

EXPLORING SUCCESSFUL WOMEN'S MINISTRY EMPLOYMENT: A COMPARATIVE  
CASE STUDY OF TWO CHURCHES IN VIRGINIA

by

Melissa Jill Small

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

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## ABSTRACT

The following qualitative case study explored the phenomenon of successful implementation of a fulltime women's ministry staff position in Southern Baptist churches to provide foundational research for a best practices guide for successful implementation of women's ministers in churches. For the research, successful implementation of women's ministry staff was generally defined as fulltime staff position devoted specifically to women's ministry in a church. The use of interviews and focus groups provided information from the church leaders and women who were directly involved in the phenomenon. The setting took place in two Southern Baptist churches, located in the state of Virginia, that have successfully implemented fulltime women's ministry staff positions. Data collection included interviews, documentation, observations, and focus groups. The analysis involved coding and theming the data from the participant discussions, observations and documents. Findings revealed that the two churches had very similar experiences in pastor-led implementation of the women's minister positions. The churches both offered support of the role, which altered the view of women's ministry in the churches. Findings also revealed that women's ministers on staff do provide a greater resource to churches to identify and evaluate the needs of women in a church setting. Future research should include studies of other churches that have implemented women's ministers in order identify best practices for other churches interested in implementing women's minister staff positions in their churches.

*Key words:* church role; women's ministry; Southern Baptist; social construction

### **Dedication**

This study is dedicated to all the women who minister and are being served in the church. May this research lead to a deeper, more successful women's ministry in churches to address growth through discipleship and the process of healing from life's pain as we journey towards the healing of the cross with the hope of a future glory.

## **Acknowledgement**

To my husband who has encouraged me to pursue excellence in every way, I owe many accomplishments to his example of pursuit of excellence; this dissertation being no exception. To my family and friends who encouraged me to pursue the calling of this degree and have supported me through a long process and personal journey, I say thank you. The sacrifice of my time and focus has impacted each of them through the years, and I am grateful to have been afforded the opportunity, understanding and support to pursue this educational endeavor.

To my chair, Dr. Barbara Boothe, who believed in me and chose to help me see this study through, thank you for your leadership through this dissertation process. To my readers, Dr. Kathleen Prince and Dr. Larry Crites who were dedicated to bring the best out in my research and writing, thank you for your diligence in pursuit of excellence. To my Research Consultant, Dr. James Swezey, who encouraged me to position a positive outlook in my research, to maintain an open mind, thank you for helping me finish the process well. To the Education Faculty, who encouraged me to stay with my passion and not veer from the path, thank you.

To the churches that opened their doors to help other churches establish a deeper understanding of women's ministry and to see women's needs met in a greater way through research, thank you. Your openness will further research in the area of women's ministry and help create best practices for other churches interested in implementing women's ministry positions.

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**List of Abbreviations**

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS)

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS)

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS)

Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia (SBCV)

Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS)

Women's Mission Union (WMU)

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Overview**

Chapter One lays the foundation and justification for a qualitative research study investigating the implementation of fulltime women's ministers in churches. Looking at the theoretical background of the study, the chapter identifies the relationship of the Vygotsky's Social Constructs Theory as it relates to this qualitative study. The researcher identified the problem, the purpose and the significance of the study. Research questions are introduced along with the research plan to study the phenomenon of women's ministers being implemented in staff positions at two churches. The researcher provided background into the situation to self, limitations and delimitations of the study.

### **Background**

The development of education through social constructivism arose from Vygotsky's (1978) research of previous learning and development theories introduced by Piaget, Koffka, Thorndike, and Binet (Vygotsky, 1978) (Bruner, 1997). Vygotsky believed that children learn from their environment before they begin to develop to a level with ability to think about what they have learned. Social constructs have direct effects on the development of children in any context (Vygotsky, 1978). According to this theory, children learn from their environments and the words and actions of those around them (Vygotsky, 1978). For the purpose of this study, Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism learning theory will be applied to the church as a learning environment for children. As the evangelical church has evolved over time, various church denominations have adopted specific beliefs integrated into social constructs that define the organization of their denominations.

Social constructs run deeply in any organization (Vygotsky, 1978). The Southern Baptist denomination as a subset of the evangelical church is no exception to embracing specific social constructs (Maxwell, 2010). After identifying the specific and unique needs of women, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) established an addendum to their social constructs in the Southern Baptist belief statement entitled *The Baptist Faith and Message* (SBC, 2000). The basic addendum identified that women were of equal value to men; however, their roles were to be established under men's authority in the home and the church. Women were not to lead men in the home or the church. Therefore, it clearly defined women's roles in the church, negating that of pastor, but channeling women to minister to other women and to children based on Titus 2:3-5 (*The Baptist Faith and Message*, SBC, 2000). This created the opportunity to establish women's ministry with a fulltime, paid staff within the constructs of the church. The social constructs of the Southern Baptist Church were challenged by its members through the question of women's roles in the church. However, the challenge brought an opportunity to focus on the needs of women in the church and implement women's ministry positions to equip women's ministers to reach women in the church. While this decision by the SBC has opened up an area for women's ministry, few fulltime women's ministers are serving in the church. With 44% of the membership in evangelical churches comprised of women, the women constitute the largest membership group in the church in the United States (Barna, 2011; Morgan, 2013). Children compose 23% and men reconcile the remaining 33%, with each group serving as a minority to women in the church (Barna, 2011).

### **The Need for Women in Leadership Roles in the Church**

Women are needed in leadership roles in the church, because the needs of women although great, can be difficult to discern. Barna (2012) studies revealed that women do not

seem honest about the reality of their personal struggles with their Christian faith and sin. The percentage of women was so overwhelmingly high saying they were experiencing joy and finding fulfillment in their faith, but it conflicted with other surveys revealing the same women struggling with depression, grief, and personal issues. If women are not forthcoming, it makes addressing their needs more difficult (Kinnaman, 2012). Because women can separate life's daily hurts and their faith in God, they need programs in the church that will create an appropriate atmosphere with other women in which they can address these deeply rooted emotions and conflicts (Kinnaman, 2012). Kinnaman (2012), who works for the Barna Research Group, has this to say about what he believes to be women's unrealistic answers to survey questions regarding spirituality and faith, "This current study shows that most women tend to offer one-dimensional, emotionally guarded responses about their spirituality. This is not because they are trying to be misleading; they simply don't know what is missing" (<https://www.barna.org/culture-articles/587-christian-women-today-part-3-of-4-women-give-themselves-an-emotional-and-spiritual-check-up>).

According to Martin & Stovall (2008), the programs that help accomplish the goal of meeting women's needs include Bible studies, prayer, fellowship, mentoring, discipleship, and counseling. Many of these programs are best facilitated by those women who have training specific in ministry and administration in the church (Martin & Stovall, 2008). Older women are directed in the New Testament to teach younger women (Titus 2: 3-5). Women are able to identify with other women on how they are instructed to live out their Christian faith, whereas men would not be able to identify with women in their personal steps to acting out their faith in their roles as women (Hislop, 2010). As noted in Hislop's (2010) research, women experience circumstances in different ways than men, such as pregnancy and abortion. Men have a



challenge in personally identifying with women's experiences to be able to provide firsthand instruction on how to approach situations with the responsibility of a Christian woman.

The SBC as an organization is supportive of women's ministry, developing women's ministry programs in four of its six seminaries. The four seminaries include Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (Fort Worth, TX), Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (Wake Forest, NC), Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Louisville, KY), and New Orleans Theological Seminary (New Orleans, LA) (Baptist Press, 2003). Programs have been created to train students for more than 10 years, with a total of nearly 1,000 women studying women's ministry in the four seminaries offering women's ministry studies. The purpose of this research project is to examine and explore the implementation and effectiveness of two churches that have employed fulltime women's ministers. This study created a foundation for future research to identify best practices of women's ministry where women's ministers are employed.

### **Situation to Self**

This research project relates directly to the researcher's education and calling. With 15 years of experience in ministry to teenage and adult women, in a Southern Baptist church, and as a pastor's wife, the researcher is passionate about seeing women's needs met through church ministries. The researcher has observed young women and older women, struggle with life, emotions, faith, and identity. The researcher has also spent time at the higher education level in an administrative role. Researching alumni, their majors, and their career fields opened the idea for the researcher to focus on women graduating with women's ministry degrees. As a student of educational leadership, it is the researcher's desire to identify, explore, and describe successful ministries under fulltime women's ministers in the Southern Baptist Church community.

## **Problem Statement**

The literature review focuses on Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivism theory as applied to church constructs, the SBC's stance of women's ministry roles, the specific needs of women, the justification for fulltime women's ministry positions, and the support of a women's ministry studies degree offered in SBC seminaries and colleges (Martin & Stovall, 2008; Baptist Press, 2003). There is a gap in the literature on how the few Southern Baptist church leaders that provide gainful employment have successfully implemented fulltime women's ministry positions in their churches.

The problem is that as 44% of the church membership, women in the church have unique and specific needs that are unmet (Barna, 2012; Martin & Stovall, 2008). Women are not able to address these needs on their own, partially because they are unaware (Kinnaman, 2012). Women experience some issues differently than men, such as abortion and infertility. Women also experience life challenges common to men and women in a different way due to biological and psychological differences according to scientific research (Kopala & Keitel, 2003). These challenges include divorce, grief, eating disorders, depression, violence, and addiction (Kopala & Keitel, 2003). In many churches, it is difficult to meet these unique needs without the implementation of a fulltime women's ministry staff position. This is due to the amount of time and specific ministry qualifications required to successfully implement women's ministry programs ([compstudy.lifeway.com](http://compstudy.lifeway.com)).

Comparing job descriptions of other fulltime ministry roles, such as children's ministers and youth ministers versus the requirements of women's ministry programs and women's needs identifies a parallel of workload and responsibility to a specific population in the church. The comparison lends to justification for fulltime women's ministry staff, especially in churches of

larger populations of women (compstudy.lifeway.com). The needs of women, the list of responsibilities, and the time required to meet them are great enough to justify a paid position for a women's minister in the church.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this comparative case study is to describe practices of successful implementation of fulltime women's ministers in churches for a foundation to a best practices guide for churches to implement women's ministers. Successful implementation of fulltime women's ministry positions will be generally defined as a fulltime women's ministry position implemented and supported by church leadership, and women's ministry programs meeting the needs of women under the leadership and responsibility of a woman on staff at a Southern Baptist church.

### **Significance of Study**

The empirical significance of this study is to contribute to the literature connected to women's ministry in the church and fulfillment of church leaders' responsibilities to meet the needs of their congregation members. This comparative case study will examine the process of creating and implementing two fulltime women's ministers in two churches. Studying the implementation of women's ministers in these churches will provide insight into the decision-making process, the rationale and the ministry activities of fulltime women's minister positions in churches that did not have women's ministers prior.

The study will provide a description of two churches that have implemented fulltime women's ministers to provide appropriate professional support to a women's ministry program. This description can serve as a best practices guide for the local church to implement fulltime women's ministry positions and women's ministry programs to support the spiritual and

emotional needs of women in the church. According to Martin & Stovall (2008) these programs are vital to meeting the needs of women. Churches' roles include three primary actions: nurturing, worshiping, and witnessing (Clowney, 1995). The role of nurturing involves a great deal of time, training, and experience (Hislop, 2010). With adequate support, the church can fulfill its role of nurturing women with specific needs in a church, needs that often go unnoted, unspoken, and possibly unmet (Kinnaman, 2012). Churches would have a guide to implement a staff position devoted to women's needs as mothers, wives, sisters, and children—going through various life circumstances—that require professional resources, devoted to their emotional, physical, and spiritual wellbeing.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guide this comparative case study. The questions arise from the underlying issue of how to create and implement a women's minister position in a church.

1. Why do some churches decide to employ fulltime women's ministers?
2. How do fulltime women's ministers provide greater resources than volunteers?
3. How are the needs of women identified and measured?
4. How are women's needs met in a greater way through churches with fulltime women's ministry staff?

The first question of why some churches decide to employ fulltime women's ministry positions helps to answer the potential question of why there are churches that do not believe they have the means to support a fulltime women's ministry position. The literature does not clearly define the reason for success in supporting these positions. The second question of how a fulltime minister provides greater resources than a volunteer, will be answered through this case study. The third and fourth questions of how women's needs are identified and measured, and

met in a greater way through churches with a women's ministry fulltime worker is currently uncertain in the literature. Since there are only three Southern Baptist churches in the state of Virginia with fulltime women's ministers, the study will provide research to add to the literature validating women's minister positions in churches (T. Bennett of SBCV, personal communication, March 2013).

### **Research Plan**

The research plan for this study is a qualitative case study. The study is qualitative in nature, because the research is exploratory in nature, rather than statistical (Yin, 2009). Since case study methodology is used in this research plan to explain, explore, and describe how or why something occurs within a bounded system, this plan will describe how the successful implementation of women's ministry full-time positions took place in two specific Southern Baptist churches (Yin, 2009).

Data collection consisted of a review of women's ministry programs provided by church leaders and/or women's ministry leaders, personal interviews with pastors and women's ministry leaders, direct observation of women's ministry program activities in each of the two churches, collection of documents, and focus groups with women who participate in the women's ministry programs in each church to determine their overall ministry recipient satisfaction.

Data analysis includes a cross case analysis of the two case studies (Yin, 2009). Documented notes from the interviews, observations, and focus groups are reviewed and themes are identified and coded (Stake, 1995). The interviews, observations and focus groups allowed the researcher to triangulate data and identify how each woman's ministry position and program developed as a viable ministry at each of the churches. The themes are compared between the two cases. The comparison of the survey data results determined the level to which women

perceive their personal needs are being met by the women's ministry offerings to verify the success of each program. The findings from the data analysis provide information to contribute to a best practice guide of successful women's ministry programs employing fulltime women's ministry staff. Identifying the successful aspects of women's ministry implemented at the churches where there is a paid women's minister position may lead to practices that could be transferred to other churches for successful ministry to women.

### **Delimitations**

Delimitations of this study include the use of two churches of the Southern Baptist denomination only. The reason for limiting to the Southern Baptist denomination is that they have a united stance on the role of women in ministry (Baptist Faith and Message, 2000). Given the limited number of three churches that have successfully implemented a women's ministry position, a required delimitation is that both churches had fulltime women's ministry employees on staff overseeing the women's ministries of the church. These churches will be located in the state of Virginia for the convenience of the researcher.

### **Limitations**

Limitations associated with this qualitative case study include reliance on the researcher's judgment to portray the information accurately and holistically, due to the nature of a case study. In addition, the study took place only in the state of Virginia, narrowing application to additional states, or the SBC as a whole.

Other limitations include documentation variations, opportunities and experiences from one church to the next. Church leaders may not have access to all documents necessary, such as research provided to church leaders, meeting notes and any proposals for a women's minister for the researcher's review. History may be lost with fluctuation of pastors, women's ministry

directors, and lack or loss of documentation to specifically address all attributions to the success of women's ministry and implementation of a women's ministry fulltime employee in the two churches.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Overview

The research design described the conceptualization and successful implementation of two fulltime women's ministry staff in Southern Baptist churches. The primary theory that applies to the constructs of women's ministry in the church is Len Vygotsky's (1978) Social Construction Theory. Vygotsky (1978) views social constructs of an environment, whether it is in the home, school, or other setting influential in the life of a child. Children in the church can observe and adopt knowledge from watching the constructs of their church organization acted out by church leaders and members. According to Vygotsky (1978), children can gain knowledge before they develop an understanding of how to use the knowledge for individual thinking. This phenomenon can establish knowledge and information passed on from adults prior to mental development to understand the knowledge and beliefs the child has internalized (Vygotsky, 1978). In the church, children are observing, listening and interacting with church members reinforcing social constructs created by beliefs adopted by the denomination.

Vygotsky's (1978, (as cited in Liu & Matthews, 2011) Social Construction Theory defines culture as an educational tool in social constructs. In relation to this study, churches employ a unique cultural subset of society that biblically educates parishioners to develop a specific worldview. Southern Baptists educate church members on leadership roles in the church, based on a set of denominational beliefs identified in the Baptist Faith and Message (2000), in a way that sets a social norm for what positions women should hold in the church. Social construction theory relates to women's ministry, because in this context, churches identify women's roles in the church and teach them how to minister and to whom they should minister (Baptist Faith and Message, 2000).



## Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky's (1978) Social Construction Theory, also called Social Constructivism, emerged in the 1970s and became a constant reference in the field of education. Social constructivism defines culture and environment as an active participant and educator in an individual's development and personal education. Vygotsky's theory depicts the environment, the student, and the teacher as always active (Liu & Matthews, 2011). The interaction between the individual, the environment, and the teacher, creates understanding, knowledge, and change. When a child or individual observes an environment, they internalize the social norms and activities by what they see and hear, creating a knowledge base. Individuals also bring their personal perspective to the learning environment, which fosters learning among all parties and creates social and individual change (Liu & Matthews, 2011). When children come to a level of development that reaches their learning level, they are able to think individually and challenge information to establish their own beliefs and knowledge base (Vygotsky, 1978). According to Vygotsky, "Consciousness is not the ability of an individual to know all the ontological answers to the universe, rather it is the ability to perceive meaningfully" (Liu & Matthews, 2011, p. 394). Social constructivism would apply to churches, in the way they operate, the roles of individuals that make up the church and the church's role in the lives of its members and the surrounding community. If Vygotsky's (1978) theory is applied to churches, children would receive information through observation and practice about how church leadership should be organized. Children would listen to the language of the church leadership and church members. They would also see that men are more visible as leaders, as staff, as pastors, as ministers. If women are observed with non-leadership roles or less visibility when it comes to ministry, this would

provide a foundation for a specific belief system on the social constructs of women's leadership in the church.

Therefore, in a SBC church, as in any other church and among other constructs, members would identify the role of the church itself in meeting the needs of the individuals in the church and live them out accordingly as individuals of the SBC social constructs. The social constructivism theory was used specifically to look at the needs of women in the church and how the church goes about meeting those needs. It also looked at the roles of women in the church in meeting those needs from a staff position or other method. Since most women ministering to women in churches are volunteers, the social constructs would point to that activity as the norm.

Social Constructivism Theory ties heavily into the culture established by religion. "Religion is one of the major social forces to preserve traditions, conserve established social order, stabilize worldviews, transmit values, and shape identities, especially in regard to gender" (Billson, 1995, as cited in Ewing & Allen, p. 95). Religion itself creates a culture by which individuals learn how to act, what to believe, and what is right and wrong. Social constructivism in the church has a major influence on how women receive ministry. Ministry positions have been historically created in the church based on the perceived cultural needs within the church's social constructs created by social movements (Wright, 2012). Women receive ministry on a volunteer basis due to the lack of women's ministry staff positions that have existed historically. Staff positions in the Southern Baptist denomination have been primarily exclusive of a women's minister position on staff for the purpose of ministering to women as a subset of the church congregation. The SBC is no exception to the influence of a church, because although the SBC uses the Bible as a foundation by which to build its social construct, culture has also influenced the timeliness of various ministries and constructs of the church structure. Although churches

initially supported the position of pastor and shepherd, the movement of Youth for Christ beginning in the 1940s led to the implementation of youth ministers in churches in the 1970s (Wright, 2012). Another cultural movement led to the beginning discussion of women's ministry in 2000. The SBC had a predetermined stance based on the organization's Christian beliefs in the inerrancy of Scripture (Baptist Faith and Message, 2000). However, with the influence of culture, the Southern Baptist Church began to change its beliefs on how ministry should be led and enacted in the church (Rogers, 2000). Holding on to foundational beliefs and primary social constructs, the Southern Baptist Church was able to begin formulating a ministry plan for women while holding to the beliefs they adhered to and taught in their church denomination (Baptist Faith and Message, 2000).

Current literature reveals criticism to Social Constructivism because it finds the theory contradictory in nature. If an individual is weighing information against his or her own personal perspective, the uncertainty comes to mind of whether or not one can guarantee learning is taking place. Another question that arises is whether or not the student is denying the accuracy of the information coming from a particular learning environment (Liu & Matthews, 2011). This can be paralleled in churches. Churches teach truth according to beliefs extracted from the Bible, but church members also have to make decisions in the midst of cultural influences. This can affect the teaching of the church and challenge its foundational beliefs. Social constructivism has been compared to a church because it is seen as its own doctrine with segmented beliefs surrounding social constructivism (Maxwell, 2010).

## **Related Literature**

### **Baptist Origins**

In the 1500s, Europe's religion was government-regulated by a Pope united with the kingdom that deemed Catholicism the national religion. However, the reformation of faith and beliefs was underway. Protestants were attracting believers in England, while Lutherans were expanding across Germany and Scandinavia (Bebbington, 2010).

As time progressed, England expanded to encompass the greatest religious diversity across the country. The Baptist denomination emerged as a product of the Protestant movement in Europe, which caused a separation from the Roman Catholic Church. The Protestants' activity birthed several denominations, including Anabaptists, Methodists, and Baptists (Bebbington, 2010). Inside the Protestant faith, Lutheran, Quaker, Presbyterian, Independent, Calvinist, Mennonite, Anabaptist, and Baptist denominations could be found practicing their own expressions of Christianity.

Anabaptists grew out of a conviction that the early stages of the Reformation were not radical enough. Anabaptists, along with Lutherans, and Calvinists believed that the original church of the apostles had fallen and lost its original purity (Estep, 1996). They coined the term "sola scriptura" saying that the church had left the potency of pure Scripture (Estep, 1996). Anabaptists were deemed with their name that meant "rebaptizers" (Gonzalez, 2004). They did not believe that infant baptism was what the New Testament taught Christians to practice. True Christians were to be baptized after choosing to believe in Jesus Christ, not when they were born into a religion assigned by the government ruling over where they were born. Anabaptists argued that if a child could not adequately choose what they believed at a young age, then they could not be baptized as a believer at a young age (Gonzalez, 2004).

During the time of the early 1600s when Calvinists were growing in number, Anabaptists and Baptists were connected. However, Baptists were first launched as General Baptists, out of a disagreement that an elect group of people were chosen as Christians (Bebbington, 2010). Anabaptists and Baptists also disagreed with each other in their stance on Reformers beliefs that the church was “a mixed body, whose holiness lies not in the personal lives of its members but in its head” (Hammett, 2005, p.56). Baptists did not see how pure holiness could be achieved with imperfect people, and therefore holiness could not be a criterion for the mark of a church (Hammett, 2005). Baptists and Anabaptists were no exception to the influencers during the time of the reformation, which also included Calvin, Luther, and Zwingli (Bebbington, 2010). However, moving into the 17th century, Baptists divided themselves even further and bore various Baptist denominations.

Some of the core beliefs that brought division from Anabaptists and other denominations were the Baptist beliefs in holiness, as aforementioned, catholicity, and apostolicity (Hammett, 2005). The idea of catholicity brought confusion and debate, due to semantics of the term catholic. However, the word used only in the context of its exact definition with no outside connotation was agreeable for most any denomination. Catholic with a lowercase “c” simply means worldwide, or universal (Hammett, 2005). When the Catholic denomination was born, the name came from the meaning of the word that the church was one entity sharing the same faith. However, as the Catholic faith added to its beliefs, some Christians had varied interpretations of how the real or authentic church should operate with biblical validity. When the government became a regulator of the Catholic faith, this caused issues for Christians who disagreed with various aspects of the Catholic Church.

