4, May 12, 2013.
\textsuperscript{190} Interview with SNES7, May 12, 2013.
\textsuperscript{191} James E. Wright, Personal Resume, January 25, 1993.
\textsuperscript{192} James E. Wright, Personal Resume, January 25, 1993.
Military impacts.

With regard to the search process “I don’t think it ever came up other than that he brought it up that he was military. I think it was more when we became friends that he talked about his being a military chaplain and being a green beret.”

He would talk, when he would talk about his time in the military like when he would parachute out and someone would be dying and he would minister to them that brought more of a caring, compassionate side to him with people who were suffering, the godly part, that you have this beautiful place to go to when you die might be the military part that would come out because I know he talked about ministering to people in the military.

That was how we connected. We were both in Vietnam at the same time, served at the same time although our paths never crossed. We served the same time over there in Vietnam. He served over there in ’68 and I served there in ’67-’68 but our paths never crossed. We were pretty close I think from what I gather but our paths never crossed. But that was how we connected. I think it did make a difference like with her dad because he was a WWII vet and he thought a lot of Pastor Wright. I think I say more from him with Pastor Wright than did with some of the others, I can remember a couple of the others.

I could tell your dad was a military guy in the way he did just about everything. We got him back here the second time that was great. Everybody that I knew was happy. Because military people are different, they think different, they do their work different, not that it is by a clock but it is in order. There has to be order in the way you do things. You can trust more so an ex-military guy, especially a pastor that has told you something, you can trust that, you can put your life on it. Organizational skills are great. Greater than someone who hasn’t been in the military. Because someone who hasn’t been in the military, some of the pastors I have worked with, whatever comes along, how it rises, then we’ll deal with it. No, you have to plan, you have things in order, its linear thinking. Because that is the way they have all been trained. So it was easy working with him, I enjoyed it.

He was all military, I mean there was no doubt. The way that he walked, the way that he talked, the way that he preached and there was that separation between a

193 Interview with SNES1, May 12, 2013.
194 Interview with SNES1, May 12, 2013.
195 Interview with SNES2, May 12, 2013.
196 Interview with SNES3, May 12, 2013.
pastor and a military man but you always knew what his background was. The military was there in the way he presented himself, in his punctuality, the way that he dressed, the way that he presented himself, the way that he walked, the military was always, always there. He loved his military, he loved his country and he loved his God too. He loved one as much as he loved the other but there was that division and you knew what that was. He walked tall. He walked proud. I could tell he would be the officer that I would follow and unfortunately I didn’t have that all the time in my career. I had these officers that were 90 day wonders, they would go to school and come out and think that they were officers. Your dad was the true officer. I would follow him wherever he needed to go. As a pastor he was always there for us and I don’t mean just our family but for any family. \(^{197}\)

“Retirement” Valley City, North Dakota 1998-2006

Pastor Wright left full time ministry in 1998 but he continued to serve as a pastor. During his previous retirement he served two small rural congregations in Pillsbury and Colgate, North Dakota. This time he served a rural congregation in New Rockford, North Dakota. In March 2001 James suffered a stroke on the way to speak in New Rockford. Though he would never again be regularly active in church ministry the warrior shepherd ethos persisted. Later in 2001 as operation Iraqi Freedom began he commented to the researcher that perhaps he should call the Army and see if they could use him. He could work at a desk somewhere and that would free up someone else to go. He also still took opportunities to teach and preach. He spoke a few times for chapel services at the nursing home where he was a resident. His final sermon in a church was on July 4, 2004 at the Mott Evangelical Community Church where the researcher was the pastor. He spoke about Iwo Jima and how God had watched over him and how God had continued to watch over him and would watch over us. James E. Wright died in December 2006, a warrior shepherd to the end.

\(^{197}\) Interview with SNES5, May 12, 2013.
CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS

The findings of interpretive biographical research are typically presented in one of three interpretive formats. Those formats are: from the subject’s point of view, subject produced autobiographies and making sense of an individual’s life.¹ This research used the “making sense of an individual’s life” format. It is the process of reading the field texts while asking questions of meaning and significance.² For this research that required reading all of the field texts that were collected in the research while asking the question, “What aspects of Pastor Wright’s civilian ministry were related to his service as a military chaplain?” This accomplishes the narrative study objective of reporting the themes that build from the story.³ This reading and analysis included two parts. First, the data concerning Chaplain Wright’s transition into civilian ministry was compared to Porter’s research on the transition from military chaplain to civilian pastor. Second, while taking into account information from the related research section the data from the Growth Ministry phase was compared with data from the Unique Ministry phase of leadership emergence. This comparison identified which of the warrior shepherd leadership expressions from the Growth Phase were also most prominent in the Unique

Ministry phase and whether that expression had a positive or negative effect on the civilian ministry of Pastor Wright. Because these findings are looking back from his time as pastor to his time as chaplain and for the sake of consistency the references in this chapter will all be to Pastor Wright instead of alternating between pastor and chaplain when referring to civilian or military service.