Apostolicity was deemed an important mark of the Baptist church because the apostles were key to the early church according to the Bible (Acts 2:42). Hammet (2005) says it this way:

The Reformers saw the office of apostle as unique and non-repeatable; thus the mark of apostolicity was understood as faithfulness to the apostolic gospel and the apostolic teaching, preserved for us in the New Testament, which itself authorizes the Old Testament as equally authoritative, God-given teaching (Hammett, 2005, p. 60).

Baptists were denoted by a “believers only” membership (Hammett, 2005, p. 81). This is why the Baptist denomination has also been referred to as the believers’ church (Hammett, 2005). Baptists noted that it is primary to biblical teaching that followers of Christ believe in Him and commit their lives to Him. Therefore, membership in the Baptist church requires belief in Christ, commitment to follow His teachings, and a connection to other believers or members of the church, sharing “one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:5-6). The Baptist denomination grew out of the reformation with specific beliefs that hold to the idea of baptism by immersion. In the 1600s, Baptists rejected infant baptism, which began to set apart a set of beliefs that came to be known as Baptist theology. Baptist theology also holds to setting apart churches that reflect the early Christian church in Acts.

Baptists established themselves in England through the work of John Smyth who led the first re-baptism of himself and in turn started baptizing others in the early 1600s (Leonard, 2005). Others followed and the movement grew until 1631 when Roger Williams traveled to Massachusetts. He experienced persecution and was ostracized for his beliefs, leading him to Providence, Rhode Island, where he established the first Baptist church in America. Another

church was founded in Newport, RI in 1663 and then Boston, MA in 1665 (Leonard, 2005). By the 18th century, there were Baptist churches established throughout New England and into Virginia and other parts of the South (Leonard, 2005).

### **History of the Southern Baptist Denomination**

As the Baptist movement grew and spread throughout the country, it became a national denomination (Leonard, 2005). Growing pains began to emerge over the next century as the belief system of the national denomination was not consistent throughout the country. Baptists had several dividing factors related to the cultural issues of that time in history. A division on the stance of creating missions organizations, biblical higher education, and slavery began to cause a major separation between the northern Baptist movement and the Southern Baptist movement. The Northern Baptists were not in agreement with missions funding and organizations, because they believed it was perceived as men taking on the convicting work of the Holy Spirit (Leonard, 2005). The southern Baptists were in favor of slavery and did not see any biblical and for that matter, Baptist constraints. As tensions grew over the nomination of a Southern slave owner James Reeve in 1845, the Southern Baptists were unwavering in their endorsement of a slave owner as their candidate for missionary service (Leonard, 2005).

The next movement was to split the Baptist denomination by definition and organizational structure, when the Baptists divided because of the Civil War and disagreements over budgetary expenditures and slavery. In conjunction with the United States as a whole, the North was against slavery and the South found it biblically defensible to utilize slaves for work. In 1845, Southerners withdrew to form their own convention through a meeting at the First Baptist Church, Augusta, Georgia (Bebbington, 2010; Leonard, 2005).

Table 1

*History of the Founding of the Southern Baptist Denomination*

| Time Period | Location | Religion                     |
|-------------|----------|------------------------------|
| 1500s       | Europe   | One Religion-Catholicism     |
| 1600s       | Europe   | Protestant Diversity Birthed |
| 1631        | America  | Baptists Spread              |
| 1800s       | America  | Southern Baptists Are Born   |
| 1845        | America  | Southern Baptist Convention  |
| 1888        | America  | Women's Missionary Union     |

Throughout the history of the SBC, leadership has been left to men. The office of pastor, elder, and committee member was specifically reserved for men, and there was little question of women joining in those roles (Bebbington, 2010). Women were busy in the home, assisting their husbands and serving in the church with their gifts, while teaching only children and other women. Church structures have retained these roles for over a century. Many of these social constructs originated from what North American's labeled as a "social gospel" (Bebbington, 2010). Americans perceived that Baptists wanted to add expectations for the way that people lived beyond having a salvation experience, saving people from eternal suffering after death. However, Baptists encouraged a change of life after salvation to incorporate biblical principles into their lives, rather than simply securing an eternal position. The perception of a social gospel presented by Baptists came from a notion for Americans that Baptists did not just want to save people from eternal suffering after death, but that Baptists had a desire to conform individuals to a societal way of living that was not completely found in the Bible (Bebbington, 2010). Baptists defended their actions with true biblical justification that Christians are not just saved for the



purpose of heaven after life on earth, but that they are to live a heavenly life on earth. The issue came when the societal way of living came from biblical principles, but extrapolated rules that were beyond the truths of the Bible. Baptists at the time believed there was evidence to each view. However, critics questioned the denomination's unwavering relationship to the Bible (Bebbington, 2010). Some of the societal regulations that Baptists interpreted as norms for the denomination included the role of women and leadership in the church. At this time, women maintaining leadership positions in any role in society was controversial, let alone the church. The leadership of women in ministry that was questioned as social gospel, versus a biblical mandate, was the same as the controversy centuries later, throughout history, to present day. The role of women remained a controversy during the wake of the Baptist denomination, and with the SBC (Bebbington, 2010). However, women's organizations began to increase in number in the wake of missions' work and service to the church and the community that was woman-led. When financial needs and labor needs arose, women established leadership roles to meet the needs of their denomination, regardless of the Baptist's position on women's roles. This led to the beginning of the Women's Missionary Union (WMU). The SBC was able to maintain its viewpoint on women in leadership in the church, because the WMU formed a separate establishment outside of its leadership.

**Women's Missionary Union (WMU).** The WMU was established in 1888, for the purpose of aiding the SBC in mission work. The organization was originally elected as Women's Mission Societies to be self-governing and self-supporting. The SBC requested policies created by men, however, women responded with "This is a Woman's Missionary Union, and there is no need for gentlemen to frame our resolutions" (Bebbington, 2010, p. 168). It was renamed the Women's Missionary Union in 1890. In 1917, the WMU resolved to support

“those forces in our country which make for righteousness: patriotism, Sabbath observance, the sacredness of the home, the effort toward a more general re-establishment of the family altar, and the crusade against poverty, disease, illiteracy, vice, and crime” (Bebbington, 2010, p. 169). Because of its strong stances tied to political movements, the WMU became an advocate for women’s rights, particularly women’s rights to vote in 1918. WMU women also played a large part of the feminist movement in 1960 in entering the job market (Robert, 2004). The WMU was vital in raising funds to support missionaries and in funding the SBC during a time of devastating debt. The WMU was the primary means by which women ministered (Robert, 2004).

Overtime, the WMU was portrayed as an increasingly vital organization to Southern Baptist ministry and American culture (Maxwell, 2010). Today, the WMU remains as an auxiliary entity to the SBC. It is also one of the largest women’s organizations in the world with over one million members. According to the WMU (2012) website, “WMU’s main purpose, unchanged since its founding, is to educate and involve adults, youth, children, and preschoolers in the cause of Christian missions.”

**Baptist Faith and Message.** As a result of convention controversy on the role of women in the church Southern Baptist-wide, in 2000, the leadership of the SBC made an addendum regarding women’s ministry roles, to the *Baptist Faith and Message*, the foundational documentation of Southern Baptist beliefs or statement of faith (Baptist Faith and Message, 2000; Rogers, 2000). Churches were in an interdenominational debate on what ministry women could lead in the church. The SBC made a stance on its beliefs on women’s roles in the church. The following addendums were added and relate to the role of men versus women with regards to leadership in the church and in the home:

Article VI. The Church. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture. (Baptist Faith and Message, 2000, para. 15)

Article XVIII. The Family. The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to his people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation. (Baptist Faith and Message, 2000, para. 32).

During this time of defining women's roles in the church and home, the SBC took repetitive stances for women's submission in the home and authority only to women or children in the church (Baptist Faith and Message, 2000). President of the SBC in 2004, Al Mohler, in response to a letter from the Vatican "to instruct church's bishops on the issues of women, feminism, and gender roles" (Baptist Press, 2004, p1), making a statement on its stance regarding feminism and gender roles said, "the letter (from the Vatican) should be respected for its clear affirmation of the invaluable role of women as wives and mothers" (Baptist Press, 2004, p1). Bebbington (2010) relays women's roles in ministry this way, "All, nevertheless, agreed that churches could not exist without the varied forms of female ministry. Women were at the heart of Baptist life" (p. 175). This focus on women's roles focused women away from ministering to

men, still providing the opportunity to pointedly meet the needs of women in the church (Baptist Faith and Message, 2004).

**Lifeway Women.** Since the WMU was founded primarily for engaging women to aid in missions abroad, the Women's Enrichment Ministry was founded to supplement the WMU and support churches in local evangelism and discipleship of women. In the 1970s, the Southern Baptist denomination acknowledged the need for a Baptist denomination women's ministry supplement to the WMU (Johnson, 2011). The name changed from Women's Enrichment Ministry to Lifeway Women in 1971. Lifeway Women is a segment of Lifeway Christian Resources. Lifeway is a non-profit organization led by the SBC that supplies Christian literature resources (Lifeway.com/women, 2011).

### **Women's Ministry Studies in Southern Baptist Seminaries and Colleges**

**SBC Seminaries Background for Women's Ministry Studies.** During the civil rights movement in the 1960s, the primary focus of the Southern Baptist denomination was on the role of women in the church, since the issue was being addressed culturally as to the role of women in the workplace and the home, not only by the SBC, but by other denominations, such as the Vatican addressing the role of women to Catholic Church bishops (Baptist Press, 2004). However, the shift of focusing on women in need of ministry began at the turn of the 21st century as the Southern Baptist seminaries began to emerge with special studies tailored to meeting the needs of women in the church. In 1998, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS) introduced a women's studies certificate in response to the request of women ministering in churches and desiring training. Rhonda Kelley, wife of NOBTS president, Chuck Kelley, was researching women's ministry at the time (Moore, 1998).

In 2003, six total Southern Baptist seminaries, including NOBTS, collectively presented women's ministry studies as a new major. This was shortly after the Baptist Faith and Message was amended to define the roles of women in churches as focused on ministering to women and children (Baptist Faith and Message, 2000). Although the SBC still adheres to women's roles in ministry strictly adhering to women leading women, or children, the SBC responded with a program that would encourage women serving in ministry roles, within the perimeters of the Baptist Faith and Message.

The secular media have directed their focus to the revisions in Article VI, 'The Church.' Why did our committee decide to deal with the issue of women in the pastorate? Simply because we were driven by biblical authority, a sense of urgency, and the near unanimous verdict of our churches (Rogers, 2000, para. 7).

In addition to Dr. Rhonda Kelley, Dr. Dorothy Patterson was an influential participant in creating women's ministry programs in the SBC seminaries as a women's ministry studies professor at Southwestern Baptist Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. She was vocal in supporting women's ministry and valued the idea greatly,

Certainly women should be called to share the Gospel with all who cross their paths (Matthew 28:19-20); yes, your guide better be the holy Spirit of God, and you can rest in knowing that the Holy Spirit within will NEVER contradict HIS written Word without. That Word is found on a printed page for you to read and embrace as the boundary to every decision. And what heritage women have – women who have been leaders in the Kingdom, women who have borne sons and daughters and nurtured them in the faith to produce the succeeding generations, women who have served their families and their neighbors and their congregations (Patterson, 2004).

In 2003, all six of the SBC seminaries pioneered by the leadership of Patterson formed women's ministry study programs. Four out of six seminaries still have women's ministry programs in 2013.

***Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.*** Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary (SEBTS) located in Wake Forest, NC, has a biblical Women's Institute offering three certificate courses in Women's Ministry Studies and one Women's Ministry Studies degree (sebts.edu, 2012).

***Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.*** Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS), located in Louisville, Kentucky, offers a diploma program through the Women's Ministry Institute for those who are interested in studying more about women's ministry, preparing for women's ministry, and learning from women with many years of experience in ministering to women (sbts.edu/women, 2012).

***Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.*** Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS), located in Fort Worth, Texas, offers two Masters of Divinity degrees in Women's Studies and Women's Ministry concentrations. The seminary also offers a Master of Arts in Christian Education with a Women's Ministry Concentration and a Homemaking concentration. Lastly, SWBTS offers a leadership certificate in Women's Studies (swbts.edu, 2012).

***New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.*** New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (NOBTS), located in New Orleans, Louisiana, offers a Masters of Divinity in Christian education with a concentration in women's ministry studies, a Masters of Divinity with a concentration in Women's Ministry Studies, and a Master of Arts with a concentration in Women's Ministries. NOBTS also offers an Associate Degree in Women's Ministry specifically

for equipping women to minister to other women. This Associate's Degree can be paired with a Bachelor's Degree in Christian Education to complete a four-year degree.

**Liberty University.** In 2008, Monica Rose (Brennan) produced a dissertation concerning the need for women's ministry positions in churches. Her dissertation caught the attention of the Liberty University, located in Lynchburg, Virginia, where she was studying as a Doctor of Ministry student and was asked to launch a women's ministry program at the school in 2009 (Rose, 2008). The program has graduated nearly 800 women in the last five years with women who are trained in aspects of women's ministry, such as creating educational programs, developing Bible studies, establishing women's conferences and fellowship events, and lay counseling ([www.liberty.edu](http://www.liberty.edu), 2012).

### **Role of the Church**

The role of the church is integral to the social construction and ideology of all ministries in the church as it creates the framework for Christian living and philosophy of ministry (Clowney, 1995). Church denominations consist of leadership hierarchies that pass down beliefs and principles for all churches in the convention to follow. The church primarily should have an impact on its local community in addition to the Church's impact as a whole (Clowney, 1995). There are various thoughts relating to the evangelical church and then specifically to Baptist polity.

**Church Function.** The Church is called to three primary actions: nurturing, worshiping, and witnessing (Clowney, 1995). In John 4:24, the Bible speaks of God's command and our natural desire as true believers to worship Him. The elements of worship can take place corporately and include preaching the Word, prayer, and song. The Church worships God because "His glory draws it and His will directs it" (Clowney, 1995). God's very essence and

being makes us want to worship Him, and His jealousy demands that believers worship Him, “do not worship any other god, for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God” (Ex. 34:14).

The purpose of nurturing on behalf of the church is to nurture others in knowing the Lord, doing the Lord’s will, and being like the Lord. God sets the example of nurturing through God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Each of the triune beings has a specific role in nurturing God’s chosen people. This example is set forth in the relationship seen between God and His children in order to replicate this act to other believers as they join the church body in faith (Clowney, 1995). Nurturing takes place through mentoring, teaching, and discipling men, women, and children in the church.

In the New Testament, Paul speaks of “being all things to all people in order to win some” (1 Cor. 9:22). Women need to model womanhood to other women for the purpose of fulfilling the final primary role of the church: witnessing (Clowney, 1995). Men cannot be all things to women. Men are challenged in identifying with each aspect and experience in a woman’s life as another woman can. Women can model a way of godly living that other women can observe and identify with. This is the aspect of winning others to God and fulfilling God’s command to believers until He returns again to receive His church. One example in Scripture talks about older women teaching younger women to love their husbands and children, and to maintain purity (Titus 2: 3-5). Women are given the responsibility for teaching other women. Men are not given the responsibility of teaching women on their specific role as godly women.

**Baptist Church.** According to Hammett (2005), there are a number of overlapping views in agreement on the role of the evangelical church and then specifically to the Baptist church. Some theologians would tend to narrow the roles into broader, more general areas, whereas other theologians would add to the list of roles the church has with more specific areas



that are not as broad as listing only two or three roles. Hammett (2005) agrees that worship and evangelism are primary ministry roles of the church, in addition to teaching and fellowship. Teaching and fellowship also could each partially overlap with Clowney's (1995) idea of nurturing. Hammett (2005) speaks specifically to teaching and fellowship with a more detailed outline of how each of those ministries should be enacted.

In regards to the churches' ministry of teaching, the purpose is rooted biblically and is a requirement of the elders to have the ability to teach (1 Tim. 3:2). In addition, however, all Christians are called "to teach and admonish one another" (Col. 3:16). God is a God of truth, but that truth is not intuitive, it is learned through the Word of God (Hammett, 2005).

The ministry of fellowship adopted by the church is also rooted in the Bible and an attribute of God Himself (Acts 2:42). The church is seen as a temple of the Holy Spirit, whose very essence emits fellowship between the other beings of God the Father, and God the Son, Jesus Christ. By emulating this nature as believers in God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the church practices fellowship with God and His people as one unit or body. This ministry of the church creates belonging among His people who believe and practice their faith in God (Hammett, 2005).

### **Structure of the Church**

In addition to the church's role, the church also has a structure to hold. The structure is representative of the order God intended when He created the world and mankind. God desired that man would submit to God and woman to man; because the woman according to the Bible was made for man (1 Cor. 11:8). This order is representative of the church in association to God (Clowney, 1995). The church is submissive to Jesus Christ, who is submissive to God. In the same way, the man is the head of the household, with the wife in submission to her husband

(Clowney, 1995; Martin & Stovall, 2008). Since women are not the head of the household, Baptists hold a hard line of clarity drawn from the Bible on the role of the church as a place of ministry in regard to witness, teaching, fellowship, nurturing. It is not so clear when it comes to where women serve in those ministry activities set forth by the church. A few particular passages that illustrate the debate on women serving in the church include biblical passages that note women, such as Priscilla, serving as a deaconess. The office of deaconess is argued from the passages regarding deacons in 1 Tim. 3:11. There is a discrepancy of the meaning of the word *gynaikas*, which is the Greek word for women and can also mean wives. So the question is whether or not the Scripture is speaking of women as a whole or just the wives of the aforementioned deacons in previous verses of the Bible. Paul also mentions a woman named Phoebe and notes her as a *diakonos* or “servant” of the church. However, many biblical scholars as well as non-scholars interpret this word to be equivalent to deacon, as it is the responsibility of a deacon to serve.

This leads many churches to lean towards the acceptance of women serving in the church in roles equivalent to a deacon or deaconess, however, to reduce controversy, the title is often omitted. A number of Baptist ministers, believe churches of the Baptist denomination are “free to recognize deaconesses” for their service, because they are clearly differing from the role of elders that hold to teaching and leading men. The primary issue that Paul warns women against, is holding authority over men by teaching Scripture to them in 1 Tim. 2:12-13. However, he never denies the right for women to maintain authority over women (Hammett, 2005). Clowney (1995) is in agreement with this from a broader evangelical perspective. He adds that women should not hold spiritual leadership positions over men, because it confuses that order in the

home that God establishes. Women leading men in the church makes it difficult to maintain the leadership order in the home God has designed for humanity (Clowney, 1995).

### **Demand for Gender-Specific Ministry**

The demand for ministry specific to women stems from both a biblical and a psychological rationale that validates the need for ministry specific to women. Women are different from men in the way they relate, communicate, and understand others. These differences come from varied “cognitive abilities, emotional expression, and psychopathology” (Kopala & Keitel, 2003, p. 86). Psychologists and mental health professionals have determined that the treatment women and men receive should be different when dealing with various psychological, biological, and emotional problems. Mental health professionals are working to treat men and women more accurately and specifically, from psychotherapy to medication prescriptions (Kopala & Keitel, 2003), recognizing that different modalities are required for effective outcomes.

The same is true if women do not receive ministry tailored to their needs and communication style, there will be significant gaps in churches offering successful women’s ministry to women in order to nurture them. For instance, women deal with emotional issues differently, being more prone to struggles with depression, abuse, and aging (Neuger, 2001). Neuger (2001) talks about the higher ratios related to these struggles than men. Five to nine percent of women compared to two percent of men are suffering from major depression (Neuger, 2001). Women are also 12 times more likely than men to experience intimate violence such as rape; and, when they do, the response is shame and guilt, leading to secrecy (Neuger, 2001). Neuger (2001) also addresses how women struggle with the issue of aging at a higher rate than men. In regards to aging, women live longer than men, have different retirement needs and are

often uncertain of decisions to make on their own regarding finances and their future (Neuger, 2001). Psychology backs the idea of an emphasis on gender-specific ministry (Kopala & Keitel, 2003). Scientists have studied the developmental differences between men and women from a young age (Kopala & Keitel, 2003). Biologically, it seems that nature prevails over nurture in regards to gender-specific differences (Kopala & Keitel, 2003). According to Kopala and Keitel's (2003) research, these differences appeared "in motor, visual, and vocalization measures before much socialization has occurred" (p. 88). Research also shows that "the most compelling evidence for a biological role is the fact that cognitive patterns are affected by past and current exposure to sex hormones" (Kopala & Keitel, 2003, p.88). The research asserts that women ministering to women can lead to more effective ministry and nurturing of women.

### **Women's Unique Struggles**

The varieties of struggles women may face include abortion, infertility, divorce, grief, eating disorders, depression, violence, and addiction. While not all of these issues are specific to women, the need for women to receive aid from other women for the sake of sense-making and from a biblical perspective lends to the argument that women need a women's minister available for specific circumstances faced by many women in the church. Hislop (2010) provides nine specific reasons why women should minister to women:

1. Women best model godly femininity.
2. Generally, women process pain differently from men.
3. Women understand women.
4. Most women have natural shepherding abilities as nurturers.
5. Women shepherding women may reduce the risk of emotional or physical adultery between male pastors and women parishioners.

6. Some women are unable to receive shepherding from men.
7. Women shepherding women will enhance effectiveness of limited pastoral staff resources.
8. Women are given spiritual gifts needed for shepherding.
9. It is biblical (Titus 2: 3-5) (Hislop, 2010, p. 28-30)

**Abortion.** Abortion is a controversial issue, politically, spiritually, and culturally.

However it must be addressed in the church, because women are facing the emotions associated with the aftermath of abortion. These emotions include guilt, shame, post-traumatic anxiety, depression, and anger (Hislop, 2010). The church is not immune to the women facing post-abortion struggles. Forty-three percent of women who receive abortions are Protestant (Hislop, 2010). Because of this truth, Hislop states, “we can no longer assume there are not abortive women in *our church*” (p141).

**Infertility.** Infertility can often be an overlooked issue for women, but it does not reduce the impact on the woman that experiences it. Hislop (2010) states, “according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 7.3 Americans or one in eight couples of childbearing age are infertile” (p. 82). Infertility has deep ramifications beyond the inability to have children. It can affect a woman physically, emotionally and spiritually, as well as her marriage (Hislop, 2010). Infertility can be a major life crisis involving an immense amount of grief over the following experiences that will never come to fruition:

- ◆ Loss of the pregnancy and birth experience.
- ◆ Loss of a genetic legacy and loss for future contributing citizens of the next generation.
- ◆ Loss of the parenting experience.

- ◆ Loss of a grandparent relationship.
- ◆ Loss of feelings of self-worth.
- ◆ Loss of stability in family and personal relationships.
- ◆ Loss of work productivity.
- ◆ Loss of a sense of spirituality and sense of hope for the future (Hislop, 2010, p84).

Whether a woman experiences grief associated with all or some of these losses, the pain is still great and requires outside assistance and guidance.

**Divorce.** Women experiencing divorce will be overcome with a number of challenging circumstances. Women have to make many decisions, typically while managing children, a career, a home, and personal emotions. Emotions can lead to thoughts of shame, rejection, suicide, and isolation (Hislop, 2010). Divorce can leave a woman feeling like there is no place for her in society. Women in the church can also feel like spiritual failures (George, 2007). Being around married couples that were mutual friends with the former spouse can feel out of place and conjure deep emotions of regret and loss. Divorced women deeply need community when they feel most alone (Hislop, 2010). A support network is vital to survival (Hislop, 2010).