**Transition Process**

Pastor Wright’s transition from military chaplain to civilian pastor appears to be consistent with the findings of Porter’s research of other military chaplain to civilian pastor transitions from the same era. Pastor Wright did encounter at least some resistance on the part of civilian leadership. This is supported by interview comments that Pastor Wright was military in meetings and especially by the critical comments from James Milord’s letter to Pastor Wright. Pastor Wright did have a position waiting for him when he left the military as he moved directly from the chaplaincy to serving as the pastor for the United Church of Christ in Spearfish, South Dakota. That this transition was not aided by his endorsing agency, the American Baptist Church, is reflected in the fact that he took a pastoral position in an entirely different denomination. The responsibilities he had as a civilian pastor were not beyond his capabilities and were certainly less than what he had experienced as a military chaplain. Serving a church of 275 is much different than being the Post Chaplain for a large military installation. The many positive comments about Pastor Wright’s ministry would also indicate that his transition to civilian pastor was easy in relation to performance.
Positive Effects

Pastor Wright’s service as a military chaplain positively impacted his ministry as a civilian pastor in many ways. These effects were seen by comparing the data from the research interviews with the data from Pastor Wright’s military record.

Warrior Shepherd

Just as his prior military service as a Marine helped Pastor Wright relate to the soldiers he worked with, his military service also had a direct impact upon the way in which he related to other veterans in his congregation. Ten of his military reviews made comments about his ability to blend the role of officer and pastor. Those who did reviews during his combat service especially noted his ability to connect with the soldiers he served and related this to his previous military service. Similarly this ability to connect with veterans was noted by individuals in all four church’s studies. Three of the four interview sets included veterans who had been in the church during Pastor Wright’s ministry and they all shared similar comments. They all felt a special connection to Pastor Wright because of their shared service.

Discipline

Having discipline was described as being organized, diligent, personally fit and willing to do the unpleasant. Twenty-two of the officers who reviewed Pastor Wright’s military performance used comments like professional, exemplary, polished, proficient, high standards and driven for excellence to describe the work of Pastor Wright while he was a chaplain. This same discipline carried over to his work as a civilian pastor as was noted by many of those interviewed. Six of the eighteen commented on various aspects of
discipline in Pastor Wright’s ministry. For one discipline was noted in the way he ran a very structured worship service. For others it was in his organization and planning. It was also prominent in comments about his dress, his punctuality and his overall demeanor.

Vision

Leaders with vision are “people who have seen more and farther than others—persons of faith, for faith is vision.” On ten occasions in their reviews officers commented on Pastor Wright’s ability to innovate, initiate and move programs forward. Similar comments were made by interview subjects from all four churches studied. Pastor Wright’s ministry was described as bringing fresh air and new energy to the churches. Especially noted was his vision for teaching the Word and reaching men. Comments often related his commitment to reaching men to his service in the military.

Counseling

Counseling has been a primary feature of the chaplaincy throughout its history. This was also the case for Pastor Wright during his military service. Fifteen of his reviewers specifically mentioned his role as counselor or advisor. This was also a common reflection in the church interviews that were done. Eight of those interviewed made comments regarding the way individuals were personally impacted by Pastor Wright as a counselor. Other comments reflected on the amount of time Pastor Wright gave to counseling members of the congregation and to the community at large.

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Loyalty, Non-Building Centered Ministry and General Welfare

While distinct categories for the purpose of observation, these three elements blended both during Pastor Wright’s military service and in his civilian ministries. Fourteen times Pastor Wright’s military reviews cite his dedication to visit soldiers. Six other times review comments note Pastor Wright’s community involvement and concern for the broader welfare of the soldiers, their dependents and even the surrounding civilian communities. This dedication is repeatedly connected to the affection and loyalty that it generated among those he served. Likewise, individuals from all four churches studied made comments about Pastor Wright’s pattern of being with people. This took several forms. Individuals from three of the churches studied commented on how Pastor Wright was consistently meeting with church members in public places where he had opportunity to interact with people outside the church. In one case this was even intentionally referred to as “recruiting.” Individuals from all the churches also commented on Pastor Wright’s ability to connect with those inside the church. All of those interviewed from the churches he served after his remarriage commented on their memories of being invited to Pastor Wright’s home. They also commented on his commitment to visit members of the church. Finally, in three of the interview sets there were comments shared about his community involvement. Specifically, he was part of the Rotary Club. It was quite striking to hear the warmth and affection with which these memories were shared. Pastor Wright himself pointed to this impact of the military on his ministry. When asked in an interview what impact the military had, one of his answers was to say, “Pastors can be out of touch with life [more] than a chaplain. I was more effective as pastor/chaplain than I would have been as a pastor.”
**Collaborative Quotient**

The final major effect of Pastor Wright’s military service was his ability to work with others. Ten of the performance reviews specifically cited Pastor Wright’s ability to work with or to supervise others well. A typical comment being that he was “a team player.” Individuals from the churches studied also commented on this with observations that he was not “domineering” in meetings and that he wanted active participation from leadership. Most often those interviewed simply cited that he was a leader or had great leadership skills. This is an interesting finding because it is contrary to what might be the normal conclusion that someone with a military background would have a difficult time working with volunteers as opposed to subordinates who had to follow orders.

**Negative Effects**

**Family**

Any discussion of the negative findings of this research has to begin with impact on Pastor Wright’s family and specifically with the divorce that occurred shortly after he left the military. Reading the military performance review comments it is clear that Pastor Wright was deeply driven in his service. A quick survey of reviewers’ comments highlights this reality:

- “a chaplain’s chaplain with no concern for time spent in ministry”
- “an officer who subordinates personal desires to meet the demands of the job”
- “gave unsparingly of his time and energy”

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6 John L. Insani, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, July 8, 1974, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.

7 Clay T. Buckingham, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, June 19, 1975, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.
“willingly expends himself beyond the normal requirements of his position”8
“involved himself in an extraordinary number of activities”9
“always available and where needed”10
“the type of combat chaplain who was everywhere at once”11
“numerous hours visiting units”12
“I know that he seldom gets an uninterrupted night’s sleep”13
“He works long hours willingly”14

In describing the zeal of the warrior shepherd it was noted that warrior shepherds see those in need of saving and are committed to act. It was also noted in the biblical reflection section that when one of these expressions becomes unbalanced the results could be very negative. The research strongly suggests that the single-mindedness that made Pastor Wright so well suited to military service had the negative impact of damaging his marriage and ultimately limited his civilian ministry. This is hardly unique among those who serve in ministry but in this case it was distinctly fueled by the combination of family, work ethic, the intense destiny experience of Iwo Jima and the nature of the military environment. This finding is consistent with the researcher’s own experience of Pastor Wright who consistently sacrificed time with family to meet ministry demands.

9 Thomas L. Merrick, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, May 16, 1972, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.
11 John J. Hennessy, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, October 14, 1969, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.
14 Grady O. White, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright December 16, 1960, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.
Ministry Opposition

While the interviews failed to identify any direct opposition to Pastor Wright’s previous military experience such opposition did exist. The clearest evidence for this finding is a letter dated August 2, 1979 from James E. Milord to Pastor Wright. Milord was a visitor to the church in Spearfish and after hearing Pastor Wright preach wrote to express,

What feelings I came away with and the dismay my daughter felt over your sermon. This was her first encounter with a minister who openly talked of his connection with the Vietnam War and with the infamous (and internationally-known for their viciousness) Green Beret units. Like myself she was horrified to say the least and I was saddened with your references to the military, as if it had some kind of enshrinement about it, a God-is-on-our-sidedness that we both thought had died a long time ago.

He ends the letter with reference to losing members of the congregation as a result of Pastor Wright’s military references. It is reasonable to extrapolate from this that other members in the church at times did have issues with Pastor Wright’s military background. It is also interesting that this letter was saved in a file that included many other personal letters of a much more positive nature. The letter must have had some significant impact upon Pastor Wright for it to have been retained in this manner. It was at the least a reminder that while his service as a chaplain allowed Pastor Wright to connect effectively with the veterans in his congregations his service was also a source of resistance and criticism from others.

Mobility

Mobility is a well-documented feature of military service and Pastor Wright’s service as a chaplain saw its share of mobility. He was assigned to eleven different
postings over 18 years of active duty service that ranged geographically from Vietnam to New York to Germany. Like many who have lived with that kind of constant change, Pastor Wright continued to move frequently as a civilian pastor. He would move another nine times after leaving the military. Three of the churches studied experienced unusual transition processes that seem to have been impacted by Pastor Wright’s military background. Those interviewed from Plymouth Congregational Church in Scottsbluff, Nebraska commented on Pastor Wright’s abrupt announcement of his departure. This appears more consistent with a military chaplain announcing new orders to a congregation than a pastor sharing news of a new call with his church. The interview with a search committee member from Columbus, Nebraska describes how this situation was further complicated by the presence of a new family that was not accustomed to the mobility of the military. The result was the acceptance of a call to Columbus followed by the refusal of that call followed by a renewed call and acceptance of that call. In another instance Pastor Wright served the same church at two different times. This is the only case the researcher is aware of where a pastor served the same church twice. However, in the military it is not uncommon to be posted multiple times to the same location. Such was the case for Pastor Wright when he was twice posted to Ft. Hamilton and twice posted to bases in Germany. Interviews with members from Salem included comments on the presence of some resistance to having Pastor Wright return to ministry there. While the negative impacts of his mobility were not major they did present extra challenges to Pastor Wright’s churches and family.
Call and Destiny

There is one additional finding which is outside of the transition from military chaplain to civilian pastor but which strongly influenced both of those aspects of Pastor Wright’s life. This finding relates to the dominate role of his experience on Iwo Jima in shaping all of his life from that time forward. A common feature of the warrior shepherd is the sense of calling or being set apart for a purpose. For Pastor Wright that sense of being set apart was forged through a powerful destiny experience. He was pinned down on the water’s edge and when he finally was able to move it was to a shell crater where he saw a friend killed. He would end up lost and alone behind enemy lines before finally being shot in the leg and removed from combat as the only one of his unit to survive the invasion. He saw this as God’s direct intervention to spare him for the purpose of ministry and committed himself to that course. Every bit of Pastor Wright’s life and ministry from that time forward was touched and influenced by his sense of call and destiny. His training, his dedication, his care for soldiers, his total inability to consider quitting and his passionate preaching of the gospel message are rooted in Pastor Wright’s conviction that God spared him for a purpose and that he was engaged in that work. Pastors often speak of the Christian’s call to serve as being grounded in gratitude for the saving work of Christ. For Pastor Wright this was far more than a spiritual truth to be believed it was the very experience he had lived.
CHAPTER SIX: EVALUATION AND DISCUSSION