**Grief.** Grief is a side effect of loss. It can come from small, temporary losses of greater long-term impact. Grief is a real circumstance that can lead to depression and suicide. The length of time someone experiences grief and the depth to which the grief is felt, depends on the level of attachment to the person lost (Hislop, 2010). Grief can require a great deal of support from others (Kopala & Keitel, 2003). Women face the emotion of grief often due to the loss of loved ones, abortion, infertility and divorce. The stress level typically becomes challenging to manage while many other responsibilities remain (Mabery-Foster, 1999). The loss of loved ones brings grief that lasts long beyond the funeral. It takes months of processing to move through the stages

of grief. Abortion, eating disorders, violence, and divorce can often be overlooked by the church or entail so much privacy, that a woman will not know how to function through the grief of an abortion or divorce (Mabery-Foster, 1999).

**Eating disorders.** As many as ten million females are fighting life-and-death battles with an eating disorder (Hislop, 2010). According to Hislop (2010) “some suspect the number is higher, given the secretive nature of bulimia and the unknown number of very young and older women who suffer from eating disorders” (p. 156). Eating disorders flow from binge eating (binge eating disorder), to self-starvation (anorexia nervosa), to bingeing and purging (bulimia nervosa) (Hislop, 2010; Kopala & Keitel, 2003). The reasons for women’s eating disorder vary, including their views of themselves, their views of food, history of abuse, and distorted thinking (Hislop, 2010).

**Depression.** Women struggle with depression at a higher rate of two times more than men (Hislop, 2010). An average of 5 to 9% of women deal with depression at any given time and 25% of women will deal with depression in their lifetimes (Neuger, 2001). These higher rates of depression are linked to biological, genetic, cultural, and psychological vulnerabilities (Kopala & Keitel, 2003). Treating depression has many variations of therapy and requires support networks from family and friends (Kopala & Keitel, 2003) (Schweitzer, 2010). While treatment of a depressive episode is typically seen as the most important, preventing a recurrence is equally important, as depressive episodes are 50% more likely to repeat once, 70% more likely to repeat after a second episode, and 90% more likely to repeat after a third episode (Kopala & Keitel, 2003).

**Violence.** In the area of domestic violence, women are two-and-a-half times more likely to be a victim of violence than a man (Neuger, 2001). Women also report experiencing intimate

violence, such as rape, at a rate of 25% of women versus only 2% of all men who report experiencing intimate violence in their lifetime. Women struggle the most with opening up to others about the fact that they are victims of violence. Women often believe it is their own fault, so they are afraid to share it (Miles, 2000). They are also afraid that if the abuser finds out that they have shared about the abuse with anyone, it will lead to even more violence. It is very difficult for women to open up about the violence they are experiencing (Cooper-White, 2011). It takes a lot of support for women to trust someone outside their situation and to believe it is okay to change their life (Miles, 2000).

**Addiction.** Addictions come from nature, nurture, learned behavior, and environment. They affect people in various areas from eating, to chemical substances, to fitness, to work, to play, to money, to perfectionism, and even church work (Hislop, 2010). Addictions require professional care and knowledge on how to help a woman work through the real issues behind the addictions, which typically stem from relationship attachment issues formulated in childhood (McKechnie & Hill, 2011). Helping a woman identify the core issue behind the addiction is the key to recovery (Hislop, 2010). Women's ministry staff can offer available support to identify the need for professional care to work through core issues that often prompt addictions.

**Chronic pain/aging process.** Chronic pain related to disease or the aging process can bring about challenges emotionally, physically and spiritually for a woman (Hislop, 2010). Women face anger over letting go of a career, household responsibilities, hobbies, and caregiving for their families (Hislop, 2010). Women often question God and direct anger toward their families, friends, doctors, and even God (Hislop, 2010). As women age they also can struggle with medical and retirement issues and questions that they may not have adequate input from which to make confident decisions (Neuger, 2001; Hislop, 2010).



## **Types of Ministry**

The demands of women in the church are numerous. Churches maintain the role of caring for the community, and women make up the majority of the church congregation. Women's areas of needs include nurturing, counseling, mentoring/discipleship, program organization, and evangelism, as well as the need to address life realistically (Fitzpatrick & Cornish, 1997; Hammett, 2005; Mabery-Foster, 1999). Women are looking for women's ministry programs in their churches, led by female leaders to accommodate the many needs of women (Martin & Stovall, 2008). With women comprising 44% of the church, the needs of that majority must be met, reaching out to "women of all ages and all stages of life and circumstance" (George, 2007, p. 60).

**Nurturing.** Nurturing is accepted to be a specific role of the church; however, it must be enacted by women reaching out to other women. Nurturing is important for every member at every age level and should be specific to age and gender (Hammett, 2005). Women are directed to reach out to other women due to their life experiences and maturity, to show other women how to live responsibility and reflect a life that emulates Jesus Christ, the one who came to save the lost from their sins, and restore a right relationship with God (Titus 2:3-5).

**Counseling.** In the area of counseling, there are numerous situations such as marriage problems, grief, and abuse that need special attention when it comes to women's ministry. These situations include single women, married women, working women, women in the home, women with unbelieving spouses, women of children with learning disabilities, and women dealing with grief (Fitzpatrick & Cornish, 1997).

Single women and married women face different struggles. Single women face the struggles of loneliness, insecurity, and lack of fulfillment (Mabery-Foster, 1999). Married

women can face marriage problems, childbearing or childrearing problems. Both single and married women struggle to balance the many demands of life, whether managing the home, working outside the home, or both. Working women, and women in the home, struggle to meet their own personal needs, in addition to the demands of spouses, children, work, church and the community (Mabery-Foster, 1999).

Women often look to the church for women to aid them in dealing with their struggles. Women who may need ongoing professional counseling still look to a female lay counselor for a variety of reasons (George, 2007). When working through the counseling process to gain clarity, the needs go beyond one-on-one pastoral counseling (Neuger, 2001). Some of these reasons include the inability to identify with a male counselor, such as a pastor, who is unable to empathize with many of women's struggles. Women also struggle to be honest with a pastor, but may be more honest with a peer or female lay counselor. Women also associate a "stigma to one's need for counseling," such as exhibiting a lack of faith or having a mental illness (George, 2007, p. 54). A woman may also consider struggles to be a part of life that can be dealt with outside a counseling office. Neuger (2001) states, "much of this work is done in women's lives through friendships and intimate partners, through educational experiences or group conversations, and through everyday encounters with events that challenge core assumptions" (Neuger, 2001). Women also struggle to have time to meet with a counselor consistently, but would benefit from calling a lay counselor to meet with periodically (George, 2007).

**Mentoring/Discipleship.** In the area of leadership, it is important that women lead other women in the church to fulfill the role of women in ministry according to Titus 2:3-5,

Likewise, teach the older women to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good. Then they can train the younger

women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the Word of God (Titus 2:3-5).

Women are not to be left alone to figure out the Christian life. Women should have someone available to guide them. Men are capable of being leaders, but the question of appropriateness arises. The literature suggests the need for a woman to lead a woman to avoid pitfalls for pastors (Martin and Stovall, 2008). Women are in need of discipleship, leadership, and mentoring offered in a personal format that impacts individual women greatly. “A woman-to-woman ministry is the older nurturing the younger to grow into a mature believer who then begins to nurture her own babes in Christ. The term conveys a sense of feeding, protecting, supporting, and encouraging” (Martin & Stovall, 2008, p. 122). Younger women can learn from older women -- how to live godly lives and how to work through life’s circumstances with direction from godly women who have experienced those same aspects of life (Mabery-Foster, 1999).

Women need to foster mentoring relationships through a programmatic process that breeds trust. Without the element of trust, women cannot come to the place of transparency required to create a true mentoring relationship. Communities no longer offer the context of older women training and teaching younger women through family relationships. Children move away at young ages, leaving their mothers, grandmothers, and aunts behind (George, 2007). Without forming new one-on-one relationships, women are left on their own to deal with life’s struggles and challenges at every turn. Dr. Thom Rainer, author of *High Expectations: The Remarkable Secret for Keeping People in your Church*, stated from his personal research: “Overall . . . only one-fourth of the churches offered one-to-one mentoring or discipleship.

Conventional wisdom states that unmet needs are often stated as the reason people leave the church or become inactive” (as cited in George, 2007, p. 68).

**Serving.** Women are seen in the New Testament as servants to other believers and to the lost. Widows served in the church and received funding for their service to God and were seen as worthy of wages for devoting their time and work to the Lord. Women are listed as deaconesses and their primary role is service (Clowney 1995). One example of a deaconess in the Bible is Phoebe. Phoebe served in the early church and was seen as a vital ministry participant at the start of Christianity. Paul called on the Roman church to see her as ordained in her service to God (Clowney, 1995).

**Programs.** Two Southern Baptist women, Jaye Martin and Terry Stovall (2008), wrote a book entitled, *Women Leading Women*. These women explored the aspects of women’s ministry within the church and determined the necessary programs for effective women’s ministry. Their findings were based on personal experience in women’s ministry in Southern Baptist churches. Certain programs are seen to be necessary and effective for carrying out women’s ministry according to the Bible. These programs and activities include Bible study, prayer, fellowship, missions, mentoring, discipleship, and counseling (Martin & Stovall, 2008).

- Bible study is a helpful tool for teaching women the Bible, which is the ultimate guide for their lives. All ministry should stem from and point back to the Bible as the authority in our lives.
- Prayer brings women closer together and the Bible calls us to prayer for the purpose of growing closer to God, casting our burdens on God and coming together with others for the sake of fellowship in Jesus’ name (Martin & Stovall, 2008).

- Missions is the primary focus of all Christians according to the Great Commission, and evangelism should be a program that is part of all church ministries, not excluding women's ministries (Martin & Stovall, 2008).
- Mentoring and discipleship allow women to experience intentional growth.
- Counseling is vital to women receiving wise words and advice when experiencing difficult circumstances, or breaking free from past trauma (Mabery-Foster, 1999).

Women are looking for church-sponsored support groups to “share information, testimonials, techniques for coping, and so on” (George, 2007, p. 70). They want to talk, listen and find friendships in small groups. Groups set up by the church offer an anticipated level of integrity and trust related to that small group of women. Small groups allow women from various backgrounds and age groups to learn from each other. Women also seek fellowship with other women, whether the church offers it or not. However, the church is a more wholesome place to provide or accommodate activities for fellowship that women can enjoy. It is better for the church to offer this opportunity complete with mature Christian women, rather than a secular alternative that would not encourage their walk with God (George, 2007).

**Evangelism.** Witnessing also involves being all things to all people and women have the greatest opportunity to reach other women. Paul speaks of this truth and calling for Christians to win others over to Christ (1 Cor. 9:19-23). It is difficult for men to identify completely with women, as they cannot identify with the differences found in men and women, and their roles in the church and the home. Women who live these truths have the ability and responsibility to model the role of womanhood in the church for other women, whereas men can only speak of the role, but can neither model nor identify with it.

**Unconscious issues.** According to a Barna study (2012), women answered positively in high percentages of satisfaction in regards to their faith. More than 73% of women say they find joy in their faith, yet they tend to blame God rather than people for disappointment (Barna, 2012). This can create disconnects between daily hurts and struggles and women's faith in God (Kinnaman, 2012). The Barna (2012) research also reveals that women, according to the survey find their greatest hurt and disappointment in relationships with others. These relationships include death of a loved one, marriages (especially marriages that end in divorce), and other family members, such as children (Barna, 2012).

Women seem to address their faith separately from their life disappointments (Kinnaman, 2012). In other words, women often split their faith and life circumstances and place them in separate categories in their minds. Kinnaman (2012) points out the fact that seeing faith as joy continually is unrealistic. He believes that women are not honest in their surveys when their results appear overly positive.

### **Justification for Paid Staff**

**Biblical support.** Justifying compensation for the workload of a women's ministries position can be managed by looking at the Bible and comparing to other paid church staff positions. The specific areas for women's needs could also apply to men.. However, because the Bible directs older women to teach the younger women, it is important that women have a woman leading them on female specific issues, such as submission to men, singleness as a woman, marriage, and childrearing (Titus 2:4). In addition, the Bible gives examples of women who were paid for their service to the church in ministry. Women who were single and widows had no way to earn income, so the church provided for their needs financially as they gave their time in service to the church (Clowney, 1995).

**Organizational support.** Since the Bible sets precedence for women in ministry receiving compensation for provision of their needs, reviewing job descriptions of other fulltime paid ministry workers in the church creates a modern-day benchmark rationale, foundation, and process for compensating women for their ministry. Although church scholars and Baptists in particular find the role of women working in the church biblically difficult to define, there are even other positions that do not even receive mention in the Bible and exist in the church today. In his review of women in ministry in Baptist churches, Hammett (2005) states,

We have a number of positions in contemporary churches not mentioned or contemplated in the New Testament. It would be difficult to find explicit biblical support for the idea of a youth minister, or minister of education or music, yet we have found such positions useful. Deaconesses, may be a similarly useful position, even if it is not a biblically mandated office (p. 201).

Churches have implemented other positions based on the effects of culture and the merit in positions that can aid the church in its primary purposes. Youth ministers are a prime example of a position implemented on account of a cultural influence. With the Young Life ministry started by Jim Rayburn in high schools to reach youth and the Youth for Christ ministry movement sweeping across the United States and Canada, churches were socially influenced to change their constructs in how they believed ministry should be structured (Wright, 2012). As churches have grown in organization, structure, and size, more positions have been created to aid in church management and ministry. These positions according to the SBC include executive pastors, visitation pastors, business executive pastors, administrative assistants, children's ministry directors, worship directors, musicians, custodial personnel, sound and technology staff, and others (compstudy.lifeway.com).

In comparing a women's ministry director job description from the First Baptist Church Elk Grove, with a children's ministry director position from First Baptist Church of Bedford, Indiana, the responsibilities were comparable for the two-fulltime positions. Both job descriptions were obtained from Southern Baptist churches. Each of these churches saw the opportunity and necessity for paid positions beyond the pastor and administrative staff. Both job descriptions outlined a requirement to oversee, develop, grow and administer programs. Both job descriptions also required oversight and management of volunteers and were accountable to another church staff member. Both positions were designed to reach a specific audience of the church and meet their specific needs.

The women's ministry director position had specific responsibilities related to the church audience of women. The job description required leadership for women's events, Bible study programs, visitation, mentoring, and discipleship. The women's ministry director was also responsible for budget, goals, planning and coordinating with other ministries in the church (First Baptist Church Elk Grove, fbceg.org, 2012).

The children's ministry director position had specific responsibilities related to the church audience of children, from preschool through fifth grade. The children's ministry director was responsible for developing leaders in the children's ministry, overseeing specific children's programs and activities, coordinating with all children's ministry workers, and reporting updates to the pastoral staff. The children's ministry director was also expected to be available for family outreach through the children's programs and direct meetings and outreach in conjunction with the Senior Pastor (firstbaptistchurchbeford.com, 2012).



**Church member support.** Some church members support the idea of women's ministry paid staff. Three women surveyed on the importance of women's ministry said the following regarding paid women's ministry staff in church:

(From Virginia) Most churches are providing nice women's ministries now, and these are generally done by women in the church rather than paid staff. Pastors should support, encourage, and understand the importance of women's ministries. Realize that when women come, children come, then men generally come.

(From Florida) I believe that simply asking a church lady who is willing to organize women's events in their spare time, just isn't enough. It will take guidance and leadership from a staff member to organize a consistent women's ministry.

(From Illinois) It has been my experience that church boards generally expect women's ministry functions to be self-supporting rather than viewing them as worthy recipients for church budget funds. (George, 2007, p. 60)

### **Summary**

The literature reveals Baptist history and the role of women in ministry. The groundwork is laid for tying in the theoretical framework of Vygotsky's (1978) Social Construction Theory with specifically meeting the needs of women in the church through women's ministry. Just as a historical movement brought the position of youth pastors to churches, the conflict of women in ministry in the late 1990s and early 2000s brought a cultural movement that challenged the social constructs of the Southern Baptist Church to change and adapt to the needs of women while still adhering to fundamental beliefs of their faith. As Baptists have developed in their organizational structure related to social needs, women's ministry has become a more primary focus, just in the

past decade. This in turn brought more opportunities for women's ministry studies in Baptist affiliated colleges and seminaries.

However, the literature does not provide insight into the best practices of churches experiencing success with implementing fulltime women's ministry staff in their churches. Since there is a need for women to receive ministry and there is justification for women's ministry leaders to be paid staff, this comparative case study explored and provided an example for other churches looking to implement women's ministry paid staff positions in their churches to address and meet the needs of women.

The literature has a significant gap in the area of current research on successfully enacting women's ministry positions in the evangelical church. The challenge exists to effectively administer women's ministries to adequately address the vast needs of women (Hislop, 2010). The literature reveals that there have been attempts to move women's ministry forward in the Baptist church, based on the biblical foundation that make up the social constructs of the Baptist church (Martin & Stovall, 2008). As Vygotsky's (1978) Social Construct Theory explains, individuals learn by relating themselves to their social environments. The lack of women's ministers in the church provides the social construct by observation that women's ministers are not part of the church leadership. Since the church as an environment functions as an educator, offering research related to a successful implementation of women's minister positions would allow church leaders and members to recognize the need for women's ministers. In turn, the church leaders can learn how to implement positions to meet the women's needs to change the social constructs of the church as it relates to women's ministry.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODS**

### **Overview**

The methodology presented in Chapter Three addresses the specific research steps that addressed the problem and purpose of this comparative case study research plan. This chapter outlines the design, research questions, participants, setting, procedures, researcher's role, data collection and analysis, and trustworthiness and ethics of the study, based on the best methodology for case study research.

### **Design**

The research plan for this study was a qualitative case study. The study was qualitative in nature, because the experiment was explorative in nature, rather than statistical (Yin, 2009). The study sought to observe and explain the process of implementing a women's ministry position. When considering qualitative versus quantitative, the researcher selected qualitative in order to expound on the descriptive information that would have been limited in merely numerical data based on survey responses. The purpose of case study research methodology is to explain, explore, or describe how or why a phenomenon occurs. Therefore, this research plan explores successful fulltime women's ministry positions implemented in two specific Southern Baptist churches (Yin, 2009). The case study is instrumental versus intrinsic because it serves as a tool to assist with providing insight to other churches, rather than speaking only to the two churches explored in this case study (Stake, 2006).

This study provides an understanding of the social constructivism of women in ministry in a Southern Baptist church. The comparative case study explores how two Southern Baptist churches have successfully implemented fulltime women's ministry positions in their churches.

Using two case studies as a comparison provides more “compelling and robust” (Yin, 2009, p. 59) findings than using one church alone as a single case study. It also lends more evidence to any findings that could be transferred to other churches as a repeated phenomenon, rather than an isolated incident that cannot be transferred. The evidence is foundational for future research that may in turn lead to an assimilation of best practices. This comparative case study is embedded in nature rather than holistic, because the women’s ministry is a segment of the church organization as a whole. The researcher did not study the entire church organism, solely the women’s ministry aspect of the church as a subunit. The study did not look at the entire organization, rather a specific ministry area within each church (Yin, 2009).

### **Research Questions**

1. Why do some churches decide to employ fulltime women’s ministers?
2. How do fulltime women’s ministers provide greater resources than volunteers?
3. How are the needs of women identified and measured?
4. How are women’s needs met in a greater way through churches with fulltime women’s ministry staff?

### **Participants**

The participants were identified through those related directly to the phenomenon to be studied at each case study site (Stake, 2006). The actual participants were the pastoral leadership, women’s ministry leaders, and women’s ministry program participants serving in the two Southern Baptist churches. The demographics of the participants varied in age and gender, dependent upon the stratified group.

**Pastors.**

Criteria for pastors included the requirement that they were the current senior pastors on staff at the church at the time of the study. The study did not extend to previous pastors.

Documents were requested to identify historical data. Because Southern Baptists do not hold the view that women can serve as pastors, the gender for pastors as expected was all male. One senior pastor was aged in his 60s and the other was in his 40s.

**Women's Ministry Leaders.**

The criteria for women's ministry leaders primarily required them to be currently on staff in a fulltime paid position at the Southern Baptist church site selection. At the first site, the original women's minister to serve on staff when the position was implemented over two decades ago was still on staff. For this location the researcher only interviewed the one women's minister. However, one church had both the current women's minister and the first women's minister that served on staff at the church when the position was first implemented. Therefore, at the second site, the researcher interviewed both the current women's minister and the inaugural women's minister on staff. The gender for women's ministry leaders was female. The age ranges included a women's minister in her 30s, one in her 50s and one in her 70s.

**Women's Ministry Program Participants.**

The women's ministry program participants were solicited by the women's minister and participated based on availability. The women's minister sent an email provided by the researcher to a distribution list of women's ministry participants on the church's file. The respondents were provided a date and time for the focus group established by the researcher and communicated by the women's minister. The women's ministry program participants were a stratified group in the church that participated in a focus group addressing the perception of the

women's ministry program in the church they attend. The women's ministry program participants were entirely female in gender. Ages varied from 30s to 70s. The ethnicity was varied with predominantly Caucasian participants and a small minority of African Americans.

### **Sites**

There were two sites for this comparative case study. The sites for this comparative case study included two Southern Baptist churches in the state of Virginia, where there are two fulltime women's ministry employees on staff. The church sites were purposive, because there are only three churches in the state that fit the criteria of employing fulltime women's ministry staff. Two churches were used to validate the outcome of the study further, instead of only one church site (Yin, 2009). The purpose of studying both churches was to explore two different cases in the same state to analyze across cases for any similar explanations that could be documented for other churches to replicate for implementation of women's ministry staff. In Virginia, there are only three Southern Baptist churches with fulltime women's ministry staff (Bennett, 2013). Site One church is located in eastern Virginia and the Site Two church is located in northern Virginia. Both churches are SBC churches with fulltime women's ministry staff. With these criteria met, the sites provided further insight into the process for successful implementation of fulltime paid staff, and how needs should be met for women in the church by church leaders.

#### **Site One Background**

The first case study site was a Southern Baptist church located on the coast of Virginia near a military base. The church has a transient congregation with a strong military population. The congregation is varied in ages and, according to the pastor, supports the demographic statistics contributed by Barna (2011) studies that women make up the majority of the

congregation with 44% of the population. The congregation size averages 1,000 members each Sunday. The ethnic population is primarily Caucasian. The church has more than 20 staff members. The women's ministry staff position has been in place since 1991. The same person has maintained the position for the entire time. The church has had three pastors during the women's minister's tenure at the church. The women's ministry consists of roughly 500 women who participate in various women's ministry offerings.

### **Site Two Background**

The second case study site was a Southern Baptist church located in northern Virginia outside of Washington, D.C. The church has a highly educated urban population. The female population ranges in age, income, marital status and other demographics. The women's ministry includes about 600 women who are involved in various offerings. The researcher interviewed the current pastor. He is not the pastor that hired the first women's minister at the church. The researcher also interviewed the original women's ministry director who was first hired at the church in 2001, and is still on staff at the church in a different position as the new programs coordinator. The researcher also interviewed the current women's minister on staff who started in 2011.