Evaluation

Strengths of the Project Design

The greatest strength of the project is the story that it tells. Narrative study has as a major goal to be able to tell a compelling story about a significant issue related to an individual’s life. Pastor Wright’s story is one worth telling. The many personal and official documents reviewed provided substantial details regarding how God developed him over a lifetime in order to fulfill God’s purposes for him. It is a story that shared some themes with the stories of other leaders and the use of Clinton’s leadership emergence theory allowed those themes to be seen. However, it is not the common themes that make this a compelling story but the specific details of how God moved and Pastor Wright responded. The promise of a scared teenager in the midst of one of our nation’s fiercest battles became the driving passion for a ministry that God used to touch and change the lives of many. It is not a story of perfection or of glory. It is a description of the formative incidents which shaped Pastor Wright as a warrior shepherd and how those experiences impacted his life and ministry. It is a story that allows readers to reflect upon their own story of how God has developed them. Finally, it is a story that affirms

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the calling and role of the warrior shepherd as one able to both serve as military chaplain and civilian pastor.

Another strength of the project is in the field texts which form the research. A preliminary concern for this research was the potential for bias on the part of the researcher as a result of a close personal relationship with subject. Part of the answer to that challenge was the need to balance the views of the researcher through the inclusion of the assessments and viewpoints of numerous others. As a result the research draws upon multiple and varied sources. It included the review of many military personnel documents including 25 officer efficiency reports that included the comments of 50 officers (each report has comments from a rater and an endorser) regarding the ministry and leadership of Pastor Wright while he served as a chaplain. These reviews were supplemented by a number of personal documents preserved in Pastor Wright’s files. The researcher was also able to interview individuals from all of the four churches Pastor Wright served from the time he left the military until he retired from active ministry. That resulted in 18 personal interviews regarding the ministry and leadership of Pastor Wright in a civilian context. While that number may seem to be a small sample it was guided by principles given by Irving Seidman who suggests, “‘Enough’ is an interactive reflection of every step of the interview process and different for each study and each researcher.”

Two criteria are suggested. First, is the number sufficient to reflect a range of participants and sites? Second, is there saturation of information? Saturation being a point at which

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3 Seidman, 55.
the interviewer begins to hear the same information repeated. The interviews conducted were sufficient in that they covered four churches Pastor Wright served and they did reach saturation as many of the same themes and observations were repeated in the interviews. Added to those documents and interviews was the availability of a personal interview with Pastor Wright that was conducted by a member of the North Dakota Veterans History Project. In this way family memories and stories were able to be balanced by the documented comments of many others.

An additional strength of the project is its connection to a distinct historical context. Pastor Wright’s service as a military chaplain has as its larger context the developing role of the chaplain in the military and especially the nature of that role during the Vietnam War era. Historical developments that were described generally in the related research were seen to be present in the details of Pastor Wright’s service as a chaplain. A few examples of this include the strong emphasis on counseling, involvement in humanitarian work with civilian populations and even the participation of chaplains in all aspects of training including parachute jumps. It was valuable to place Pastor Wright’s story within the context of the larger story of the history of the Army Chaplaincy.

A final strength is the personal connection of the researcher to project. It is unlikely that a researcher would choose a topic for doctoral work without having a professional interest in that area, but in the case of this research the interest was the deeply personal connection of a father to a son. About the time the researcher was considering topics for this project he came into possession of all of Pastor Wright’s personal files. Having heard the stories of Pastor Wright’s life for years the idea of

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4 Siedman, 55.
researching those stories became a natural choice for the project. This strong personal connection served as motivation to pursue all available resources in order to tell the story in as much detail as possible. It also served as inspiration. Good narrative research reflexively brings the author into the story. Pastor Wright was without question the most influential leader for developing the life and leadership of the researcher and as such the researcher was always aware that this was not just Pastor Wright’s story but was his own story as well.

Weaknesses of the Project Design

The most significant weakness of the project was the limited access of the researcher to Pastor Wright’s ex-wife, Phyllis, and his children from this marriage. While the researcher had limited contact with one member of that part of Pastor Wright’s family the others were unavailable or unwilling to participate in this project. Their perspective would have added much to the personal side of Pastor Wright’s story, especially through the years he served as a chaplain.

A second weakness was in seeking to make a narrative study fit the designated framework of the project. In particular it was difficult to connect the biblical and theological section to suit a narrative biography. This was in part due to the fact that biblical character study is less of an academic pursuit and more of a pastoral pursuit.