## **Procedures**

### **Permissions**

Procedures for this study included submitting a full proposal outline of the research plan and securing International Review Board (IRB) approval (see Appendix A). Once IRB approval was received, two Baptist churches in Virginia were contacted and requested to participate in the study (see Appendix B). Upon receiving approval from each church organization (see Appendix C), the pastor and women's ministers participant permission was elicited by offering a consent

form to the interview participants (see Appendix D). Invitations were sent by email to women's groups to participate in focus group (see Appendix E). Prior to participating, the focus group participants signed consent forms (see Appendix F) for the multisite, multi-case study, allowing their responses to specific statements regarding the women's ministry to be used for research (Creswell, 2007). Churches were selected purposively with the simple criteria that they are a Southern Baptist church in the state of Virginia retaining women's ministry staff employed in fulltime positions. At the time the research was executed, there were only three churches in the state of Virginia that met these criteria.

### **Interviews**

Information for the study was gathered via interviews with pastors and women's ministry leaders (see Appendix G), formal observations of interaction during structured activities, and focus groups (see Appendix H) with the women's ministry program participants (Creswell, 2007) (Seidman, 2006). Interviews took place with women's ministry leaders and each pastor separately. Women's ministry leaders were interviewed about their experiences in their ministry preparation, their employment process and experience to date, as well as their current ministry structure. Pastors were interviewed to discuss how and why their church implemented a women's ministry fulltime position. The interviews were recorded via audio technology. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher for further analysis and coded for themes using software called HYPERresearch.

### **Observations**

The researcher attended one women's ministry program offering for each church site. The observation entailed women's Bible study gatherings. Site One of the observations took place in a church and Site Two observation took place in a participant's home. The Site One



research location was a Life Group, equivalent to what many churches call a Sunday school class. The class was an offering of the women's ministry and involved women of all ages in the class. The researcher took notes and observed the activity and interaction before, during and after the class.

The Site Two location was a small group offered by the women's ministry in a participant's home. The women met for a Bible study and it was a small group of women. It was one of ten small groups being offered for women by the women's ministry at the time. Observational protocol was for the researcher to record notes of activities, her experience, reactions, and feelings during her observation (Creswell, 2007). The researcher attended these events solely as an observer, not a participant. Notes were taken on the functions of the event, as well as the participation of the women. Body language, verbal expressions, and quotes from discussion were also documented.

### **Focus Groups**

A focus group was held with participants from the women's ministry at each church. Short surveys were disseminated to women's ministry participants to elicit their initial perceptions and feelings about the impact of their women's ministry programs. Women were notified of the purpose of the study and how it would be used for research purposes. The surveys were offered to the women in each church through the researcher during the focus group. Women were asked what they thought of their women's ministry program and what they value most about their women's ministry. Women were also asked their opinion on the importance of a paid women's ministry leader position in their respective churches.

### **The Researcher's Role**

With over a decade in higher education administration, as a marketing director, and alumni director, conducting research related to employment of graduates, I learned the number of women studying women's ministry in college and graduate school. The purpose of this case study is to explore successful implementation of women's ministers, in order to provide a description for other Southern Baptist churches to implement women's ministry positions. As a pastor's wife I have observed the opportunity that exists to greatly enhance meeting the needs of women in the church. These leaders are needed to focus their time on creating the necessary programs, counsel, and fellowship for women in the church who need community and support to face life's challenges on a spiritual, emotional, and psychological level. As a female and a pastor's wife, I see the needs of women in the church on a daily basis. This gives me a bias towards implementing women's ministry fulltime staff in churches. I believe churches would benefit greatly and maximize women's ministry by having a woman caring for the needs of women in the church fulltime.

### **Data Collection**

The researcher selected two church research sites as case studies to compare. The sites were selected based on information provided by the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia (SBCV). The SBCV is part of a cooperative program that includes various Southern Baptist churches. The SBCV women's ministry director provided names of churches with fulltime women's ministers on staff. The researcher selected two of the churches furthest away and least associated with the researcher to remove bias. The researcher then contacted the churches to receive permission to study at each location. Data collection included interviews, observations, focus groups, and documents. These data collection methods are considered the ideal procedures

for case study research (Stake, 2006). The use of various data collection points provided methodological triangulation (Stake, 2006). The researcher requested permission and received approval from the IRB to conduct interviews, focus groups, observations, and to collect data at each site, after each location provided permission on official church letterhead for each prospective case study.

The researcher contacted each church to schedule interviews directly with the women's minister and the pastor at each site. The researcher worked with the women's minister to identify women's ministry participants willing to conduct the focus group. The women's minister also identified events for the researcher to observe.

### **Interviews**

Two sets of interviews were conducted with the participants in relation to each one of the research questions. The researcher interviewed the pastor and women's minister at both research sites. Site One included only the pastor and the current women's minister, because the women's minister on staff was the original women's minister. The Site Two included the pastor, the current women's minister and the original women's minister. The original women's minister is still on staff in a different position and was available to answer questions regarding the implementation of the women's ministry position. Therefore, both the current and original women's minister were included.

The researcher asked the pastors and women's ministry employees the same set of questions directed toward the success of meeting the women's needs, as well as programs and events that bring positive outcomes for the women who participate. Questions 1 and 4, "Why do some churches decide to employ fulltime women's ministers?" and "How are women's needs met in a greater way through churches with fulltime women's ministry staff?" were addressed by

interviewing the pastors and the women's ministry employees of the church. Interview questions addressed to the pastor sought to provide insight into the success of proposing, creating and implementing a fulltime women's ministry employee for women's ministry in the church.

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### *Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions*

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#### *Questions for Pastors and Women's Ministers*

1. What is the philosophy of ministry at your church?
2. Please describe the process of implementing a women's minister in this church. How long did the process take?
3. At what point did you know you needed a fulltime position to accomplish the needs of women's ministry at your church?
4. Were there any challenges that made implementing a women's ministry position difficult? What were they? Financial? Social?
5. What would you recommend for other churches looking at adding a women's ministry position?
6. What was the expectation in adding a women's minister?
7. How do you believe a women's ministry position can greater meet the needs of women in the church setting?
8. In what ways would you say a women's ministry position can strengthen a church if implemented?
9. How does your women's ministry contribute to your overall philosophy?
10. Is the ministry financially self-sustaining? How do you budget your ministries?
11. How are the women's needs identified?

*Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions (continued)*

12. How do you measure the effectiveness of this program in meeting those identified needs?
13. How do you prioritize their needs?
14. How do you measure their needs?
15. How do you measure success with your women's ministry activities and programs?
16. How much did your church grow overall when a women's minister was added?
17. How much did the women's ministry grow?
18. How does women's ministry fit into your discipleship process?
19. What is the planning process for the programs you incorporate?
20. How did you develop your programs?

The Pastor and Women's Ministry Questions were created to address and expound on each of the research questions and provide discussion to answer those questions. The questions addressed the phenomenon of implementing women's ministry positions and to identify and measure women's needs being met through the church. Interview questions 1 through 5 provide insight into research question 1 on why some churches employ fulltime women's ministers. Interview questions 6 through 10 referred to the second research question on how women's ministry staff members provide greater resources than volunteers. Questions 11 through 15 of the interview addressed the measurement and identification of women's needs, research question number 3. The final interview questions 16 through 20 discussed aspects of women's ministry, programs, and growth that were accomplished because of a women's ministry staff position and addressed research question 4. The researcher reviewed the interview questions with experts in the ministry to ensure the questions were understandable and worded intuitively.

## **Observations**

Observations aided in providing additional information that is not documented, and proved helpful in describing a specific phenomenon (Yin, 2009). The observations also allowed the opportunity to observe the phenomenon in action, providing more rich data that the researcher was able to experience personally and later fuse into data analysis and findings. Observations for this research plan took place with the researcher assuming the role of a passive observer (Yin, 2009). Observing the women's ministry program activities assisted in answering research questions, 2, "How do fulltime women's ministers provide greater resources than volunteers?" and 3, "How are the needs of women identified and measured?" The activities observed were a life group and a Bible study. The researcher observed one group meeting at each research site. Site One location was a life group at the church, equivalent to what many churches call a Sunday school class. The class was an offering of the women's ministry and involved women of all ages in the class. The researcher took notes and observed the activity and interaction before, during and after the class. The Site Two location was a small group offered by the women's ministry in a home. The women met for a Bible study and comprised a smaller group of women. It was one of ten small groups being offered for women by the women's ministry at the time.

During the observation the researcher documented detailed field notes regarding the women's expressions, interaction with each other and the women's minister. Comments related to the research topic were recorded. Program events and happenings were also noted to identify what is offered from the women's ministry program to meet the needs of women in the church. These observations helped provide an "accurate" portrayal of the women's ministry programs that are producing success in the women's ministry programs at the two churches (Yin, 2009, p. 112).

## Focus Groups

With the aid of the women's ministry staff, the researcher conducted a focus group consisting of women's ministry participants in each of the two case study churches, Site One and Site Two. The purpose of the focus groups was to determine the overall satisfaction of women participating in the women's ministry programs overseen by the fulltime women's ministry staff. The focus groups involved women who participate in the women's ministry offerings at each of their respective churches. The women's minister helped to facilitate participants by sending emails soliciting participants from various small groups that meet on a regular basis. Women who participated in the focus group were all involved in the women's ministry events and groups by participating in small groups, Sunday school classes, women's groups, or events offered through the women's ministry. Participants in the focus group had knowledge to discuss topics addressed to them regarding the women's ministry offerings of the church.

The focus group participants were first offered 10 statements to align with the literature pertaining to women's spiritual and emotional needs during the live focus group session. The statements also aligned with research questions, 2) "how do fulltime women's ministers provide greater resources than volunteers?" and 3) "how are the needs of women identified and measured?" The statements identified the success of the women's ministry based on a Likert scale, as described in the **Focus Group section (p.61)**, measuring the women's individual and collective levels of satisfaction with the women's ministry program and event offerings by the women's ministry staff. Women had to strongly agree, agree, remain neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree with each statement. Then we discussed the statements and the participants' responses as a group. The questions were peer reviewed by church leaders upon receiving approval from the IRB and prior to conducting any official research with participants.

*Standardized Focus Group Survey Questions*

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Questions

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*Questions for Women's Ministry Participants*

1. I feel that my church's women's minister meets my expectations in fulfilling her role as a women's minister.
2. I believe a women's minister position greater meets the needs of women in our church (than if there was not a women's minister on staff).
3. I believe that having a women's minister strengthens our church as a whole.
4. I believe that being ministered to as a woman allows me to play a more vital role in my church.
5. I believe our church and our women's minister is aware of my needs as a woman.
6. I feel that my needs are prioritized by our women's minister.
7. I feel that my church's women's ministry activities and programs meet my needs.
8. I feel I am being disciplined and growing in my faith through our women's ministry offerings.
9. I believe that having a women's minister allows me to work through life's struggles in a greater, more victorious capacity than I would without a women's minister on staff.
10. I believe our women's ministry program is more effective than those without a women's minister on staff.

(Likert scale: 1-Strongly Agree, 2-Agree, 3-Neutral, 4-Disagree, 5-Strongly Disagree)



## Documents

The researcher reviewed various documents as permitted by and available through the pastors and women's ministry leaders of each church. Reviewing organizational documents from the two comparative case studies served to answer the research questions 3) "how are the needs of women identified and measured" and 4) "how are women's needs met in a greater way through churches with fulltime women's ministry staff?" The documents that the researcher requested to review included the following:

1. Proposals for women's ministry staff or new women's ministry program ideas.
2. Meeting notes from staff meetings, budget meetings, strategic planning, etc.
3. Budget materials specifically related to women's ministry salaries and events.
4. Organizational charts of the church leadership.
5. Church/women's ministry mission statements.
6. Videos of women's ministry events.
7. Promotional materials related to women's ministry events such as videos, websites, emails, announcements, bulletins, etc.
8. Calendars.
9. Journals.
10. Church constitutions.

The purpose of requesting the proposals, meeting notes, budget materials, mission statements and church constitutions was to explore and describe the communications that led to the structure of the two women's ministries in this comparative case study. The purpose of requesting videos, promotional materials, calendars, and journals was to explore and explain the continued success of these women's ministry programs. Many of the items requested were not

available. Therefore, the researcher asked questions regarding the date the document was created or the context of the meeting, to acquire understanding of the documents, notes or promotional materials utilized to capture supplemental information from the interview participant's as they recalled the process of implementing a women's minister position.

Documents relating to meeting minutes, job descriptions, discussions, emails, etc. were requested from each research site. Site One only provided a job description. They noted that there was no knowledge of any documentation that was still in existence as the job was created 23 years ago. The information came primarily from the women's minister's firsthand experience. Site Two provided a job description for the women's minister position and the women's ministry assistant position, an organizational chart, women's ministry policies, and a yearly budget proposal worksheet. Therefore, the researcher asked questions regarding meeting minutes and discussions to capture supplemental information from the participant's as they recalled the process of implementing a women's minister position.

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis included analysis of the case context, case description, individual cases, coding, within-case theme analysis of each case, cross-case theme analysis, and similarities between those themes. Assertions and generalizations were then made (Creswell, 2007). The case context and case description described how pastors and churches in this case study provide an opportunity to fill a gap in the literature. The context of their stories asserted the provision of details as a foundation for best practice guidelines of implementing women's ministry positions in churches. The researcher used pattern matching as a form of coding to identify themes within the data collected from interviews, documents, observations of women's ministry firsthand and surveys of the women who received the ministry benefits or outcomes. Codes were applied to the

interview and focus group responses. The codes were then identified for patterns that arose among the codes. The patterns were established from theoretical propositions drawn from the research questions (Yin, 2009).

The cross-case analysis incorporated the use of a computer-assisted pattern matching qualitative research software tool called HYPeRresearch (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009). The software program allowed the researcher to identify themes found by observation of each site within the multisite case study. It also allowed for observation of themes among interviews of church pastors for rationale behind creating or discussing women's ministry positions. The software program helped to compare the importance of individual case study themes against other individual case study themes, which provided the most common themes represented in the case studies. The HYPeRresearch tool had a report feature to the software that creates a frequency report after coding each of the documents in each case. For example if the code "availability" was provided to summarize text from the interviews or focus group discussions, the report would pull the amount of times that "availability" was assigned as a code, along with the corresponding text that was coded with that term. A frequency report was run for each case, and then a frequency report was run for both cases together. The researcher compared all of the documents transcribed from the interviews and focus groups by each individual document within each individual case study using the HYPeRresearch frequency reports. Then, the two cases were compared and themes emerging from both case studies were identified based on the codes that were assigned.

The triangulation of data was integrated throughout the process of the study from the implementation of the research design to the point of data analysis. The research design provided automatic triangulation through its implementation of methodological triangulation,

using various forms of data collection to cross-reference sources, from documents, to interviews, to focus groups (Creswell, 2007). The various forms of research collected provided information from different sources allowing the researcher to validate information from individuals' opinions, personal observation, and documents. Member checking also triangulated the data by reviewing the compilation of interviews and documents after the researcher completed the data analysis and summarized it (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2006).

### **Trustworthiness**

To establish trustworthiness and validate this study, the researcher included triangulation, thick description, and member checking in the case study (Stake, 2006). The researcher triangulated the data with various sources from the study to verify credibility and add backing to theories that evolved from the case study. The triangulation of data came from comparing the interviews, observations, surveys, and documents collected from each case study. The data was then compared between the two case studies for further validation. Thick description was used for the observations, interviews, and focus group discussions. The researcher included rich, thick description with descriptive language written from the observations, interviews and focus group discussions, to provide detailed descriptions so that the findings of this case study can understandably be applied elsewhere. Words and information from firsthand experience allow the research to hold fuller meaning. Member checking involved experts in the field reviewing the research to provide insight and cross-reference the researcher's interpretation of the data. Participants were also able to check their interview summaries as a form of member checking to verify accuracy and to identify any possible further observations that were omitted in the researcher's notes. The researcher also reviewed the data analysis, observation descriptions and

selected themes with the participants as a form of member checking for validation (Creswell, 2007).

### **Ethical Considerations**

The researcher was transparent about the purpose of the case study with all participants of the focus groups and interviews within each case. The participants included the pastors, women's ministers, and women's ministry participants. The researcher disclosed the purpose of the study, but did not disclose names of participants in the research study once analysis was recorded. Individual cases were represented by a title alias for the purpose of anonymity and focusing the case study on the research outcomes, not the actual disclosure of the individual participants' identities (Creswell, 2007). In addition to titles in the writing of the case study, all data is being kept in a password-protected computer for privacy protection of all individuals involved. Only the researcher has access to the password on this computer.

## CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

### Overview

Chapter Four presents the results of the data collection and analysis related to this comparative case study to answer the research questions presented in Chapter Three. The research conducted for this comparative case study involved two churches from which qualitative data was collected and then analyzed by coding the data. To complete the research, the researcher conducted interviews with the pastor and the women's minister at each site. A focus group was also led by the researcher with a selection of women's ministry participants assembled by the women's minister at each site. The focus group session began with ten statements supplied to the participants with responses of agreement or disagreement based on a Likert scale. The responses created the foundation for discussion among the participants. In addition to the interviews and focus group, documents from each site were collected and reviewed by the researcher. The researcher also observed a women's ministry study group offering as a non-participant at each location.

The purpose of the two case studies was to explore two churches that have implemented paid, fulltime women's minister's positions, and the women's ministry provided in each context. The exploration serves as a foundation for future research to identify best practices for the local Southern Baptist church to implement fulltime women's ministry positions. The research also provides insight into meeting the needs of women spiritually and emotionally through a fulltime women's minister position (Martin & Stovall, 2008).

Data collected from the interviews, focus groups, documents, and observations from each site provided answers to the four research questions. Using special coding software, HYPERresearch, the researcher was able to analyze the data and create codes to identify themes

for sense-making of the data. The software simplified the coding process by allowing the researcher to type in codes to summarize the data and then store the codes in the software. Codes assigned by the researcher were then grouped into themes by the researcher by categorizing the codes for similarities. For example, one code assigned to the interviews and focus group responses was “availability” as a summary of what the respondent was verbalizing, when discussing one reason a fulltime women’s minister provided greater resources than a volunteer. The codes then lent themselves to themes which the researcher assigned using the program to electronically group the common codes into larger themes of correlation.

Sites One and Two were treated as individual case studies; thus, the results for each of the research questions are provided for each site. Both individual cases were then compared to identify common themes found in both cases. The results contributed to the purpose of this comparative case study which seeks to provide insight into the process of implementing a women’s minister. It also seeks to show how the functions of the paid women’s minister identifies and meets women’s needs in a greater way than a volunteer and demonstrate how to evaluate women’s needs when led by a fulltime women’s minister.

## **Research Sites**

### **Site One**

Site One was a Southern Baptist church in eastern Virginia. The church is located near a military base, which brings a large military population and an attendance of approximately 1,500 people. The female membership of the church makes up more than 50% of the total attendees as noted by the pastor and women’s minister in their interviews. As the first Southern Baptist church in Virginia with a paid women’s minister on staff, the church implemented the position more than 20 years ago. Maintaining her position on staff the entire time, the current women’s

minister is the matriarch of Southern Baptist women's ministry and has led the ministry to grow for more than two decades, investing in women of the church and offering ministry to them. The current pastor views the women's minister as a conductor for leading the women in the church to carry out the church's mission and vision. Firsthand ministry is implemented to women through a women's ministry team that supports the women's minister. Hundreds of women are now participants in the women's ministry as it has grown in the past 23 years that the women's minister has been on staff.

### **Site One Participants**

**Pastor.** The pastor on staff at Site One is a Caucasian male in his mid-40s with a Ph.D. from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS), Louisville, KY. Based on the interview, his leadership philosophy within the church and among the church staff is to delegate authority and responsibility to other ministers. Pastoring at the church for nearly a decade, he expressed his passion for discipleship. Focus on a larger view of the overall organization and how he creates a clear vision for the church were also noted in his interview. He believes that various ministries should align with that vision, including the women's ministry, which supports the belief of a women's minister on staff. The primary focus of the pastor's interview was on what he wants to accomplish in the church and how the women's ministry aids in that focus. He views the women's minister as a support to the overall vision of the church as she leads the women in fulfilling their part of the vision.

**Women's Minister.** The women's minister on staff at Site One is a Caucasian female in her late 60s to early 70s who has been on staff at the church for 23 years. During the interview she expressed a strong enthusiasm for ministering to women. With years of experience, she leads a team of women and is well-respected based on the focus group responses. The women's



minister was also well known, as was evident when we walked through the church hallway on a Sunday morning. The church members greeted her and stopped her to speak often. It created a challenge for us to proceed to our destination. It was clear she had built many connections and relationships as a leader at the church for more than 20 years. During the interview both concern and hope were expressed in regards to the next generation of women ministering to women. She expressed her interest in participating in the study to share any information that would aid in future generations of women continuing the ministry into which she has poured her time, energy and career for 20 years. With no indication of retiring anytime soon per her interview, she is still looking for ways to offer more effective ministry and meet the needs of each generation of women as they develop.

**Women's Ministry Participants.** The women's ministry participants consisted of a collective group of Caucasian women who ranged in ages from their 30s to 60s or 70s. At least one decade per person was represented in the group. The women were at different stages of life, some with young children, others had grandchildren. None of the participants present were in their 20s or younger. The focus group participants were personally involved in the women's ministry, leading Bible studies, attending women's ministry events, and participating in various ministries such as small groups and support groups. They were transparent about their experiences and expectations for the women's ministry during the focus group.

**Site One Observation Participants.** The observation of about 50 participants took place during the life group meeting session, which was equivalent to a Sunday school class, or small group, on a Sunday morning. Looking around the room, there was diversity in age and ethnicity, with ages ranging from women in their 30s to women in their 70s. Less than 15% of the women

were African American, with the rest of the participants categorized as Caucasian. The demographics were consistent with the highly Caucasian population of the entire church.

### **Site Two**

Site Two is a Southern Baptist church in northern Virginia, in the suburbs of Washington, D.C. Church membership consists of 1,500 people in attendance on a Sunday morning. Based on the interviews, the staff noted that the church members have high levels of education and were politically minded and involved. The female membership of the church was identified as more than 50% of the congregation. Women's ministry has been visible for over eighteen years as the first women's minister was implemented at that time. The women's minister is still on staff as a new ministry coordinator. However, she trained another protégé to fulfill her role as women's minister on staff when she moved to a new role. The pastor is supportive of women's ministers on staff and believes they minister and relate in ways that he could not when it comes to women. The women's ministry consists of a volunteer leadership team that answers to the women's minister. Five hundred women have become involved in women's ministry since a women's minister position was implemented on staff more than 18 years ago.

### **Site Two Participants**

**Pastor.** The pastor at Site Two is a highly educated Caucasian male in his 60s with a doctorate from a SBTS. With decades of ministry experience, his tenure at the church has been about five years. Shared by the women's minister on staff in her interview, his leadership style focuses on servant leadership, serving his staff and congregation and leading others to serve by his example, with a strong emphasis on teaching. Although a pastor who leads by example, he also administers the staff to follow the vision of ministry for the church and to meet goals. He shared his passion to maintain organization and achieve greater success, with the organization

consisting of communication and simplification of processes within the church. Per his interview, the pastor is very supportive of women on staff even though he was not in the role when the women's minister position was implemented. He views the women's minister as a vital addition to the ministry team to meet the needs of women in the church.

**First Women's Minister.** The first women's minister on staff at Site Two began the women's ministry at the church as a volunteer. Under her leadership the women's ministry grew exponentially from a handful of women to 200 women in one Bible study. This prompted church leaders to create a position on staff for her as a women's minister. The first women's minister led the women's ministry for more than a decade. As stated in her interview, her vision was to lead a ministry to women who would set the tone of the church as women who want to serve the church and carry out the mission of the church. Although migrating to a different role within the past decade to initiate other ministries at the church, she still remains on staff at the church. She began her position before the church experienced exponential growth, partially as a result of a population increase in the area outside Washington, D.C. She has maintained a passion for ministry for nearly two decades.

**Current Women's Minister.** The current women's minister is an offspring from the first women's minister. Having grown up in the church, she was young when the position was implemented. As shared in her interview, she developed a passion for women's ministry under the leadership of the first women's minister. This experience leads her to believe she can attribute personal and spiritual growth to the women's ministry that was available to her before she became the women's minister herself. Observing church growth over time led to the development of a love for the church and the people in it. The women's minister noted that her devotion to meeting women's needs and being a part of fostering growth within the church

existed both extrinsically and intrinsically. The women's ministry leadership team supports her vision of ministry, which falls under the mission and vision of the church.

**Women's Ministry Participants.** The women's ministry participants were a collective group of Caucasian women and one African American woman who ranged in ages from their 30s to 70s. There was at least one person per decade represented in the group. Various years of church involvement were represented based on the length of time the participants had been members of the church. Some had been at the church for 30 years, and others as little as three years. The participants represented different stages of life raising young children, others grandchildren. No young women in their 20s or younger were present. Some women were participants as recipients of the women's ministry, while others were leaders in the ministry, teaching Bible studies, or planning activities.

**Site Two Observation Participants.** The observation at Site Two consisted of five women at a small group, home Bible study. The participant demographics included diversity of age and ethnicity, with ages ranging from thirties to fifties. Ethnicity of the group consisted of four Caucasian and one African American female. Interaction and participation were observed as the women came with their Bible study completed and verses memorized.

## **Results**

### **Site One Results**

The researcher conducted interviews with the pastor and the current women's minister. A focus group was also conducted with a selection of women's ministry participants gathered by the women's minister. The women's minister sent an email to women's ministry participants provided by the researcher. Women's ministry participants responded to the email to participate in the focus group. Women's ministry participants in the focus group completed a form with 10

statements asking for agreement or disagreement based on a Likert scale to foster discussion directed towards the research questions. Documents were collected and reviewed by the researcher. The researcher also observed a women's ministry life group, similar to a Sunday school class as a non-participant.

**Answer to Research Question One.** The answer to research question number one “why do some churches decide to employ fulltime women's ministers?” was provided by the research conducted at site one. Church leadership decided to employ a fulltime women's minister in order to build a women's ministry. The church leadership believed decades earlier that the position could enhance fulfilling the mission of the church. Resources to support the position were also available. Therefore, the decision was made to employ a fulltime women's minister in order to create a ministry for the women that make up the majority of their church attendees. At site one the pastor saw a need to meet women's needs in a greater way and believed the women's ministry growth under a fulltime women's minister would aid in achieving the mission and vision of the church.

**Themes related to Research Question One.** The first research question was, “why do some churches decide to employ fulltime women's ministers?” The researcher designed interview questions for the women's minister and pastor and focus group statements asking participants to agree or disagree with the statements based on a Likert scale, in order to provide insight and answers to the research questions. The results from the interviews and focus group discussion explaining responses of agreement or disagreement provided responses that were coded by the researcher using HYPEResearch. The codes were then organized into themes to answer the research questions. The themes related to the first research question are outlined in the table below. Further excerpts from interviews and focus group responses are provided to

include thick, rich descriptions from the participants' personal experiences and viewpoints.

Table 2 displays how the codes were applied to the interviews and focus groups and the themes that came from the research related to research question number one. The themes that surfaced after the analysis of the interviews and focus group questions were church philosophy, pastor initiation, and evidence of need.

Table 2

*Research Question #1 Themes*

| Themes            | Codes  |
|-------------------|--|
| Church Philosophy | Discipleship and Evangelism<br>Women's Ministry Aligns |
| Pastor Initiation | Pastor Initiated                                       |
| Evidence of Need  | Need was evident<br>Created to Build Ministry          |

***Church philosophy.*** Church philosophy was the first theme identified in the interview responses, as it relates to the function of ministry in the church and the church's perception of women's ministry. The church's philosophy is founded on evangelism and discipleship, with its vision aligned throughout all of its ministries and functions. Noted by the pastor and women's minister that the women's ministry was structured to support the church's overall vision and philosophy, no ministry runs independent from the rest of the church. The pastor had this to say about the overall ministry and how the women's ministry should align with it:

I would simply say, make sure when you are evaluating any ministry implementation in the church, you make sure it aligns with the overall vision and mission of the church and

women's ministry certainly is a part of that. And as it is in our church, our women's ministry aligns with the overall vision and ministry and direction of our church, so you want to make sure that that alignment is in place and that they are not running counter to each other.

The women's minister also responded with her support of the church's overall vision and philosophy. She views the women's ministry as an extension of fulfilling the church's mission. She did not envision a separate mission for the women's ministry, based on her response, "Well obviously to me everything that we do, whether it's women's ministry or whatever, should be part of discipling other people." She did not see women's ministry occurring in isolation, as all Christians are called to the same overarching mission of discipleship. However, her process of carrying out the vision to women varies from the process of other ministries in the church. She tailors the ministry specifically to meeting needs of women and encouraging women to participate in church ministries that coincide with the vision of the church, according to the Baptist Faith and Message (2000). The pastor and the women's minister noted the importance of the women's ministry lining up with the vision of the church and enhancing the ministry of the church. The women's ministry was noted to grow over time along with the church. When asked about the growth of the women's ministry, the women's minister answered, "I think we came on staff to help build [the women's ministry] whatever the number was."

***Pastor initiation.*** The second theme related to research question one is pastor initiation. The pastor had a great influence in addressing the research question, "Why do some churches decide to employ women's ministers?" More than two decades ago, the women's minister position was implemented by the pastor of the church at the time, prior to the current pastor. The current women's minister has been on staff for 23 years as the only person to be employed in the

position. However, three pastors have held the position of senior pastor during her tenure as women's minister. The women's minister did not advocate for a paid position; it was offered to her. The pastor asked her to fill the inaugural position based on her ministry activities as a layperson. The desire for the position was determined by the demographics of the church as they were the majority of members and he believed they needed a women's minister.

*Evidence of need.* The third theme that arose in relation to research question one came from two of the codes used based on the responses to the interviews and focus group. The codes were that the need was evident in regards to a women's minister and the position was created to build a ministry that did not exist, although needed in the church. The current pastor shares the view of the original pastor that a women's minister position is necessary, in addition to the other pastors who served at the church between the pastor who implemented the position and the current pastor serving at the church now. However, the need remains based on the number of women who participate in the women's ministry and in the church population. The current pastor's response to the continued support for a women's ministry paid position was this:

It provides the leadership that is necessary to direct the membership toward meeting the specific needs of women in particular. So yes, though one person cannot meet all needs of the ladies in the church, she can provide the leadership and direction necessary to accomplish that.

The current pastor noted that women are 50% of the church and require direct support.

When asked about the need for a women's minister position in the church, the focus group noted that the position needs to be a paid position with the amount of needs the women have and the programs that fall under the women's minister's expectations and responsibilities:



Instead of having a volunteer women's ministry position, I guess the paid position, because then they would be interviewing for a position rather than seeking out volunteers, especially with a church our size, for somebody to take that on would be very inundating.

In regard to the reason for ministry, the position was created for women in the church to receive a ministry facilitated by a paid position. The church desired to grow a women's ministry at the time the position was created. The position was not created because there was a large ministry in place, but to create and build a ministry for women. Recounting the story for me in her interview, "The pastor at the time felt, he wanted most of my attention and energy to go to women . . . his desire was to see women's ministry grow in a new way."

**Answer to Research Question Two.** The research findings provided an answer to the second research question "how do fulltime women's ministers provide greater resources than volunteers?" The themes from the research provided understanding that a paid position leads to greater expectations and requirements. A women's minister on staff is able to provide work on a consistent basis while held accountable with specific expectations. A volunteer is not held to the same level of accountability without pay. Volunteers have more freedom to lessen hours, push back deadlines, or disregard protocol. A job description, as provided in the documents shows the level of expectation that comes with a paid position.

The women's ministry position is allotted an operational budget, which allows for offering women's ministry events and studies. The church understands that if it invests in a women's ministry position, it needs to invest in a women's ministry budget. A women's minister is held accountable to manage a budget at a higher level than a volunteer. This creates more trust for church leadership to offer a larger budget to the women's ministry. In the interviews, the pastor noted that the budget was increased to match the ministry offerings that the

women's minister added when she became a staff person. Over the years as the budget is reviewed, the budget increases as the ministry grows and the women's minister is able to provide justification for offering additional events and ministry offerings due to the time she allots to managing the ministry alongside the budget. In addition, due to added time and effort managing the budget, the women's minister is able to offset overall ministry costs by women's ministry participants who pay for certain events or materials when they participate in ministry events.

The women's ministry position also offers community to the women in the church by enabling relationships to foster and deepen through women's ministry programs. Per the focus group participants, when there is a women's minister on staff, she conveys a visible and vital women's ministry. The paid women's minister position offers increased visibility for the staff member to be known and to gain credibility in a greater way than a volunteer position, due to the amount of hours the women's minister is able to afford to the ministry. According to the focus group participants, women are drawn to feel included due to this reality and in turn bring their families to the church. The women's minister is a resource for overall church growth.

**Themes related to Research Question Two.** The second research question was, "how do fulltime women's ministers provide greater resources than volunteers?" Responses from the pastor and women's minister interviews and the focus group disseminated data that answered the second research question. The themes in Table 3 represent the codes assigned while analyzing the data with the HYPERresearch software. The themes that emerged for research question two are women's minister expectations, budget, and contributions.

Table 3

*Research Question #2 Themes*

---

Themes

Codes

---

|                               |                     |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Women's Minister Expectations | Authority delegated |
|                               | Meet various needs  |
| Budget Maintenance            | Offset by charging  |
|                               | Childcare offset    |
|                               | Events offset       |
| Contributions                 | Community           |

***Women's minister expectations.*** Women's ministers are expected to meet needs of women in various ways. Upon analyzing the data, specific themes arose from the interview questions and focus group responses. When a women's minister position is implemented expectations are instated by church leadership and church members, especially the women's ministry participants. One expectation fulfilled at this site comes by providing mentoring in various settings.

The women's minister and the pastor talked about how authority is delegated directly to the women's minister to have freedom and responsibility to meet the needs of the women. The focus group also noted the women's minister's ability to empathize and identify with women:

I don't know if any of the rest of you have needed it or not, but when my dad had cancer and there was a lot of chaos within the dynamics of our family, our women's ministry director was the one that came to me and said I'm going to set this up. We are going to get you in with the counselor.

The women's minister was in authority and gained credibility because of her role to approach the woman in need in the church and recommend help to her.

The position brings expectations for the women's minister to provide leadership to women who serve in women's ministries at the church. The pastor, the women's minister and the focus group highlighted the theme of female leadership to women. A women's ministry team is in place that looks to the women's minister to provide insight. According to the focus group, the role of the women's minister was to provide leadership to women in the church. The focus group participants saw a staff role as a higher level of authority than a volunteer position, because the women's minister in the paid position was present in meetings with other church leadership to make decisions and spent significant time in strategic planning sessions as a staff member.

In addition to the interviews and focus groups, the documents collected provided insight into research question two. Job descriptions were supplied to aid in this research. The descriptions laid out clear expectations of how the women's minister would carry out women's ministry and be held accountable to the church leaders and to the women receiving ministry. The paid position required office hours and ministry performance levels that would be difficult to justifiably place on a volunteer.

Leadership was an important factor for having a women's minister on staff according to the focus group participants. One participant put it this way, "You need the leadership. You need someone to take it, especially when it comes to women. It is a full time job". The women's ministry participants in the focus group did not believe the expectations could be met without a paid position. The women's minister was aware of this expectation and provided the following response in her interview, "I see myself as a facilitator and a liaison and as the person that is going to help them in the ministry that God's really called them to be a part of." The pastor also saw the need for leadership and delegated to the women's minister to lead her specific area, "[the

women's minister] has pretty much a free reign to evaluate to do and to discuss." The accountability of a paid position versus a volunteer allows the pastor to be more comfortable to delegate, because he meets with her often and she understands the vision of the church that she is to carry out through the women's ministry.

The women's minister, pastor and focus group participants also identified the women's minister as a liaison on behalf of the women to the staff. She is seen as a representative in staff meetings, an event planner, and a voice for the women and their needs. She sees her position in this way, "I see myself as a facilitator and a liaison and as the person who is going to help them in the ministry that God's really called them to be a part of."

The documents collected involved multiple versions of job descriptions and organizational flowcharts. The various job descriptions represented modifications made to the original job description over the years as the position grew and changed to meet the needs of the women in the church. The women's minister was able to supply these documents for the study. There were no meeting minutes, emails, or journals available that documented the inception of the first women's minister position.

**Budget maintenance.** The topic of budget was a theme throughout the interviews and focus group discussion related to research question two. Budget and finances are an anticipated concern from church leaders and members when raising the topic of implementing a women's minister position on staff at a church. Budget needs include coverage of a women's minister's salary, as well as the operational needs of the ministry. The women's ministry budget is maintained at a greater capacity with a paid position than a volunteer due to the hours spent carrying out the duties of women's ministry. The women's minister per the job description maintains and manages the budget. In a paid position there is more focus and accountability

with the budget. There are also greater expectations for ministry, for which the budget should be managed and stretched to increase ministry offerings. At this site, the women's ministry budget was not fully self-sustaining, but the budget was offset in various ways, from women paying for childcare and meals, to Bible study books. Major events and Bible study teaching materials would be purchased by the women's ministry budget. However, the women would supplement with a few dollars to pay for childcare at various events and pay for their own Bible study books if they participated in a Bible study. The women's minister is provided freedom and authority to advocate for budget needs to cover ministry offerings. As the pastor noted, she is fully responsible for identifying the needs and requesting a budget to meet the needs of the women's ministry for a calendar year:

It's a process of evaluating what ministry objectives there are for the particular year and evaluating that price tag and what investment we need to make. We have a history of what those budgeted line items would be, so that helps, but starting out, I would think that you just evaluate, what are the basic priorities to the ministry and how it relates to the overall mission of the church. And then, evaluate, what are those price tags compared to that investment.

The women's minister provided a narrative example of one of the women's ministry's most successful events and how ladies who participate offset the budget. They have also worked to have sponsors to provide prizes and volunteers to help with setup and design on a budget. The event is a lunch offered monthly at the church for women only that brings hundreds of women every month. She shared about the lunch event in her interview:

For the "Let's do Lunch" you have a ticket and we have food services here and we are very fortunate to have that and they work really well with us and for \$6 our women get a

really good lunch different every time, they have a lovely table done. We have a group of women that do the “Let’s do Lunch” and so they are volunteers and they make it happen and with hardly doing anything, they make it look magical. They make placemats and we are very fortunate we have a graphic artist and so with that we make it happen. We print them out here and we do that and so it’s something that when you walk in, you know that somebody wanted to make it look nice for you. And so, for \$6 you have a very nice meal; if they have children, they are cared for. That’s no cost.

The women’s minister provided a specific example of how the women’s ministry budget is offset by participants who pay for the event and it does not drain the budget. The women’s ministry also has volunteers and cost effective means of creating a nice event without spending excessive amounts. As a fulltime staff member, the women’s minister has the time to spend to create and maintain a more cost effective budget.

*Contributions.* The contributions of a women’s minister describe the value of the position and how it offers greater resources to women’s ministry. The theme arose in the interviews and focus group based on the codes assigned to the data. The women’s ministry at this site was noted to provide community, which was an important need identified by the focus group. In relation to the women’s ministry position, the focus group felt the women’s minister was able to provide a more focused community than a volunteer for specific groups of women, because she was available and had built the programs over time to sustain and reach women in greater ways. The various ministry offerings allowed women to build relationships that were meaningful, adding to their perception of community. One focus group participant shared a testimonial in relation to her experience:

I was a part of that Bible study and I was really, really interested in getting a relationship with an older woman just because I'm 40, 41 actually and I've got four little ones at home from 10 to 20 months and being at home all the time with them, I just really, really desired somebody who's understood where I've been.

The Life Group ministry observation by the researcher also identified a sense of community among the women's ministry participants. Despite the attendance of more than 50 participants, the women shared on a personal level and spoke with confidence that they were cared for. The women's minister stated that there were dozens of groups similar to this group that met on a regular basis and experienced deep fellowship together. The women in the group expressed emotion through some tearful deliveries of personal stories. They also smiled and clapped for each other when positive news was shared. Women in the group appeared to have assurance when they spoke that the other women in the room would be concerned for their circumstances and would willingly lift them up in prayer. Observing the Life Group reinforced the theme of community that was voiced in the focus group. Through observation of the group, the women were interactive and participatory in discussion, as well as open about personal life issues and beliefs.

**Answer to Research Question Three.** In answer to research question number three "how are the needs of women identified and measured?" the women's minister position provides a means of identifying and evaluating women's needs in order to improve the women's ministry offerings. Surveys are provided to women to identify needs. Word of mouth through the ministry team and direct conversations with the women's minister also provide input to identify women's needs in the church. By working with a team and maintaining focus on the effectiveness of women's ministry, the women's ministry offerings are changed and modified to



continually meet the needs of women. The women's minister looks to the women's ministry team and women in the church to provide feedback and makes changes to the women's ministry offerings accordingly. Attendance is measured to assess the women's ministry participants' engagement and interest in various events. This allows the team to assess whether or not changes should be made to what the women's minister offers participants in the ministry programs. Intrinsic growth was noted to be difficult to measure; however, it is still attempted by mentors and study leaders through relationships and conversations with women's ministry participants.

**Themes related to Research Question Three.** The third research question was, "how are the needs of women identified and measured?" The researcher interviewed the pastor and women's minister in addition to conducting a focus group of women's ministry participants. Based on the information provided in the interviews and focus group, the researcher assigned codes to the responses and then divided them into themes. Table 4 represents the assigned codes and the themes that were developed from the codes by the researcher. The themes that emerged from research question three after analyzing the codes are identification of women's needs and evaluation of women's needs.

Table 4

*Research Question #3 Themes*

| Themes                          | Codes                |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Identification of Women's Needs | Surveys              |
|                                 | Word of Mouth        |
| Evaluation of Women's Needs     | Difficult to measure |
|                                 | Quantitative Growth  |
|                                 | Qualitative Growth   |

***Identification and evaluation of women's needs.*** Measurement of a women's ministry is important for the purpose of assessing its value, especially when there is a monetary investment and an expected goal of meeting women's needs in the church. The third research question was addressed by the responses provided from the interviews and focus group. Identification and evaluation of women's needs emerged as themes after the codes were assigned in relation to measurement of needs and growth. There was a challenge for the staff in describing and identifying the needs of women in fully tangible ways. The women's minister and the pastor highlighted the difficulty in making all needs identifiable and measurable. The philosophy of the church focuses on evangelism and discipleship. The pastor spoke about setting goals to meet needs that tie in to evangelism and fellowship, and how the women's minister is responsible to set goals and accomplish them for the women's ministry specifically:

The overall goal would be how many missionary followers of Christ are we developing?

That would be the overall ministry tool and then the overall events or ministry plans have specific goals attached to them as well and you evaluate those ministry plans or events

based upon how well it achieved the goal that it had. And those goals are established essentially by the minister herself and she sees this is what we need to accomplish and basically we see how well we did at the end of the year.

The pastor also addressed specific budgetary and numerical participation goals that are discussed when annual budgets are reviewed and strategic planning takes place. The women's minister is required to focus on the budget per her job description provided in the document collection and review to the researcher. According to her yearly duties documented in her job description, she is required to "prepare and provide a yearly women's ministry budget".

The needs of women can have tangible offerings, however, whether the needs are met or not was more difficult for the church leaders to measure. Both the women's minister and the pastor addressed numbers and how they can help to measure effectiveness. Regardless, the effectiveness of the ministry was not solely measured based on numbers. The women's minister gave several examples of events or Bible study offerings that were offered and monitored over the years based on numbers. However, both the pastor and the women's minister stated that a Bible study would always be a component of women's ministry due to the mission and philosophy of the church whether numbers were signifying success or not. The women's minister did discuss offering different times for Bible studies that would allow for increased participation:

The two things that we have where we don't see big growth right now, the Tuesday morning Bible study right now, it's become more on the Wednesday night. That saddened me but what we've discovered is its young women going back to the workforce. That was the big group that came on Tuesday morning. And so we've lost some of that and we have the school system where if your child's a kindergartener, if

your child's in the morning, they couldn't get here because they couldn't get them on the bus in time and if theirs was the afternoon time, they would have to leave the Bible study early to get them in time. And so, there have been some things like that that we know have affected that group. And Wednesday night has become a larger night, but I still would like to see more women. And I know some of them do that on Sunday mornings in their Life group, but that had been such a good part that that's one area where we've lost some ground. They are still in the church and still involved, but they can't participate sometimes, no matter what I do to work with their schedule.

There was also an event that was offered annually that had declined over the years. The event began as a mother/daughter dinner and dwindled in attendance over the years. The women's minister said they modified the event and saw an even greater decrease in attendance. They plan to modify the event again or move to a different offering altogether. The women's minister shared about this event in her interview:

Nope they didn't want to do that and we had an okay crowd and I don't remember exactly but it wasn't but 300 people and I don't think we even had that. And we are on the team trying to think about what are we going to do and somewhere in the middle of that because we had already lost this group and now we aren't able to do and I know a couple of churches that have done that and they weren't able to have success with that and so I don't know what we are going to do with that this year and for so long it had been a success and I am finding that it's not such a big deal anymore.

In this event, attendance was one form of measurement, while word of mouth was another.

Informal comments addressed the event and alluded to the fact that the attendance would

dwindle in the subsequent years. The women's minister and her leadership team tried to change the event based on the feedback they received as well as the decrease in attendance.

**Answer to Research Question Four.** The fourth research question, "how are women's needs met in a greater way through churches with fulltime women's ministry staff," was answered through interviews and focus groups which addressed offerings provided by a women's minister in a paid position. Connectivity and the development of programs became the greatest offerings to meet women's needs. From coordinated women's studies, to events and women's ministry offerings from a fulltime employee, the ability to meet women's need increased. At this site, the church leaders offer full responsibility and delegate authority to the women's minister. The women's minister was able to freely develop programs to build a women's ministry from the beginning of her employment. This in turn brought church growth and supported the church's mission, through the development of successful programs.

**Themes related to Research Question Four themes.** The fourth research question was, "how are women's needs met in a greater way through churches with fulltime women's ministry staff?" Interview questions were offered to the pastor and current women's minister that related to research question four. Without expectation from the researcher, the focus group participants relayed insights pertaining to research question four. The results were analyzed and assigned codes using the HYPERResearch coding software. The codes were developed into themes by the researcher. The themes and codes in Table 5 represent the data results pertaining to research question four. The themes that emerged from the data analysis and codes applied to the information were connectivity and program development.