Another part of the challenge is the different way that narrative study is typically done. One description of this process describes it as making soup. Soup can have many different types and amounts of ingredients but it is still soup. In the same way, there could be different ingredients in our narrative pots. Parts of our research text can be composed of rich descriptions of people, places and things; other parts can be composed of carefully constructed arguments that argue for a certain understanding of the relations among people, places and things; and still others
can be richly textured narratives of the people situated in place, time, scene and plot. For us all of these can be narrative texts.\textsuperscript{5}

Further the idea of narrative writing being “soup” leads to difficulty when the container for the soup is clearly laid out. Specifically cited in relation to this difficulty is the instance of writing a dissertation where form is specified.\textsuperscript{6} This is true because stories are at times difficult to fit into a precise format. If form were not proscribed this narrative study might have had an introductory chapter followed by chapters that told Pastor Wright’s story divided according to Clinton’s timeline which would be followed by chapters on observations and biblical correlations at the end. Hopefully, the researcher’s struggles in this area may stretch the boundaries of the format a little so that others may pursue similar research in the future.

\textit{Overall Findings and Challenges as They Relate to the Practice of Ministry}

Part of the importance of the research was to examine the validity of the chaplaincy as a path for developing pastoral leadership. This is particularly important as the increase in military actions in recent years has increased the need for chaplains. This research demonstrated that for Pastor Wright his service as chaplain did develop pastoral leadership skills that were able to be applied in either a military or civilian setting. One aspect that was important to his development was the availability of training in specific areas. The Army Chaplain Corps continues to offer opportunities for specific educational training areas for chaplains. Those include:

1. Critical Incident Stress Debriefing: preparation for ministry to groups and individuals in crisis following a traumatic event.

\textsuperscript{5} Clandinin and Connelly, 155

\textsuperscript{6} Clandinin and Connelly, 155
2. Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP): prepares Chaplains to conduct premarital marriage enrichment and education workshops.

3. Clinical Pastoral Counseling: Selected chaplains can opt to earn a Doctor of Ministry while attending this program of study. During this time they become fully qualified chaplains for the institutional settings of prisons and hospitals.

4. Advanced Civilian Education: Selected full-time Chaplains are sent to top notch universities to obtain a graduate degree in areas such as Ethics, World Religions, Family Life and Resource Management.⁷

Beyond the opportunity for formal training, service as a military chaplain helped to develop warrior shepherd leadership expressions related to discipline, loyalty, vision, non-building centered ministry, concern for the general welfare and collaborative quotient. All of these were aspects of Pastor Wright’s military service that bore fruit in his civilian ministry. Individuals considering becoming a military chaplain could expect to see similar positive outcomes on their leadership development and future ministry in both military and civilian contexts.

While research did show many positive impacts from Pastor Wright’s service as a military chaplain, one might conclude from newspaper, television and e-news stories during the time period of this research that the military is no longer as positive a venue for pastoral leadership. Issues which Chaplain Wright did not have to contend with at all or only in a minor way are now significant perennial challenges for some.

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Chaplain (Colonel) Greg W. Hill, US Army, Retired, listed some of these issues in a series of emails on December 20, 2014. One such issue is the increased religious diversity in the military as well as in the chaplaincy. Certain chaplains have found it difficult to provide worship experiences for those whose faith practices they are opposed to. Others find it difficult to work alongside chaplains of particular faith groups they find offensive. Chaplains from faith-groups that do not ordain women find it difficult to lead worship with ordained female chaplains, at least initially.

Chaplain Hill also noted that the greater emphasis on professional military education has discouraged some chaplains from remaining or has impacted their ability to be promoted when they do not complete that training. Especially visible in the press is the perceived negative consequences or in some cases actual consequences when a Christian chaplain, during a mandatory formation or mandatory class, prays in Jesus’ name, when military members are present find that prayer offensive or anathema to their religious beliefs.

An article in the Wall Street Journal catalogues some of the current news stories that have been said to reflect a growing anti-religious bias in the military:

In early April, Army Reserve soldiers in Pennsylvania were told in a redeployment briefing that evangelical Christians and Roman Catholics were "extremists," the same category as al Qaeda. Later that month, the Southern Baptist Convention's website was blocked on Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps bases due to what the military's software filter told Web users was "hostile content." And in early May, news reports said that an anti-Christian crusader had proposed new rules for the Pentagon so that military-service members could be court-martialed for sharing their faith.8

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However, the article goes on to note that in all of these cases the initial reports “were exaggerated, taken out of context or simply false.”9 Specifically, “The Army Reserve briefing materials in Pennsylvania were quickly corrected and the alleged website ban turned out to be a software glitch. On May 2, the Pentagon issued a statement reiterating its policy that personal evangelism is permitted.”10 In regard to these concerns this research shows that they are not really new but have been part of the fabric of military chaplaincy throughout its history. Chaplains serve not as half-military and half-church but as a full member of both institutions.11 This duality of serving both the church and the military creates a level of tension that anyone entering that role should be aware of and be prepared to accept. While many of the current issues were not concerns during the time of Pastor Wright’s service the tension created by the duality of military chaplaincy did exist for Pastor Wright when he served as a chaplain and persisted in the minds of some even after he entered civilian ministry. Pastor Wright’s experience suggests that the tension of that duality is not an insurmountable obstacle to service if an individual considering military chaplaincy is prepared to accept and manage it.