Table 5

*Research Question #4 Themes*

| Themes              | Codes                        |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Connectivity        | Provides Connection          |
|                     | Increased Ministry Offerings |
| Program Development | Brainstorming                |
|                     | Budget                       |
|                     | Calendaring                  |

**Connectivity.** Connectivity was a theme that emerged in relation to research question four. The women's minister is able to provide a more vital women's ministry. Women's ministers on staff provide greater leadership and accountability to foster additional programs to meet women's needs. Because women's ministers are held accountable as employees of the church, the focus and follow through to identify and meet women's needs increases. According to the focus group, the women's minister had a large role in identifying Life Groups. The Life Groups were created to place women together in similar life situations and stages. Focus group participants mentioned military mom's groups, young married women, older women, cancer support groups, and other groups that were formed under the leadership of the women's minister. The focus group stated that they believed the women's minister as a paid position allotted time and accountability for the women's minister to foster greater connectivity for the women.

Connectivity was a factor in women coming to the church and remaining in the church per the interview with the pastor and the focus group participants. The pastor stated that women are the majority of the church and influence families which directly impact their children and

spouses to attend. He also shared how women engaged their friends to attend the church in addition to their families:

Yeah it definitely provides growth both quantitatively and qualitatively. It provides growth in the women of our church so that they in turn help us reach other people. And so it's a beautiful picture of how ministry should be happening in the church.

There was no concrete data provided during the interview, however the growth of the church was addressed and attributed to a successful women's ministry. One participant in the focus group noted that women find a women's ministry group vital to connecting with a church, "I know that I have women that sometimes with their families they've come here and now they have their whole families here and they were looking for women's ministry." If the women have a place to belong and find community, it will affect the decision they make to bring their children and their husbands to come to church and solidify being a part of the church membership.

In both interviews and in the focus group, the participants unanimously agreed that a paid women's minister position attributed to meeting women's needs in a greater way than a volunteer. In relationship to other churches that may be interested in implementing a women's minister position for the purpose of church growth, the women's minister had this to say:

First of all I'd be sure that the congregation, that, it's something that not just one or two women, think they need to do that. It might be that it starts in a home or a small group. It might be how God blesses. I think that's so God's going to lead each one of us to see as churches what it is He's really turning our hearts to and our energies and our resources and all to that and I mean I would love to think that every church had women's ministry in some shape or form because I think it's a blessing.

The pastor also had advice on implementing a women's minister and overcoming obstacles that may exist. When speaking to the idea that other churches may not see the benefit or affordability of a women's minister position, he stated:

It's probably the idea that we have a set number of monies that we can contribute to a personnel situation and women's ministry would not fit that category. For instance in most churches you have a one-person staff or two person-staffing situation and in those situations, they are not going to dedicate a certain amount of money to a women's ministry as much as they are a pastor, or general education or that sort of thing. I guess they don't have the money or see the priority for that sort of thing, but even in that situation, when you only have a few staff positions, or personnel budget for a few staff positions, I think there is a great advantage, even in a part time situation to bringing on board a staff position because it is a unique ministry that can add great, great benefit to the church.

***Program development.*** The women's minister receives feedback from women on the ministry team and within the congregation. The feedback has aided in starting focus small groups for women such as military wives, as the church is near a naval base. The women's minister also has to comply with a budget and the availability of the church calendar. There is a meeting held annually with all staff to work together on calendar planning. She discussed some of her planning process in the interview:

Those are some of those things that get on the calendar and then I put on the Evening for Women and we have to give and take sometimes because of an opportunity to have somebody. But we will have the calendar pretty much finished when we leave that meeting within the next week or so, but we will have changes, we will pretty much take



something off or put something on as we can.

One document provided to validate the emphasis put on the budget and calendaring was the job description. The women's minister is required to annually plan a budget and calendar for the women's ministry participants in the church. The pastor also shared in his interview how the programming is put into effect from a leadership standpoint. He described the budget and calendaring process in this way:

It's a process of evaluating what ministry objectives there are for the particular year and evaluating that price tag and what investment we need to make. We have a history of what those budgeted line items would be, so that helps, but starting out, I would think that you just evaluate, what are the basic priorities to the ministry and how it relates to the overall mission of the church. And then, evaluate, what are those price tags compared to that investment. Again it goes back to calendar planning, or ministry planning which ties into calendar planning and event planning, which as all of those things are pieced together, we try to evaluate what the cost or investment of those things would be.

### **Site Two Results**

The researcher conducted interviews with the pastor, the inaugural women's minister, and the current women's minister. A focus group was also conducted with a selection of women's ministry participants collected by the women's minister. Participants opted into the focus group by responding to an email created by the researcher and sent by the women's minister. Women's ministry participants in the focus group completed a form with ten statements asking for agreement or disagreement based on a Likert scale to foster conversation directed towards the research questions. Documents were collected and reviewed by the

researcher. The researcher also observed a women's ministry small group Bible study as a non-participant.

**Answer to Research Question One.** Research question one "why do some churches decide to employ fulltime women's ministers?" was answered at site two through interviews and focus group responses. The women's minister was employed at this church due to the women's ministry needs that were made evident to church leadership. Women's ministry participants increased exponentially through the leadership of a volunteer and the staff could not support the needs of women. The church leadership envisioned how the position would further the mission of the church. The pastor and church leaders decided to create a staff position for the women's minister volunteer at the time.

**Themes related to Research Question One.** The first research question was, "why do some churches decide to employ fulltime women's ministers?" The researcher designed interview questions and focus group statements with responses of agreement or disagreement based on a Likert scale to provide insight and answer the research questions. The results of the interviews and focus group discussions provided themes to answer the research question outlined in the table below. Further descriptions of the themes are provided through excerpts of interviews and focus group responses. The excerpts provide data from the participants' personal experiences and viewpoints. Interview results provided responses that were coded by the researcher and then organized into themes to answer the research questions. Table 6 below displays the codes that were applied to the interviews and focus groups and the themes that came from the research related to research question number one. Themes that surfaced after the analysis of the interviews and focus group questions were church philosophy, pastor initiation, and evidence of need.

Table 6

*Research Question #1 Themes*

| Themes            | Codes  |
|-------------------|--|
| Church Philosophy | Discipleship and Evangelism<br>Women's Ministry Aligns |
| Pastor Initiation | Pastor Initiated                                       |
| Evidence of Need  | Created to Support Ministry<br>Need was evident        |

***Church philosophy.*** Church philosophy was a theme that emerged from the interviews and focus groups at site two related to research question one. The church's philosophy had a focus on loving God, loving others and then reaching the community, focusing on discipleship and evangelism. The pastor spoke of the need for a woman to relate to women in their endeavors to become devoted disciples of Christ. He explained how women's ministry aligns with the mission of the church in his interview,

Well, if the overall philosophy includes, and we really include several things, mission, vision, strategy, but if we just looked at the mission of the church, we want to glorify God by making fully devoted disciples of Christ and if women should be disciples of Christ, there are some things that I can give them and there are some things that I could not give them as well, so, if they are going to be a fully devoted follower of Christ, in their roles as wife and mother, we may go through tragedies, things of that nature, the women's ministry would be there to help them become fully devoted disciples filling in the blanks or holes that I and the other pastors can't.

***Pastor initiation.*** A second theme related to research question two was the pastor's involvement in initiating a women's minister paid position. The position was initiated at the church because the inaugural women's minister began serving in a volunteer capacity to facilitate ministries for women. A core group of women wanted to be part of the ministry, and as she stated she was passionate about starting a women's ministry. These factors led to a growth movement within the church in the women's ministry area. In the first women's minister's interview, she said, "As more women responded, more ministry help was needed and it kind of grew into a position as the need grew." The women's minister went to conferences and read books to study more about women's ministry.

The ministry started with one Bible study with one hundred women in attendance and a retreat. Ministry needs grew as the amount of women involved increased. The church leadership approached the volunteer about becoming a staff member. The current women's minister was aware of the history although she was young at the time:

There was a core of them that started a women's Bible study together so they went through I'd say well over a year, two years maybe, praying for a ministry to start here, for a ministry to women. In that time though, they did a few things. They sponsored a retreat, they knew they weren't the ones to lead this, but they sponsored a retreat, which is actually the one I went to and I think that's where God stirred a little bit in my heart.

***Evidence of need.*** The church office was receiving many calls and questions about the women's ministry offerings. There was no one on staff who could field the questions and needs to the capacity that they were coming in. The church leadership approached the women's minister about creating a staff position for her to serve at the church and be a liaison for the women to the pastors. They implemented the position within a couple of months.

The pastor and women's ministers (previous and current) recommended that every church with any opportunity should implement a women's ministry position. The position offers an example of women's leadership and Christian living from a female perspective. The position provides staff leadership to lay leaders and representation of the majority of the church to the staff servicing the church body. The current women's minister sees herself as working with the church leaders and volunteers from the church membership, "And of course there are guidelines, policies, and procedures that they are under the authority of the pastoral staff. But it's teamwork. I have a team of leaders that work with me. They all have teams that work under them."

The first women's minister who participated in the process of implementing the women's ministry had a light shining in her eyes and deep enthusiasm in her voice while recalling the events during her interview from her own perspective:

Well the women's ministry started in 93 and then we went from 0 to 100 women at the first event and then the first retreat had 150 and then that Joy in the Morning was the kickoff of women's ministry. The Bible study started and we didn't know we were going to have a women's ministry so the first Bible study that we started had 120 children and over 100 women in it. So it went from 0 to 100 within the first year of having that. They were starving and they brought friends. We've got so many testimonies of women that brought friends and the friends got saved and you know because there was something here for women and now they're leading in national MOPS organizations.

**Answer to Research Question Two.** The answer to research question two "how do fulltime women's ministers provide greater resources than volunteers?" was answered at site two by the way that the women's minister is held to specific expectations, the budget that is managed by the women's minister position, and contributions that the women's minister makes through a

fulltime position. Since the women's minister at site two started as a volunteer, the women's ministry participants and the first women's minister were able to identify the benefits of a women's minister on staff versus a women's minister as a volunteer. The women's minister is held accountable to meet specific needs of women in the church per the job description provided to the researcher. Although a volunteer may have standards, the level of standard and ability to hold a person accountable are greater with a paid position. The women's minister is allotted the time to evaluate program effectiveness through surveys and to research the most current needs of women in the church. The church leadership also set aside a larger budget for the women's minister to utilize for meeting women's needs as she sees most useful, due to her time spent to manage it as a paid employee. A volunteer is not guaranteed to spend the amount of time a fulltime women's minister spends managing the budget, because volunteers control their own time.

The women's minister offers community to the women through well-organized women's groups tailored to specific needs of various women. The women's minister is also available to women and provides consistent leadership and vision for the women's ministry. Due to accountability to church leadership in a paid position, the women's minister allots more energy and planning than a volunteer. In addition, because of the longevity of tenure in a paid position the women's minister was able to increase the quality of the programs in the church.

**Themes related to Research Question Two.** The second research question was, "how do fulltime women's ministers provide greater resources than volunteers?" Interview questions were offered to the pastor and current women's minister that related to research question number two. The answers from the interviews provided results to answer the research question outlined in the table below. Focus group discussion also provided insight into research question two.

Further descriptions are provided with excerpts from interviews and focus group responses to provide thick, rich descriptions from the participants' personal experiences and viewpoints. Codes were assigned to the interview responses and focus group discussion. Themes that emerged from the codes assigned pertaining to research question two are women's minister expectations, budget maintenance and contributions as shown in Table 7.

Table 7

*Research Question #2 Themes*

| Themes                        | Codes               |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Women's Minister Expectations | Authority delegated |
|                               | Meet various needs  |
|                               | Accountability      |
| Budget Maintenance            | Offset by charging  |
|                               | Childcare offset    |
|                               | Events offset       |
| Contributions                 | Community           |

***Women's minister expectations.*** Women's minister expectations emerged as a theme related to question two. The women's minister's job description, as noted in the documents provided, was similar to tasks the women's minister implemented as a volunteer. The difference in the expectation from the church leaders and members involved accountability. The women's minister was now held accountable for meetings, ministry vision, and participation in various events. The first women's minister on staff noted that pay equals accountability:

I was probably more expected to attend some meetings, have a bigger vision, and have more accountability and responsibility. Actually my role with women's ministry had already grown to a point that they said to me it needs to be a staff position, so there wasn't any added. My responsibility was already big enough at that point.

The women were looking for answers to questions regarding women's ministry while it was a volunteer position. This issue was the primary reason that the church leadership decided to implement a women's minister position. The women in the congregation were identifying a need for someone on staff to be able to support women's ministry in the church and to answer questions in a timely manner. A volunteer position was not able to accomplish that due to lack of hours and connectivity to the church administrative office. The women's ministry focus group participants spoke about representation and the value placed on being in a church where a women's minister position had been allocated. One focus group member had this to say:

I think everyone wants to see themselves and their needs represented at the table.

Everyone wants to be affirmed that there is room at the table for who I am. And, without having that person at the table to serve as an advocate to provide insight, then it sends a message of how we are valued or devalued and so I think it's a symbol of how the church sees us as women. Do they see us as Paul and the apostles and Jesus saw us? Or do they see us from a skewed perspective. And, having women represented at the table, reaffirms to us that we are viewed, maybe not perfectly, but in the light that Jesus to be viewed.

Expectations for the women's minister that include leadership and vision offer consistency to the women in the church. It also provides availability to women. The current women's minister views it as her responsibility as the third women's minister employed at this



church to be available, “I’m here to support what God has called the women to do and the gifts and talents He’s given them and facilitate it happening.”

The documents requested and provided to the researcher also provided insight into the expectations placed on the women’s minister in a paid position. The documents collected at the second site included an organizational chart in addition to various job descriptions. The job descriptions had morphed over time to represent the current expectations and job responsibilities of the women’s minister. The needs of women have changed over time, as well as the ministry offerings. The women’s minister provided the documents at the time of her interview. There were no other documents related to the implementation of the original women’s minister position such as meeting minutes, emails, or bylaws. One of the documents was the job description and expectations. The women’s minister was asked to facilitate, grow and add ministries to increase the offerings and meet the needs of women in greater and more specific ways over time. A second document identified an organizational chart that showed the level of accountability placed on the women’s minister while she answers to the Pastor of Community Life.

***Budget maintenance.*** Budget maintenance was a second theme that emerged in relation to research question two based on the interviews and focus groups conducted. As a fulltime employee, the women’s minister is able to manage the budget in more detail to provide greater effectiveness of the budget. Although the budget was raised to support increased ministry of a women’s minister, the budget for this church is not self-sustaining. The budget is offset by women who pay for various women’s ministry offerings in the church. The budget will cover base costs for events such as Bible study programs or simulcasts. The women pay for Bible study workbooks, lunch or childcare provided in addition to the event offering. The current women’s minister explained this in her interview:

I have a budget. There are some things that are not expected to be reimbursed. We are given that money to put on events. I am given a certain amount of money and whatever I can't cover; I have to charge for, that sort of thing. And we charge a very minimal \$3 per child per meeting. And that's just budget through the giving of the church, we have paid childcare workers for our ministries and so it's really, really amazing. We don't have to charge for things we print. The giving of the church covers printing, publications, that sort of thing. The amount builds over time. As the value is seen, it was going on they would be more willing to allocate funds like the childcare. We do charge for Bible studies, like if you take a Bible study, you pay for your book, but we offer scholarships at all times. We will never, not let anyone study the Bible if they need to. So our MOP's does charge dues. That can get pricy. So we just look at what are our goals for the year, what do we need spending wise and if they don't approve it then it has to be, then you have to charge for it. But almost everything we do is offset, like we are about to do the Beth Moore simulcast just to play it, so we are charging to cover that, but we are using events to charge back.

**Contributions.** Contributions were revealed as a third theme related to research question two. The women's minister provides consistency and availability and brings community through the ministry offerings. The first women's minister at this church founded the women's ministry on a Bible study and a retreat as a volunteer. However, over time, the women's minister was not able to support the needs of the women's ministry as a volunteer while she was working another job outside the church. The Bible study was the foundation of the program and remains that way today. The women found fellowship and community and were drawn to participate in the women's ministry programs and in the church. The Bible study offered childcare and an

atmosphere to learn, grow and share with other women of the same mind. This in turn leads to personal growth and influences the lives of those the women touch. The current women's minister explained it like this in the interview:

When women are prompted, when they're drawn to Bible study together, when opportunities are created for them to grow together...where they can share in a way that you don't share in mixed company. There's just that support that fellowship and that accountability that happens, I think that when you really support the spiritual growth of that woman and get involved in what God's doing in her life, and she is maturing in her faith, it affects every relationship she has.

The women's minister understands the needs of women. She contributes vision, leadership and consistency to the women's ministry program.

The focus group shared that the women's minister provided leadership to a team of women with accountability. The women who participated on the team were then able to offer leadership to other women. The focus group participants believed having a women's minister on staff to provide leadership created more opportunities for women to contribute in ministry. One of the participants said it this way:

One thing our women's ministry does well is provide little jobs, little ministry roles you can take on in a safe environment, so you can take on a small group Bible study or be that hospitality person for that event and get your feet wet and start to learn and grow and use your gifts so other people are starting to get used to you. I started making coffee and I took little baby steps.

The focus group also shared how the women's minister invests in the leadership, which creates an example for women on the leadership team to invest in the women at the church as a whole.

The focus group participants felt very strongly that they were being poured into and that affected their lives in the church. One participant summarized her thoughts, “If you’re not poured into in a meaningful way, it is very difficult to pour out, so being poured into in a meaningful way, on a consistent basis through our women’s ministry allows us to be involved and to have something to pull from in order to give back or you’re going to be depleted.”

**Answer to Research Question Three.** In answer to research question number three, “how are the needs of women identified and measured?” the women’s minister has a strong focus on assessing women’s needs. The women’s minister utilizes surveys, focus groups, research and direct feedback and input to identify what programs to provide. The women’s ministry has consistently grown because the women’s minister is consistently in touch with women. She has a record of past success and assesses current success to decide with a leadership team what direction the women’s ministry should go to continue meeting women’s needs in a greater way. The women’s minister has the authority and the resources to adjust the ministry offerings per the needs of the women. This allows the women’s minister to identify needs of women on a recurring basis and to evaluate if those needs are being met. The women’s minister effects change as needed to adjust ministry offerings to meet needs of women in a greater way.

**Themes related to research question three.** The third research question was, “how are the needs of women identified and measured?” Interview questions were offered to the pastor and current women’s minister that related to research question three. The following results focus on themes that developed from the responses. Some of the exact interview responses and focus group discussions are included to provide a thick, rich and personal narrative. Codes were assigned based on analysis of the data. Table 8 identifies the themes that emerged from the codes and provide answers to research question three. The themes that emerged from the codes

related to research question three are identification of women's needs and evaluation of women's needs.

Table 8

*Research Question #3 Themes*

| Themes                          | Codes                |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Identification of Women's Needs | Surveys              |
|                                 | Focus Groups         |
|                                 | Word of Mouth        |
| Evaluation of Women's Needs     | Difficult to measure |
|                                 | Quantitative Growth  |
|                                 | Qualitative Growth   |

***Identification of women's needs.*** Identifying women's needs was part of the focus of research question three. In coding the responses from the interviews and focus group discussion, the theme related to the research was answered through the means by which the women's minister identifies women's needs. The second research site had a strong focus on research to identify women's needs. The women's minister relies on surveys, focus groups, and research in the ministry field to aid in creating ministries and programs to meet women's needs. The current women's minister explained the process of her research and how it brought out information of what the women wanted in their ministry offerings:

We did focus groups. I did a focus group with college girls in my living room and asked them specific questions. And we took some of their suggestions and implemented them.

We didn't just say thank you, we hear you, we got them involved and implemented them,

so we built that information and implemented them. We had people come and broke them up into generations by table, so maybe 20s and 30s and 40s and then another table to older. So we asked questions and asked them to answer them within their generation, so it got the youngest table in their 20s to one of the questions was what do you think about that table over there, and the things they said brought tears to women at that table and this was a focus group. We were able to see what the needs were, what does this generation need, what does this generation need? What do they want? And then that core group was able to see what the other generations needed and we were able to play off of that.

***Evaluation of women's needs.*** Evaluation of women's needs emerged as a theme related to research question three as various codes were created and involved this same theme. The first women's minister utilized research from Lifeway Women to implement and evaluate programs. Both women's ministers, the first women's minister on staff and the current women's minister took women's ministry leadership teams to an annual women's ministry leadership training conference. The first women's minister on staff recanted her process of evaluation in her interview:

I always did a lot of reading and studying and I always had a lot of leadership books, Lifeway resources were excellent, so we have been going to the Lifeway national forum and they do research and teach us and then we bring it back and they always take leadership teams to that.

Program effectiveness is measured by means of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The intrinsic factors involve personal and spiritual growth or progress. The measurement is subjective as there is no tool or numerical report to identify personal growth. However, testimonials and observation lend themselves to measure this data. The interviews revealed that

the numbers do help the women's minister and church leadership to know if a particular offering appears to meet needs of women.

Another way the women's minister monitors the needs of women is through an annual leadership meeting to look at the calendar year in retrospect, holding a post mortem on what seemed to be beneficial to the women in the church and what did not. The ministry offerings are then modified or removed based on leadership team feedback. This research site also used word of mouth input to identify women's needs. Various ministries were identified for the purpose of meeting needs specific to groups of women that were relayed from individual feedback. The women's ministry participants initiated the feedback. The current women's minister talked about one new ministry identified this year through word of mouth as the need for a ministry to single women:

You have to have relationships with people to know what's going on out there. A lot of that will come from people actually coming to someone on staff or coming to me or coming to one of my team members and saying we really wish that there was "this." Like right now, we are feeling that we have a gaping hole of reaching single moms, that the way our ministry we have set up is not conducive to a single mom, because we haven't really had any in the past.

The women's minister noted how women's needs had changed and how the ministry has to grow and evolve with the needs of women in the church. Priorities are decided by a combination of factors. Factors include the church mission and vision, intensity of the need, and the budget required to meet the need per the women's minister's input and pastor's direction.

**Answer to Research Question Four.** Research question number four "how are women's needs met in a greater way through churches with fulltime women's ministry staff?"

was answered primarily by the interviews and focus group discussion. However, documents and observations provided some additional insight into the topic. The church leaders and the women's ministers responded in the same way that there were no challenges in implementing the positions. The pastor recommended that other church leaders and members become aware of the importance of women ministering to women. Pastors have limitations in relating to women. A women's minister offers the option of a liaison to the staff and female who can relate to women and identify needs and ministry to offer in order to meet those needs. The women's minister also mentioned that church leaders could first implement a part-time women's minister and build the position as the ministry builds.

**Themes related to Research Question Four.** The fourth research question was, "how are women's needs met in a greater way through churches with fulltime women's ministry staff?" The interview questions offered to the pastor, first women's minister and current women's minister, as well as the focus group discussion responses highlighted specific themes related to research question four. Data was analyzed by the researcher and codes were applied to organize the data and identify common themes. Table 9 shows the themes that emerged from the codes assigned during the process of data analysis in relation to research question four involving connectivity and program development.



Table 9

*Research Question #4 Themes*

| Themes              | Codes                            |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| Connectivity        | Increased Ministry Opportunities |
|                     | Provides Connection              |
| Program Development | Brainstorming                    |
|                     | Budget                           |
|                     | Calendaring                      |

**Connectivity.** Connectivity emerged as a theme for research question four at site two. From the beginning of the implementation of a women's minister position, the women's ministry grew exponentially due to the connectivity provided by the ministry offerings. Through Bible studies and a retreat, the women attended as a group of 100 or more and grew to nearly 600 women participating over a decade's time. The women's minister recalled the story of the women's ministry growth as she was at the church as a teenager at the time:

I don't think anyone sat down and said let's hire a women's director and we went from 500 women to 1000. I don't think that's . . . I think as the church started growing quickly, we added a women's director, even a children's director, things of that nature, in order to handle the influx of people, but then as you got the person, then more people came. So it would not be unusual to what people see in youth ministry. You might have 10 or 20 with a part time guy, so since you have 20, you have the part time guy and it goes 40 so . . . I do believe that because we have a women's ministry director on staff that it increased the overall offerings of the church . . . .