Just as ministry candidates should be open to considering service as a military chaplain, churches should be open to call reserve or retired chaplains as pastors. This research clearly showed that people in the civilian congregations Pastor Wright served appreciated many of the warrior shepherd leadership expressions developed during his military service. Discipline, loyalty, vision, non-building centered ministry, concern for the general welfare and collaborative quotient are not just aspects of Pastor Wright’s

9 Mollie Ziegler Hemingway, May 9, 2013.
10 Mollie Ziegler Hemingway, May 9, 2013.
11 Hutcheson, 19
leadership but were identified in the research as valuable expressions of leadership for any pastoral leader. Beyond the expressions developed most strongly in Pastor Wright the research identified a number of other expressions that can also be related to the role of warrior shepherd. Certainly, not all who serve as chaplains will have the same warrior shepherd expressions carry over to civilian ministry but they will have some of those expressions carry over and benefit the congregations they serve. A very recent example of this comes from Pope Francis. He has recognized that chaplains can effectively serve in civilian contexts and appointed Chad Zielinski as bishop for the Fairbanks Diocese. Zielinski had been the active-duty chaplain at Eielson Air Force Base and was deployed to Afghanistan in 2011.12

**Discussion**

The related research on leadership development recognized that leaders needed to be those who have brought order to the chaos of their own life, to be able to do not what their followers wanted them to do but to do what Christ called them to do and to do that trusting not in their own ability but trusting in the sufficiency of what Christ would supply.13 These are not leadership lessons for chaplains alone or pastors alone. They are lessons for any who would serve Christ as a shepherd to Christ’s followers. Part of this narrative study then has to ask if beyond the specific warrior shepherd leadership expressions shown by Pastor Wright did his service as a chaplain allow for him to learn these important leadership lessons?

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Titus 1:6-9 describes leaders that have brought order to the chaos of their own life:

if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

Virtually all of Pastor Wright’s story shows him to be a leader of the highest integrity and as one whom indeed had brought order to the chaos of his own life. This was illustrated in many of the comments made by his reviewers. Exemplifying this is one comment:

I have had the opportunity to observe this officer daily under all conditions short of combat and he has always performed in accordance with the highest standards both personally and professionally. In his private life he adheres to a very stringent code of ethics; however he is intelligent enough to recognize human frailties in others.  

Nothing in any military review or personal interview even suggested the presence of debauchery or insubordination. To the contrary comments clearly reflected that Pastor Wright was viewed as a leader who was above reproach. Frequently mention is made of his hospitality, his concern for good of all and the discipline that marked his personal life.

In the midst of all this order his divorce stands as one glaring example of chaos. Depending on how one chooses to interpret the phrase “the husband of one wife” Pastor Wright may or may not have failed in this area but the reality of the divorce is enough to say that at least in that part of his life Pastor Wright wrestled with bringing order to the chaos of his life. The comments of those who were in his church at the time also affirm that this season of personal chaos did bring hardship to the congregation. The lack of

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participation from Phyllis, Pastor Wright’s ex-wife, limits the ability of this research to more fully explore the roots of this chaos and determine its full cause. Still there is the lesson that chaos can come to even the most well-ordered lives if leaders fail to give careful attention to all aspects of their lives and ministries.

A major theme of Scripture is that leaders lead by serving. John 13 reminds leaders that they belong to the “order of the towel,” because leaders are to follow Jesus washing the disciples’ feet. Again comments of those he worked with affirm Pastor Wright’s willingness to serve. However, serving is not just giving someone what they want but it is seeking to bring about the transformation that God desires.15 Pastor Wright’s commitment to doing this is reflected in the observation, “He was a most successful counselor for the young inexperienced soldier. I credit him with guiding many to a successful adjustment either by getting them on the right path or talking them out of starting down the wrong one.”16 Further affirmation of Pastor Wright serving by seeking to bring this kind of transformation is found in comments from two personal letters in Pastor Wright’s file. In the first dated October 18, 1973 V. Schroder states, “I haven’t had any trouble with drugs since the day I saw you and I know I won’t ever again. No need to worry or be concerned about that matter. I know the Lord has well taken care of me.” The second from J. Gralub dated January 30, 1974 includes this statement, “Mom just could not believe her son was home. She was so happy to see I have changed. If she could only see me now. I have decided that I want to be a true Christian and since that day my life has been filled with the refreshing breeze of God’s wisdom.” That this was present in his

15 Lawrence and Lawrence.

civillian ministry is seen in comments from one of the interviews, “He kind of saved my marriage. He came up to my office and he said ‘you know what you’re doing is wrong.’ I said yeah. He said, ‘knock it off’. That was all.”

It is a strong possibility that being part of the military contributed to developing this leadership skill. Chain of command is vital to military performance and discipline. Soldiers are trained not to fulfill personal desires but to execute the orders given to them. This has a natural spiritual parallel in the common pastoral observation that God is more interested in your character than your comfort. God is more interested in making your life holy than He is in making your life happy. Pastor Wright’s exposure to the warrior ethos seems to have made him very comfortable being extremely direct with people about personal issues in need of transformation.