The church leadership also understood that women relate to women. Having a woman on staff set an example and as the initial women's minister stated she understood "women set the tone of the church". She believed that the women's actions would set a precedent on how church members would behave as a whole. Women would influence other women, their children and their husbands. She specifically mentioned refraining from gossip and backbiting as an important part of setting the tone of love and fellowship, rather than being a church of animosity. The first women's minister at this church was integral in branding the women's minister with a biblical role of womanhood in the church:

For Titus 2 to put legs to it, you can't just say women you need to be mentoring. They need tools . . . they need resources, if a woman is 65 how is she going to connect with the woman who is 25? How is a woman going to even know, feel confident enough with a woman to go to her and say will you mentor me? She has no way to connect to them, so the women's ministry leader team is just a vessel to help them connect. The other verse in 1 Timothy 3, [says] in the end times, deceit will enter homes through women. We want a women's ministry to protect our homes. We set the tone at home and we set the tone at church. Females set the tone, they don't lead but they set the tone and if you are spiritually mature, you will set a spiritually mature tone.

The focus group participants believed having a women's minister on staff was vital to the balanced development of individuals. The participants had the sense that many churches often focus on male discipleship and development, because the staff is primarily male. However, with a women's ministry leader, it created a voice at the table of church staff to represent and to remind the other leaders of women in the church who also need to be disciplined to grow in their faith. One of the focus group participants said in her own words:

I think that the church as a whole is supposed to be growing in our faith and so if we did not have a women's ministry position, there would be a lack of some of that growth on one side of the congregation, so then you could potentially have all of these male strong influences, but then women are not being challenged to grow, but I think in regards to the whole church, it keeps growth in balance.

The researcher observed connectivity among women's ministry participants when attending a small group Bible study at one of the women's ministry participant's homes. The small group observation provided insight into the theme of connectivity as the researcher witnessed the candor with which women shared personal information. The women were invested in their Bible study as they completed homework, recited Scripture and came prepared to engage based on their preparation. Women were deeply connected with and committed to each other. The small group met weekly and was a repeat group of women involved. The relational depth and connectivity was also shown when ladies enjoyed refreshments and conversation after, staying for an hour beyond the study's end. Although the group members change as the study offerings change seasonally, the depth was evident by the way the group was led and the way the women responded. The women's minister is held accountable for providing the resources for the need of connectivity to be met for women in this church.

***Program development.*** Program development was a second theme associated with research question four. The program development process is closely related to the evaluation process at this church. Per the job description provided through the documents requested by the researcher, the women's minister is held most accountable in her job responsibilities to provide ministry offerings to women for the purpose of meeting their needs. The women's minister evaluates feedback from women and then works to develop ministry offerings annually with a

planning retreat. She invites her entire ministry team and asks for feedback from the ministry leaders who are connected to different women. The team discusses the needs and programs offered the year prior. If a new need arises or changes, the programs are modified accordingly. The team then meets monthly to plan the specifics of events, calendar dates, and logistics of moving forward with the programs they decide to implement. The current women's minister shared some of her process for development in the interview:

Yeah, I would say the bulk of that work is done at our monthly meetings. The planning retreat is more of a look back at the year and we discuss leadership needs and we discuss people. And then we talk about what we see as where we need to put a lot of focus for the coming year. But then the nitty-gritty planning, we do that during the monthly meetings and then everyone is planning and working with individual teams. So that's basically how that works.

The focus group participants understood the importance of having a focused program to create the greatest vision for strategic growth. The participants understood the amount of planning that has gone into their women's ministry offerings. They also understood the fact that the team led by a women's minister created the best avenue for strategic planning. One participant summarized it this way:

Also, because it's kind of a team approach where she is kind of the spearhead, when we are thinking about studies to do and all of that, it takes in the full scope of what the needs are for the various ages and stages in life and so-on, but it's synthesized and strategic instead of "harem scarem", or where this person's heart is leading them, it may not be relevant to the needs of the body of women in general, but because there is this position

and there is an opportunity to think pray and be strategic about the programs that are offered, I think it's more beneficial that way. It's not hit or miss. It's planned.

The focus group participants felt that the women's minister was successful in leading and training women to minister with a specific vision and plan. The women generally agreed that the women's ministry position allowed the person in leadership to develop a clear plan and include other women in that plan. The women felt they knew what the women's minister wanted to do for the women's ministry and how they could serve in the ministry or participate as recipients of the ministry.

Women had many small group options provided to them based on the interviews. The women's minister explained that it was part of her job description. She is required "to provide women, specifically leaders, with books, materials, and supplies that will aid them in teaching, facilitating Bible studies, as well as personal spiritual growth. The researcher observed a small group offering that was a result of this job requirement. Women were supported and equipped to lead numerous small group Bible studies through the women's minister's provision of organization and materials.

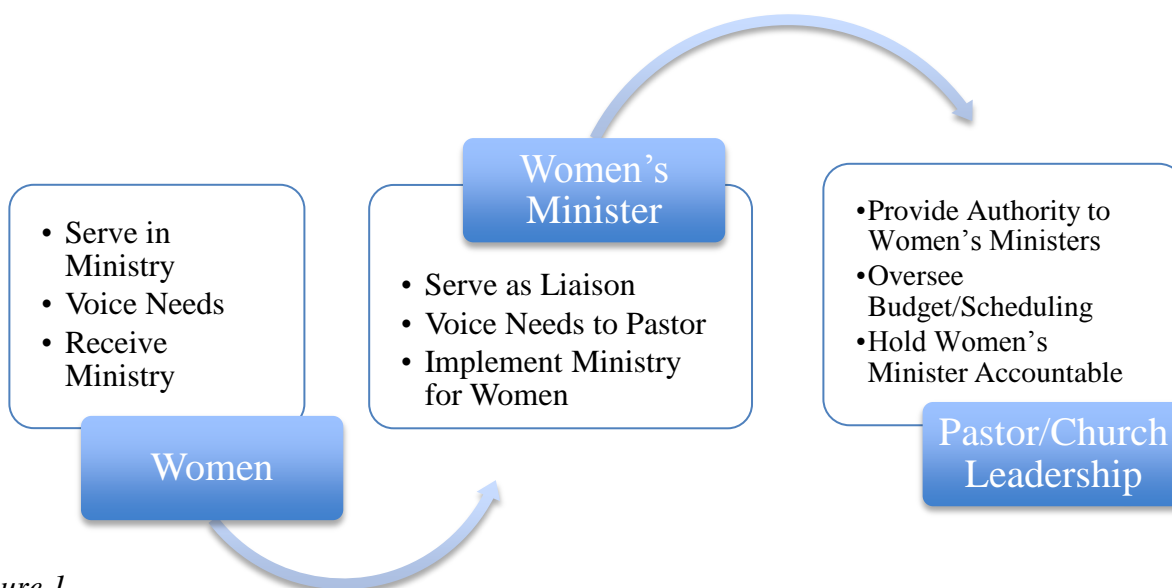
### **Comparison of Two Sites**

The researcher compared the data collected from the two research sites for similarities in themes between the two cases. Comparing the two cases allowed for identification of common themes that arose from the individual cases. Similar themes were identified from the individual case studies that related to each of the four research questions. Most of the compared themes from the case studies were the same with one primary difference among the codes from which the themes emerged. The themes exemplified a focus on what a women's ministry position offers and how a women's ministry position can be implemented. Comparison of the two sites

revealed that the answers to the research questions overlapped with similar themes when analyzing the data of the individual case studies. Results comparing is discussed in the remainder of chapter four.

### **Research Question One**

**Answer to Research Question One.** Combined research from the two churches answered research question one “why do some churches decide to employ fulltime women’s ministers?” with similar answers. Both churches had pastors and church leadership that believed the women’s ministry was a vital part of the church’s philosophy and vision for ministry. Pastors understood that the women were interested in community and service with other women. In addition, the pastors also realized that the women’s ministry would help engage the mission of the church. The need was evident for women to relate to women and to have a liaison to the church leaders that oversee the women’s minister. In Figure 1, the first box identifies various needs of women in the church relating to their function to minister and to receive ministry. The second box lists some of the roles that a women’s minister fills to meet women’s needs. The third box identifies the role of the pastor to fulfill the church’s vision as it pertains to women’s ministry.



*Figure 1*

**Themes related to Research Question One.** The first research question, “why do some churches decide to employ fulltime women’s ministers” was answered based on the data analysis from the individual cases. Data analysis consisted of reviewing data from each case and comparing the themes that overlapped between the two sites related to research question one. The table below shows the similar themes that emerged from both sites. Themes represented in Table 10 are church philosophy, process of implementation, and challenges of implementation. The table also notes the one difference in the codes representing the theme process of implementation. At site one, the position was created to build a ministry, whereas at site two, the position was created to build an existing ministry run by a volunteer.

Table 10

*Research Question #1 Themes Compared*

| Themes            | Codes  |
|-------------------|--|
| Church Philosophy | Discipleship and Evangelism<br>Women's Ministry Aligns   |
| Pastor Initiation | Pastor Initiated   |
| Evidence of Need  | Need was evident<br>Created to Build Ministry (Site One)<br>Created to Start Ministry (Site Two) |

***Church philosophy.*** Both sites had the theme church philosophy emerge from the coded data. The church philosophy in both of the churches focused on discipleship and evangelism. The churches do stem from the same foundation. The Southern Baptist churches follow the Baptist Faith and Message (2000) as referenced in the literature review. The Baptist Faith and Message (2000) focuses on evangelism and discipleship as the primary focus of the church (Matthew 28:16-20). The women's ministry in both churches was aligned to discuss the connection between the women's ministry and the focus of the church. The church leadership, women's ministers and focus groups agreed that the women's ministry plays a vital role in assisting the churches to fulfill the vision and philosophy of the church. Both women's minister positions were implemented to carry out the philosophy and mission of the church in a greater way. The churches recognized that the women make up the majority of the church membership. This led both churches to decide that a women's minister was necessary to not only lead, but represent women in a staff role to the church leadership. The women's minister assists the



pastoral leadership in each church to represent the philosophy and carry out the mission of the church. The women's ministers reach the majority of the church as an authoritative leader seen as an investment by the church leaders into the women of the church. Women's ministers help lead the majority of the church membership in fulfilling the mission of the church in their respective roles and genders as women.

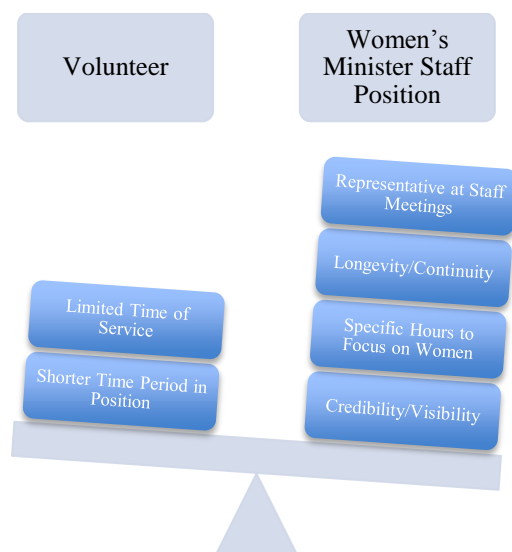
***Pastor initiation.*** Process of implementation was a shared theme that emerged from the coded data at both sites. In both churches the pastor and other leaders of the church led the process of implementing a women's minister. The leadership saw the need and the benefit to support the women in discipleship and ministry as the majority of the church. The pastor and church leaders identified the value in reaching women directly by a leader focused specifically on their needs. They also saw the value in a leader who could relate directly to gender specific experiences and needs. The pastor and church leaders identified the women and selected them personally.

***Evidence of need.*** The women's ministers at each site had a different need to meet in regards to the women's ministry. At site one, the women's minister position was implemented to grow a women's ministry. Aware of the need for women's ministry and believing in the mission of it, the pastor brought a women's minister on staff for the purpose of building a women's ministry. There was nothing in place at the time the women's minister was implemented. However, at site two, the women's minister position was implemented for the purpose of investing further in the women's ministry that was built from her time and effort as a volunteer. Evidence of needs for a facilitator in the office during business hours was evident to the church leadership at the time. Therefore, her position was extended into paid position with authority and credentials to represent the church leadership in the office, rather than a volunteer.

Something of note to the researcher with this particular subject is that the churches in which the women's ministers were selected and employed by the pastors maintained a women's minister on staff since the position was implemented. Both of the original women's ministers are still on staff at their respective churches decades after their positions were implemented. The women's minister at site one has maintained her position for more than twenty years, while the other women's minister at site two has moved to another position on staff. While still on staff the women's minister at site two has trained two other women's ministers who have served in her position since it was implemented and remains a consultant for women's ministry on the church staff.

### **Research Question Two**

**Answer to Research Question Two.** The second research question, "how do fulltime women's ministers provide greater resources than volunteers?" was answered by the interviewees and focus groups members. The pastors at both sites realized that the women's minister was a resource as a church leader of the same gender. The women's ministers acknowledged they were representing the women to the church leadership and serving as liaisons to women who were ministering to women in the church. Time and longevity were also noted to be crucial to the provision of greater resources. The women's ministers have the opportunity to spend longer periods of focused time on meeting the needs of women in the church, not only hours in the week, but consecutive years in a row. Figure 2 identifies key comparison of the limit of volunteer offerings versus those of a fulltime women's minister on staff.



*Figure 2*

Women's ministers on staff last longer than an average volunteer. The women's ministers are involved in leadership and staff meetings with the pastoral staff. This provides the opportunity to involve women's ministry more penetrably within the vision of the church.

**Themes related to Research Question Two.** The second research question, "how do fulltime women's ministers provide greater resources than volunteers?" was answered by analyzing the data from each individual case study. Comparing the two case studies, the same themes emerged from the data analysis. The themes in Table 11 were represented in each case study. The themes represented in the following table are women's minister expectations, budget, and contributions in relation to research question two.

Table 11

*Research Question #2 Themes Compared*

| Themes                        | Codes               |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| Women's Minister Expectations | Authority delegated |
|                               | Meet various needs  |
|                               | Accountability      |
| Budget Maintenance            | Offset by charging  |
|                               | Childcare offset    |
|                               | Events offset       |
| Contributions                 | Community           |

***Women's minister expectations.*** Based on the responses from the interviews and focus groups, the women's ministers provide an authoritative example of leadership and representation. The church leadership delegated decisions to the women's ministers for ministry offerings including Bible studies, events, calendar dates, and any evaluation, maintenance or changes to the women's ministry. When the churches hire a women's minister on staff, it creates an automatic example to women in various areas for the church. The women's minister is a leader because she is on staff. All of the staff in the church is viewed as leaders to the congregation members. The women's minister is viewed as an example to other women of practical Christian living. She is also available to be an example, to share thoughts on how to live out the mission in the church.

The women's minister becomes a representation for the women to the staff. Women's needs are represented from a female perspective in meetings. She disseminates information from

the church leadership to the women in the church and vice versa. Being on staff provides endorsement and automatically offers authority, leadership and respect, just because of her position. This affords her the ability to be more impactful and effective. Per the focus group responses, a paid position lends to longevity more than a volunteer's hours. This allows a women's minister to continually build credibility and visibility over time to attribute to greater influence as a leader.

Having a women's minister position offers focus for how women should live as Christian women, according to the focus group participants. It also creates a focus on the majority of the church according to church leadership. Lastly, the position creates a focus to meet the needs of women. The women's minister is present at staff meetings, held accountable to a job description, and given authority and responsibility to care for the women of the church, offering a focus on women.

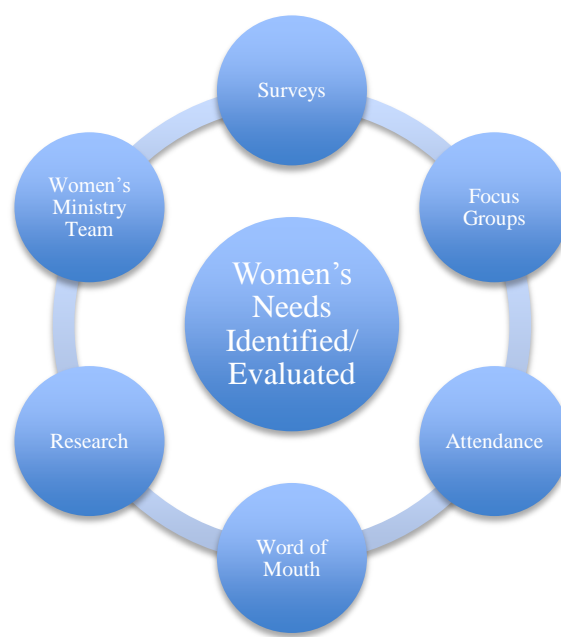
***Budget maintenance.*** The case study sites that implemented women's ministry positions had more freedom with the budget. The church had resources that allowed them to implement women's minister positions without challenges or negative responses from church members. Both churches had financial freedom to add to the budget and enough pastoral leadership to not only support the idea, but drive the idea to fruition. Church leadership then gave the women's ministers freedom to act as necessary to meet the needs of women in the church. The women's ministers were provided with budgets and resources to implement ministries.

***Contributions.*** The women's ministers in each of the churches made strong contributions by providing and fostering community to the women in the church. Primarily noted by the focus group, the women's ministers provided vision to implement programs, which in turn offered community to the women. Bible studies, fellowships, life groups, events, surveys,

research and leadership teams made the women feel connected. The women’s ministry participants from the focus group also stated that having a leader as a women’s minister on staff provided an extension of themselves to the church leaders to allow them to feel connected to other women within the context of a larger community.

### Research Question Three

**Answer to Research Question Three.** Research question number three, “how are the needs of women identified and measured?” was answered by the women’s ministers and the focus groups. The women’s ministers and women’s ministry participants from the focus groups identified the ways that the women’s ministers met the needs of women in the church. The women’s ministers at both churches spent time assessing ministry offerings, noting attendance, and identifying new needs as they arose. Performing focus groups, offering surveys, and executing research to note the needs of women from year to year and generation to generation allowed each women’s minister to identify and evaluate women’s needs. Figure 3 identifies the various sources and methods of capturing data to identify and evaluate women’s needs.



*Figure 3*

The women's ministers also both had women's ministry teams to provide input and offer analysis of current offerings. The women's ministers were active in leadership training and networking to identify women's needs and new offerings to meet them.

**Themes related to Research Question Three.** The third research question, "how are the needs of women identified and measured?" was answered by the data collection and analysis completed for each individual case study based on the interviews and focus group discussions. Data was assigned codes and themes that emerged were compared between the two case studies. The same theme emerged from the individual case studies in relation to research question three. Table 12 represents the themes that emerged from both case studies, which are identification of women's needs and evaluation of women's needs.

Table 12

*Research Question #3 Themes Compared*

| Themes                          | Codes                |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Identification of Women's Needs | Surveys              |
|                                 | Focus Groups         |
|                                 | Word of Mouth        |
|                                 | Research             |
| Evaluation of Women's Needs     | Difficult to measure |
|                                 | Quantitative Growth  |
|                                 | Qualitative Growth   |

***Identification of women's needs.*** In both of the churches that participated in the case study, the interviewees identified that measuring the needs of women is challenging. Women

have needs that are often intangible, dealing with spiritual growth, emotions, and unspoken needs. Both churches utilized quantitative and qualitative measures to identify women's needs and whether or not the women ministry was meeting them. Surveys were offered, focus groups held. Research was also a part of both churches, although stronger at one church than the other. The women's needs were also identified through conversation, recommendation, and assessment of current offerings, versus population represented within the women in the church.

*Evaluation of women's needs.* It was evident that the ministries fluctuated over time and the offerings changed, although core offerings, such as Bible study and discipleship remained. The events offered and the methodology for meeting women's needs changed. However, both of the case study sites found ways to measure women's needs. The churches utilized quantitative measures for participation in women's ministry events. If attendance decreased, changes were made to ministry offerings. Counseling was added and new classifications of women such as single mothers were made the focus. Schedules became more accommodating to the working-woman and mother.

#### **Research Question Four**

**Answer to Research Question Four.** The fourth research question, "how are women's needs met in a greater way through churches with fulltime women's ministry staff?" was answered by the interviews and focus groups at each church. The answers provided offered a gateway into the tangible offerings of a women's minister staff position, rather than a volunteer, or no one in the position at all. The women's minister has an effect on connectivity of women through the position and programs developed to meet their needs. When a position is created and there is a seat at the table for a voice to be heard, as the interview and focus group participants discussed, there is value placed on not only the position, but primarily on the



ministry to women. The women feel represented and valued. This creates a sense of value for women in the church overall. The women want to be in a church where the value is evident based on the focus group responses. The women that come and participate in the church bring families creating connectivity. The families grow and the church health is increased by attendance and participation. The intrinsic growth goes beyond the intangible extrinsic growth per the interviewees and focus group participants. Figure 4 provides a visual highlight based on the comment of a focus group participant saying that when a church has a women's minister on staff a message is conveyed that women are valued at that particular church.



*Figure 4*

The women's minister is also equipped with longevity to create continuity of vision. This in turn impacts program development, assessment and improvement. A women's minister position creates a time investment by guaranteeing focused hours on women's ministry, due to the fact that it is a paid position.

#### **Research Question Four**

**Themes related to Research Question Four.** The fourth research question, "how are women's needs met in a greater way through churches with fulltime women's ministry staff?" was answered by the themes that emerged from the data analysis of the individual case studies. When comparing the case studies, the same themes emerged from the individual case studies to

answer research question four collectively. Table 13 represents the themes connectivity and program development in relation to research question four.

Table 13

*Research Question #4 Themes*

| Themes              | Codes                    |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Connectivity        | Provides Connection      |
|                     | Women influence families |
| Program Development | Brainstorming            |
|                     | Budget                   |
|                     | Calendaring              |

**Connectivity.** The church is positioned for success and growth due to a focused position on gender specific ministry. The women's minister is evaluating women's ministries and identifying new needs as they arise and how to meet them. The women's minister is working with lay leaders and the pastoral staff to advocate for the women. The women's minister was able to focus time, energy, and thought to the needs of women. Through the focus on and provision of women's needs, the women's ministries grew. With this focus, the women experienced a greater connection through increased ministry offerings. With the addition of Bible studies for focused groups of women at each church, the women expressed that the connectivity to other women and the church itself increased, due to the fact that there was a women's minister on staff.

**Program development.** With the implementation of a women's minister on staff, both churches identified paths to develop successful programs. Having a women's minister on staff

allowed both churches to strategically develop programs with a focused goal in mind for women's ministry. The focus led back to the purpose of the church and meeting the needs of women through the church. Having a women's minister on staff provided a coherent process for women's ministry assessment and development to meet the needs of women in the church.

The process of developing programs in both churches included meetings with the staff of the church to identify a common focus among the various ministry areas and to verify available calendar dates for ministry offerings. Programs were assessed and needs were evaluated annually. The churches identified the cost of ministry versus the benefit of ministry. If something was not successful from an attendance factor, it was reevaluated and either modified or discontinued, depending on the importance of the event and the desire for women to continue the event.