A final leadership consideration is the need for the leader to have a radical trust in Christ in which he trades his control for God’s resources and his safety for Christ’s cross. In essence, ministry leaders need to learn that they are called to do what they cannot do with what they do not have for the rest of their lives. Meanwhile they trust God to do what only God can do with what they do have working through them for the rest of their lives.17

Ministry leaders are called to use the training and resources they have been given but ultimately to serve not in their strength but in Christ’s. This does not seem to have much in common with military training which has as its focus to “produce competent, confident, adaptive soldiers, leaders, and units, trained and ready to fight and win our

17 Lawrence and Lawrence.
nation’s battles.”\textsuperscript{18} This describes a reliance on self, on training and on resources. Pastor Wright certainly had both training and skills but his personal experiences had taught him to place his trust not in those things but in what God could do with him and through him. The research points to a deep trust in God’s provision that was learned during military service but not through military training. Pastor Wright’s survival at Iwo Jima taught him that lesson. Having a parachute fail during a training jump affirmed that lesson. His actions on the field of combat reflect that lesson,

During this period the brigade was very heavily engaged in combat operations and Major Wright with complete disregard for his own personal safety and welfare assured that the troops constantly received the spiritual guidance and religious services essential to them.\textsuperscript{19}

Pastor Wright’s courage was rooted in a trust that God who had delivered him in the past would continue in his loving care.


\textsuperscript{19} James C. Smith, Officer Efficiency Report: James E. Wright, July 14, 1969, Official Military Personnel File: James E. Wright, Department of the Army, Adjutant General’s Office.
CHAPTER SEVEN: REFLECTION

Personal Growth

There has been a constant awareness throughout the research on this project that as the researcher is telling James Wright’s story he is also telling his own. During the church visits the researcher did for the interviews he had the opportunity to preach at one of the churches and in an interview after the service one of those interviewed commented,

You had a great teacher. I see so much of him in you. Listening to you this morning, I told my daughter, I could see so much of Pastor Wright, I could see him, I could hear him. He is here with you. He is giving you what you need. He may not be somewhere where you can go, “Dad, what do I need to do?” He’s helping you. He’s doing what needs to be done. You know he is, you know he is up there going, “Brian, this where you need to go with this.” You know darn good and well that is what he is doing. Cause that is just him, that is exactly what he’s doing. He succeeded, he did well and he is going to make sure you do the same thing. He is standing next to you, watching you, and he is doing the same for Sarah.1

His statement, “I see so much of him in you” is the heart of the researcher’s personal growth from this project. As he considered how James’ time in the military affected his work as a civilian pastor the researcher could not help but consider how this also affected his work as a pastor. Much of that reflection was centered on the list of positive and negative impacts of James’ service and how those elements have influenced the researcher’s life and ministry.

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1 Interview with SNES5, May 12, 2013.
While the researcher has never served in any capacity with any branch of the military, he has been left with a very high view of the men and women who do serve this country. He has also been able to have a fairly good relationship with the veterans in his congregations. He is sure that they do not speak of things the same way they would with James but they know the researcher understands at least a little more than those who have never been around those who have served. The researcher would also say that at least some of the warrior ethos that was so much a part of James’ life is also part of his own. This is especially true of the line that states, “I will never leave a fallen comrade.” Many times in ministry the researcher has faced situations where others in leadership wanted to discard or move on from individuals in difficult or complicated situations. The researcher has repeatedly fought that tendency and insisted that even in the face of risk the church had to do all it could to reach a fallen brother or sister.

This is a part of James’ work that has not carried over to the researcher’s own work. He is not great at being organized, disciplined or even punctual. If there is any part of this that persists in his work it is being willing to do the unpleasant. The researcher was once told by a church member that he was the only pastor the church member had ever known who was willing to get his hands dirty. This is manifest in being there to help with all the set-up, tear down and special projects at a church. It is also manifest in being willing to sit down and have hard conversations with people. Sometimes those conversations are about them and sometimes they have been about the researcher.
Consistently the thought in his mind as he enters those moments is of James and how he would approach that situation. The researcher continues to draw strength from James’ discipline.

Vision

James’ ability to innovate, initiate and move programs forward is a part of ministry that has been passed on to the researcher. In the researcher’s case it has also been impacted by an ecumenical spirit that was also influenced by James and his military experience. In every ministry setting where the researcher has served he has been part of leadership teams where multiple churches partnered to bring new ministries to the community. One instance of this was bringing all the churches in a rural community together to do a community Vacation Bible School. This openness to partnering with others can be traced back to the experience James had as a military chaplain. His daughter Kathy noted the same thing in a message sent on May 25, 2013. She stated that the biggest impact she had seen as result of James being a chaplain was

> When I was younger, we considered ourselves ‘Baptists’. The older I got, Dad seemed to move away from that term ... and went more to the protestant label. It was more generalized and encompassed more of the type of congregations that he had in the military. His teaching I would say, became just a little more ‘loose’, than say a strict Baptist might be.

James also was especially noted for his vision in teaching and preaching. It is here that the researcher is most like James. While the structure of their messages is different much of the presentation is similar. James always preached without notes and often without the pulpit. This is also the researcher’s approach. Those who knew James have even commented that they are similar in the way they sit, sing and lead worship.
Counseling

The researcher has not had the extensive training and experience in counseling that James had and so this aspect of his ministry has not been in any way replicated in the researcher’s own ministry. One of the things the researcher has missed most since James’ death is the ability to seek his guidance in the counseling situations that the researcher faces.

Loyalty, Non-Building Centered Ministry and General Welfare

James always felt that it was important for a pastor to be active in the community and this is something that has definitely carried over into the researcher’s ministry. At the researcher’s first church he spent time working on a task force seeking to address the growing teen pregnancy rate in the community. As pastor of a rural church he served on the park board, led the renovation and was the manager of the community swimming pool. When that community was devastated by a severe drought (the worst since the dust bowl years), he helped lead a community relief effort. In his current position he is very active in the local ministerial, volunteers as a marching band chaperone, continues to teach swimming lessons and directs the junior high drama program.

James’ example of being with people outside of formal settings is one that continues to inspire the researcher. His model of stressing pastoral visitation is one that the researcher is continuing to follow in his ministry. The part of this research that was most challenging for the researcher personally were the many comments about time spent over coffee at various community establishments. This means of connecting with the
The researcher’s own collaborative quotient is something that is most reflected in
the inter-church cooperative efforts of which he has been a part. These have been both in
partnership with outside organizations such as Youth with a Mission and Luis Palau and
in partnerships formed at a more local level. During the researcher’s ministry in rural
North Dakota he was part of organizing multiple community events and working with
other churches to form joint ministries.

Family
The most significant negative finding of this research was the impact of James’
single-mindedness on his marriage and family. It was noted that this finding was
consistent with the researcher’s own experience. One example of this was the 30 minute
visit James made to the hospital on the occasion of the birth of the researcher’s daughter
Anne. He stopped in on the way back to Nebraska when he returned to Salem
Congregational to serve as their interim pastor. Other examples would include the many
family trips or vacations that were cancelled or cut short because of a need to return to
the church to care for the needs of others.

The researcher’s interaction with his family has been deeply shaped by his
experience in this kind of family environment. He has sought to be as present for the
activities of his family as he possibly could. Attendance at concerts, sporting events,
school conferences and other family events has been priority. He has been blessed in that
he has rarely had to modify family plans as a result of ministry issues. Where James
never really could relax, the researcher has been very deliberate in taking days off, taking
regular vacation time and he recently took a two month sabbatical from ministry.

**Mobility**

Related to these family issues is the issue of mobility. James moved nine times
after leaving the military. Personally this resulted in the researcher attending seven
different schools and adjusting to multiple new communities. The researcher’s own
pattern has been to seek the opposite course for his ministry and family. In twenty-three
years of full time ministry he has served just three churches and moved only once since
his children were born. It was significant that the twelve years he spent serving in North
Dakota was the longest he had ever lived in one place.

**Further Research Questions**

Two areas stand out as areas for further research as a result of the findings of this
project. The first is the need for more study regarding the transition from chaplain to
civilian pastor. While this project will add to the available material there is still very little
available on this topic and most of what is available does not reflect current issues
surrounding this transition. Only one other thesis could be obtained that covered this
issue and it was from the same time frame as James’ retirement. The ministry
environment for military chaplains is very different today and the challenges for
transitioning to a civilian ministry are likely more complex than they have ever been. It
would certainly be beneficial to tell the stories of those who are making that transition
today. This could be very helpful to those considering becoming a military chaplain and
helpful to the many who have served as they prepare to return to civilian life.
The other question for further research is the connection of the destiny pattern to future ministry success and failures. The findings surrounding James’ call to ministry as it related to the destiny experience at Iwo Jima was unexpected and intriguing. Some questions this information raises include: How common is the destiny experience in the lives of ministry leaders? How do ministry leaders who have had a destiny experience differ from those who do not have this kind of experience? What are the biblical and theological implications of having or not having a destiny experience as part of a call to ministry? James Wright’s destiny experience was the dominant factor in shaping the rest of his life and ministry. If this is also the case for other leaders it would be very helpful to explore how this occurs.

**Conclusion**

Studying the life of Chaplain (Colonel) James E. Wright has provided insight into the distinct transition that occurs when military chaplains return to civilian service as pastoral leaders. The vision, discipline and counseling that were developed by his time as a military chaplain were employed with great effectiveness in his civilian ministry. The pattern of doing ministry with the troops flowed into a pattern of ministry that stressed being out with the people through hospitality, visitation and community involvement. Finally, his military experience allowed him to make strong ministry connections with other veterans in his congregations.

It is unfortunate that today military chaplains are more frequently cited for controversy than commended for their courage and dedication to meeting the spiritual needs of America’s military personnel. This project has demonstrated the positive way serving as a military chaplain can develop pastoral leadership skills. It also has shown the
important ministry of military chaplains. Those whose comments were included as part of this project represent a small fraction of the thousands of soldiers and their families that James Wright impacted during his service as a military chaplain. They are people who were set free from addiction, comforted in loss, restored to their families and strengthened in their faith. This work is continued today by the faithful men and women serving as military chaplains.
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