### **Summary**

Chapter Four provided a summary of results, which answered the research questions identified in this research study. The case studies were performed at two different sites and then compared for similarities. The church representatives were cooperative and informative. The researcher was able to accomplish the research requirements for completing the study. The original women's minister from each church was available to interview. This provided the most detailed and accurate information from a firsthand source since the position's inception. The two research sites had similar themes that were identified from the interviews, focus group responses and observations.

Site One noted the success of a women's minister on staff for more than two decades. The women's minister was brought in to help grow the ministry and was able to see successful women's ministry and growth added to the church as a whole during her tenure on staff. Site

Two also had a successful implementation of a women's minister and validated the benefit of a women's minister on staff. The women's minister was brought on staff to continue growing the women's ministry she had implemented as a volunteer.

Both sites contained leadership that implemented the women's minister position. Both churches had the budget resources to support a women's minister staff position. The two site churches also were able to offset ministry expenses by subsidizing costs of Bible study books, meals and childcare. The women's ministry participants made direct contributions to the events they attended.

The research results also showed how the women's ministers used research, surveys, focus groups, and attendance tracking to identify women's needs and how successfully they were being met. The women's ministers were able to adjust the ministry offerings to women's needs over time. Overall the women's ministry participants were satisfied with the ministry they were receiving and credited that satisfaction to having a women's minister on staff.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Overview**

This chapter will provide a summary of the findings, discussion of the findings, the implications of the research, the limitations of the study, and future research opportunities for the study. The findings from this qualitative, comparative case study involve validation of the literature review, as well as new findings that point to new novel contributions. The implications of the study are empirical and practical in nature as it relates to the church. The limitations as it relates to a qualitative study are outlined and the future research opportunities that exist with the findings from this research are discussed by the researcher in this chapter.

### **Summary of Findings**

The research for this comparative case study included the cooperation of two churches to allow the research to take place at each site. Both of the original women's ministers are still on staff at their churches. The women's ministry positions implemented in these churches have been truly successful for more than a decade at one location and for more than two decades at the other location. The findings revealed that the women's minister positions have been in place at both churches throughout a series of changes in pastoral leadership.

The research questions for the study were answered through the interviews, focus groups, observations and documents. Research Question One "Why do some churches decide to employ full time women's ministers" was answered primarily by the interviews. The pastors and women's ministers noted that the churches wanted to grow their women's ministry, or support the current women's ministry with a staff position. The leadership saw that the women, being the majority of the church body needed a focused staff position for the large membership group of

the church. The leadership recognized the needs and saw the benefit in devoting a position to the female segment of the church population.

Research Question Two, “How do fulltime women’s ministers provide greater resources than volunteers?” was answered through the interviews, focus groups, observations and documents. The women’s ministry participants shared how they feel valued and supported merely by having a staff position. They saw significance in having someone to go to regarding the needs of women. The women also felt the women’s minister provided representation to church leaders for the female population. The outcome of this was a support team led by the women’s minister at both churches to carry out ministry to women and support the needs of the church. The women’s ministers have the time to devote to the needs of women and to be in the office in correspondence with church leaders. Availability helped women’s ministers in a paid position greater meet the needs of the church. The women’s ministers also held longevity in their staff positions for up to 20 plus years. The longevity afforded consistent leadership, vision and support.

Research Question Three, “How are the needs of women identified and measured?” was answered through interviews and focus groups. The focus groups felt they had a doorway to share their needs and were solicited to share their opinions and concerns to the women’s ministry leadership team and the women’s minister. The women’s ministers also shared in their interviews about performing surveys, focus groups, doing research and measuring attendance for Bible studies, programs, activities and events. The women’s ministers also networked with women’s ministers and attended women’s leadership training annually.

Research Question Four, “how are women’s needs met in a greater way through churches with fulltime women’s ministry staff?” was answered through the interviews and focus groups.

The women's ministry staff position supports the needs of the women as an extension of the leadership of the church. The women's minister has the resources through time, authority and budget to devote to women in the church. The women's minister in turn provides community and a larger participation of women in the church. The women come to the church because there is a focus on women's ministry. The women grow spiritually and personally through the ministry. This develops women who are healthier, because their needs are met. The women in the focus groups recognized that the resources were available to meet their needs as evidenced by their responses.

### **Unforeseen Findings**

The researcher uncovered some unforeseen findings in the women's minister and pastor interviews. The interview questions were directed towards the research questions, however, some themes arose that expanded beyond the answers to the research questions. These themes seemed noteworthy, so the researcher included them in chapter five to bring awareness to the fact that the staff at both churches noted that they did not experience challenges when implementing a women's minister position.

**No challenges of implementation Site One.** Both the women's minister who participated in the original process and the current pastor noted that they were unaware of any challenges in implementing the women's minister position. There were no known objections or individuals that fought the idea. The pastor was not present when the position was implemented, but gave this response regarding challenges of implementing a women's minister:

I don't know why you wouldn't have someone dedicated to women's ministry. It could be in some staffing situations, the pastor's wife becomes the women's minister and I know that to be true in some settings, but I think having someone dedicated to that

position is still vastly beneficial than just having a volunteer, but I don't know why if you have multiple staffing situation, I don't know why you would say no. I know that they have thought about it, I just don't know why they would say no to it.

**No challenges of implementation Site Two.** Challenges of implementing a women's minister arose as a theme in relation to research question one. Interviewees said there were no known concerns about implementing a women's minister position that were brought up by the church staff or membership at the time. They said there were no issues that arose at the time the women's minister position was implemented. The ministry had already begun and the women's minister was volunteering her time. The church leadership saw the effectiveness of the ministry and was inundated by women asking questions regarding the women's ministry offerings at the church office. Employing a women's minister on the church staff was an aid and relief to the pastoral staff. The church leaders were willing to pay for the ministry that was already offered on a volunteer level to require accountability and availability in the church office. The church had the resources available to employ a women's minister. There were no issues of budget or concern over the idea of a women's ministry position that could be recalled by anyone. The first women's minister implemented into the position stated in her interview, "I knew of none of it. Now if there was some and I was shielded from it, I really don't know. As far as I know there was nothing."

## **Discussion**

### **Social Construct Theory Confirmation**

The study validates the idea that denominations and even churches establish their own social constructs (Vygotsky, 1978). The churches in this research study both had women's ministers on staff for more than a decade. The women's minister positions were maintained,



although the pastors changed three to four times from the time the women's minister position was implemented. The social constructs of these two churches have changed from a belief that a women's minister is not part of the church organization, as they now hold to the truth that a women's minister is a necessity on a church staff. Whereas, the social constructs of other churches would point to a belief, by omission of the position, that they do not deem a women's minister as a necessity for successful women's ministry. The interviews and focus groups noted the vitality of the women's minister position on numerous occasions and in answer to numerous questions that were asked of the participants. One primary note that showed a change in social constructs was in site two. The current women's minister identified the fact that she had grown up in the church where she is serving. She was heavily impacted by the women's minister on staff before her. This reality impacted her personal constructs and belief system of women in the church. Thus, her environment exposed her to a women's minister on staff and she held the same belief and became a women's minister on staff herself. The social constructs of these two churches also now include congregation members that believe women's ministers are a normal part of the staff structure of a church. A women's minister on staff has become the norm at these two churches, despite the fact that there are only three Southern Baptist churches in Virginia with women's ministers on staff. The participants were all surprised to learn of that statistic in their interviews.

### **Role/Structure of the Church**

Although the social constructs changed the structure of the staffing to include women's ministers, the role of the churches remained the same. The churches were part of a social constructs that did not include women's ministers on staff historically. However, through the implementation of the position, the pastor, women's minister and women's ministry recipients

identified the fact that the position is necessary for meeting women's needs in a greater way than a volunteer. The participants validated a need for the position and support of the position. This is not the normal construct of the Southern Baptist Church considering there are only three churches with fulltime women's ministers on staff. The churches both adhere to the role of the church as an organism that evangelizes individuals in the community and disciples individuals in the church (Clowney, 1995). All of the staff and focus group participants validated that truth in their interviews.

The structure of the church was in agreement by both of the churches as well. The research sites both agreed that men were to be in leadership of the church body as a whole, while women were to minister to women (1 Cor. 11:8) (Clowney, 1995; Martin & Stovall, 2008). The women's ministers saw their role as replicating for women what pastors do for an entire congregation. The women's ministers saw their roles as teaching and exemplifying to women how to live godly lives and to lead other women in reaching women in the church and the community.

### **Need for Gender-Specific Ministry/Women's Unique Struggles**

The literature addressed the idea that men and women have gender specific roles and reactions to circumstances. Biblically speaking, churches identify different roles for men and women in the church (Titus 2:3-5). As the pastor from site two noted in his interview, he understands that he is not able to address gender specific roles with a full understanding of the challenges that arise from a woman's perspective. He noted that he is not able to understand childbirth, abortion, or miscarriages from a personal perspective as a female can. He also noted how women struggle differently in their marriages having a unique role that is different from a man in marriage. This is consistent with the literature from Hislop (2010) that speaks about the

different aspects of women's struggles in comparison to men. He also addressed the fact that as a male pastor, he is unable to identify with or model how a godly woman should live. He knows this is a unique advantage to a women's minister relating to women. The women's minister also noted the same sentiments in her interview. She identified the fact that when she is counseling, she is able to identify with a woman in a way that a male could not. She noted the benefit of having a woman on staff to speak with a woman who is in need of counsel. The literature pointed to the fact that women face challenges in life differently from men (Hislop, 2010) (Neuger, 2003). The literature is consistent with the participants' responses from the research.

### **Types of Ministry**

The types of ministry that were noted in the research results were also consistent with the literature. The literature focused on women's needs for nurturing, counseling, mentoring, discipleship, serving, programs, evangelism, and unconscious issues (Hislop, 2010) (Neuger, 2003) (Martin & Stovall, 2008). The results from the research showed that the ministry in the two churches focused heavily on mentoring, discipleship, programs, and evangelism. One church had a program for counseling, while the other church was in the process of creating a counseling program. Another part of the research from one church alluded to the fact that the women's minister was able to identify some subconscious issues and connect the participant with help for those issues. The women's minister was able to spend time with the women's ministry participant and identify that she was struggling personally. She engaged the participant in conversation and suggested counseling to draw out the issues below the surface and bring healing. However, answers to the types of ministry that were most needed were not completely addressed. The literature noted additional ministry areas needed than the research identified. Some of the emotional needs that women have were just being broached by site two. They were

working to identify a process and a program by which to meet the emotional needs of women on a deeper level. The women's ministers at both sites acknowledged they were still in the process of uncovering needs and the best means to provide for them.

### **Justification for Paid Staff**

The research provided job descriptions that have evolved over decades to identify the practices and responsibilities necessary for women's ministers to perform tasks successfully. Both of the women's ministers provided full job descriptions to fulfill the documents requested in the research collection process. The job descriptions involve attendance at staff meetings, leadership duties, leadership training and recruitment of other women to aid in women's ministry, and building the women's ministry participation within the church. The women's ministers manage a budget for the women's ministry.

The women's ministers are also both accountable to the minister of education in their respective churches. They oversee the Bible studies and curriculum for any women's ministry discipleship programs. The women's ministers are expected to evaluate women's ministry offerings, conduct research and make modification as needed to the women's ministry programs. The women's ministers are expected to complete professional development research, seminars and workshops. The women are also expected to help with annual planning of events, oversee events, and aid in counseling women or identifying counseling resources to women in need. The job descriptions justify the payment of staff in these churches. The job descriptions are equivalent to the youth minister and children's minister job descriptions identified in the literature ([compstudy.lifeway.com](http://compstudy.lifeway.com)) ([fbceg.org](http://fbceg.org), 2012). Due to the responsibilities and hours required to complete the ministry tasks, as well as the size of the population receiving ministry, the job descriptions validate payment for the ministry necessary to meet the needs of women in

churches. Based on normal church industry standards by which other staff members are paid, the work required of a fulltime women's minister identifies the justification for payment of this position as well.

### **Novel Contributions**

This qualitative case study focused on the process of implementing a women's minister for the purpose of providing a guide for churches to decide if and when to implement a women's minister position. The literature does not currently provide research on the process or the qualifications necessary in a church to implement a women's minister. The research provides a description of how to assess if a church is prepared to implement a women's minister and a description of the support needed from the church leadership and church members.

**Church support.** The setting for a women's minister involves a church leadership team that is in favor of implementing a women's minister, the budget to provide a salary for the women's minister, as well as a budget for the ministry to be organized and administrated by the women's minister. The research from this study does not conclude that a women's ministry must already be in place. At one location the women's minister was brought in to grow a women's ministry. She was not a volunteer, nor was there a major ministry in place by a volunteer prior to the women's minister being brought on to the staff. At the second location the women's ministry started with a volunteer. The women's minister was then paid to continue the ministry that had grown beyond volunteer manageability. The budget was allotted by the church to begin paying for the hours as a part time position and slowly added to the hours and the pay. The church leadership at each church also added paid ministry assistants to the women's minister areas over time.

The church was supportive of the women's minister position implementation and continued to support the position for decades after the position started. The church became a supportive culture of women's ministry. The women's ministries grew in this context and authority, responsibility and respect were offered to the women's ministers by the church leadership and the congregation.

**Longevity.** Findings identified the longevity of the women's minister on staff to provide an impact on the success of the women's ministry as a whole. Longevity was a factor in the ability to assess programs, as well as incorporate new programs. Longevity added trust with the church leaders and women's ministry participants. Women's ministers at the two church sites had an average history of twenty years at each church. The women's ministers were able to incorporate and build ministries with consistency to reach women and meet their needs. Longevity was an unforeseen theme that was a foundation for the greater success of a staff position over a volunteer.

**Community.** The theme of community was one of the most repeated needs that women's ministry participants identified as important to them. The focus group participants identified the numerous groups and ministry gatherings that offered community. They also noted the hierarchy of a women's ministry team that provided a funnel of community initiated at a church leadership level. Women felt cared for and ministered to because they knew the leadership valued them to have a women's minister on staff required to provide community for them in various ways. Community did not arise as a direct topic in the literature in the area of women's needs. However, this is an important tool in meeting the needs of women as they relate to other areas that women deal with on more personal levels, emotionally and spiritually. Women seemed to be able to work through personal issues with more success when offered

community that the women's ministry participants claimed was successful specifically because the women's minister was a paid position.

## **Implications**

### **Theoretical**

Theoretical implications of the study point towards the methodology that churches use to select and implement staff positions. In Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructs Theory, the organization teaches individuals from a young age what the constructs of their society should be. Currently Southern Baptist churches select from a list of staff positions that very seldom chose women's minister positions. The implications of this study may prove to change the way that churches view their staffing needs. Churches may note the importance of the majority of their congregation and note the importance of having a gender specific minister to the women in their church. If other churches identify the importance of women's ministers in their churches, as the two case studies in this research have validated, there could be a change in the social constructs of churches. This was already noted and founded in the church at site two where a predecessor was influenced by her church that had a women's minister on staff and she followed in the same vocation. Churches may identify women's ministers as a necessary staff position to serve the majority of their congregation members, as the two churches in this comparative case study have already rewired their constructs. Per the research results, both of these churches believe women's ministers are vital to the church fulfilling its mission and meeting the needs of women in their church effectively and successfully.

A recommendation to churches would include church leadership reviewing social constructs of the church in the context of how the church has developed beliefs based on the current needs of culture within a biblical framework. Churches that have implemented women's

ministers would be a primary resource to aid in these conversations. Churches could connect to discuss the process of influencing culture within a church to implement a women's minister position and educate individuals in a new way of thinking and carrying out ministry.

### **Practical**

**Guide to implementation.** The information can be used to create a guide for other church leaders to implement women's minister positions in their churches. The study provided information pertaining to job responsibilities, budget, and accountability, working relationships with the church leaders, working relationships with church members, and specific ministry ideas for women in churches. The study also provided rationale and justification for a women's minister in a church.

The women's ministers were both implemented to build and grow a women's ministry. The church leadership acknowledged that there was a need to specifically focus on the needs of women. The leadership was also aware that meeting the needs of women and developing a community for them would grow the church as a whole. Churches looking for these outcomes can further explore the process of implementing a women's minister.

Both of the women's ministers have multiple job descriptions that have been written and adjusted over the years to focus on the tasks necessary to manage a successful women's ministry and to meet the needs of women in the church. The budget was outlined in each site to note how the women's minister should create and manage a budget in relationship to the women's needs and to work with the overall budget management of the church. The budget management involved offsetting the budget in both of the churches by knowing what ministry to offer at a discount or how to manage funds well to provide valuable ministry at an affordable rate for women to participate. Accountability, as a staff person and to the church leadership and the



members of the church, was noted as a necessary component of success for a women's minister to implement a successful women's ministry. Because the women's ministers are held accountable, the work product from their ministry tasks is held to a higher level of not only completion, but achievement to justify the payment of a salary.

The study also spoke of the relationship between the women's minister and the church leadership. The church leadership delegated to the women's minister and provided authority and responsibility to the women's minister for the women's ministry offerings and for meeting the women's needs in the church. These were important aspects of the women's minister position being a success in the church. The women's ministers also had to have vital relationships with women in the church to relate to them. This involved a women's ministry team in each of the churches, which then reached out to specific areas of women to provide ministry to them. This provided the necessity of identifying specific ministry ideas to meet the needs of the women in the church. The evaluation methods specifically by the second church made a strong assessment for noting women's specific ministry needs to meet.

The researcher recommends that church leaders assess the needs of women in their churches to fulfill the overall mission of the church in the area of women. Since women make up the majority of individuals in the church, women's needs should be assessed for the possibility of implementing a women's minister in the church. Churches that have already implemented women's ministers could speak to the process of identifying the need, creating the position and offering a job description for ministry tasks and expectations. Church leaders should also review existing job descriptions to identify what tasks are helpful and aid in successful women's ministry output. If a women's minister staff position is added, church leaders would have a foundational job description from which to incorporate tasks for women's

ministers. In addition, budgets should be assessed and reviewed for management by a women's minister to maximize ministry potential. Women's ministers on staff can provide greater oversight in more detail due to the commitment of hours required to fulfill their position.

**Universities.** Universities and seminaries can benefit from the information in this research. Since the Southern Baptist seminaries and universities provide women's ministry studies, the findings from this research study can provide information for appropriate decision-making at universities and seminaries. Since the information provided identifies the necessary qualities and job requirements in a women's minister, women can be educated with appropriate curriculum to be practically effective in a women's minister position upon hire. Educational institutions can use the findings in this study to identify curriculum for women's ministry studies. The curriculum can be chosen to inform studies on women's ministers meeting needs of women, establishing leadership qualities, performing research and assessment for women's needs, and the infrastructure of church leadership and how to serve in that environment.

The universities can also use the research findings to establish relationships and communication channels with churches. When the researcher contacted seminaries and universities offering women's ministry studies to identify the number of graduates with women's ministry degrees, the contacts for the educational institutions expressed interest in the study. They noted that there was an awareness that women were graduating with degrees, but struggling to find positions to serve as women's ministers. Educational institutions have great interest in identifying churches that want to implement women's minister positions in their churches. With the findings provided by this research study, seminary and university leaders can approach churches with guidelines on how and when to implement a women's minister in a church.

Many churches may not have awareness that students are studying and graduating with degrees to serve as women's ministers in the church. In addition, churches may not know the process to implement a women's minister position if there is interest. Establishing relationships with churches using the research in this study can provide doors for positions for women's ministers as they prepare for ministry to women in the church.

Recommendations to universities would include creating consistent channels of communication between educational institutions and churches. Seminaries and universities can identify churches interested in implementing women's ministers through state convention affiliations by contacting the SBC. The SBC can offer church and pastor contacts for channels of communication regarding women's ministry. Women's ministry majors can be placed in churches as interns to help introduce the idea of a women's minister staff position to churches. If seminaries and universities know the benefit of a women's minister on staff, they will be able to initiate the idea with churches that may not realize the benefit, or know of resources available in this area. Seminaries and universities could also identify practical training needs for women's ministers through internship programs that would aid in curriculum assessment and incorporation of information related to women's ministry preparation for service in the church.

### **Empirical**

Since empirical research on the implementation of women's ministers does not exist, this provides a foundational study to prompt further research in this area. The area of women's ministry has primarily focused on the limitations or lack thereof for women in ministry, not on women ministering to women, where there is generally no argument in existence. Therefore, the empirical research is extended a great deal through this research. Researching the process of implementing women's ministers in a church provides new data and focus on an unfocused area

of research. Churches can look to this research to further thoughts, ideas, questions and theories for ministry in the church.

Recommendations to churches regarding empirical research include the suggestion to church leaders to visit churches with women's ministers on staff. The researcher was able to glean much information by speaking with the pastors and women's ministers on staff at the church sites where researched took place for this study. The pastors and women's ministers shared their excitement in helping other churches succeed in ministry by sharing helpful information in the study. The discussion and information would help churches to create models of women's ministry that would work for their own churches. Speaking with other churches that have had success in implementing women's ministers in their own churches could aid in creating the best ministry format for women's ministry.

### **Limitations**

The limitations of this study include limits of time and space, using volunteers, and the notion of a subjective view of the data. If the researcher was closer, more time could be devoted to each research site. The researcher had to work with limited days to visit the site for interviews and observations. The researcher was able to travel on multiple occasions to complete the research. However, spending more time at the sites would provide deeper insight into the interaction of the staff with the ministry participants. The limit of time was noted in the dates of events that were held for the women's ministry participants. Because the researcher was conducting the case studies in a window of time, attending some of the events was not an option unless the researcher would extend the data collection for a full year. Seeing the events would have offered the researcher the option to observe more events that emulate the ministry's success of meeting women's needs, rather than primarily hearing about it from the interviews and focus

groups. Despite these limitations, the researcher was still able to observe two of the women's ministry offerings to the women's ministry participants.

The researcher was limited to the use of volunteers since the researcher is not familiar with the sites. The researcher was reliant on the women's minister to collect volunteers for the focus groups. The researcher also relied on the women's minister to identify groups to observe for the data collection process. Relying on the women's minister makes it subjective in that the researcher could not go and randomly select volunteers without the involvement of the women's minister. However, the women's minister was able to send emails to women's ministry participants to recruit volunteers, so the individuals were not selected; they were still volunteers. The volunteers were limited in number, as they had limited availability to participate in the focus groups.

Document collection was minimal as records were not kept in great detail from the implementation of the women's ministers at each church. This is likely due to the length of time that transpired from the time the women's ministers were implemented. The documents would likely have been on paper if written at all. Meeting minutes were not kept from that time period and emails likely were not in existence to capture written conversations regarding the implementation of women's ministers.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

There are a number of opportunities for future studies that can arise from this research. Recommendations include the addition of denominations, extending the geographical boundaries of the study and assessing the health of churches. Future studies could also include the addition of the third church in Virginia with a women's minister, comparing women's ministry staff

verses volunteers, and assessing women's ministry programs offered by churches with women's ministers on staff.

### **Additional Denominations**

One study opportunity would extend the research to include churches from other denominations outside the Southern Baptist denomination. There are other denominations that would benefit from a staff position focused solely on women's ministers. Much of the research in the literature identified in this study regarding women's needs is universal and not subject only to the SBC. The churches may already have women's minister positions to be researched. The research would identify whether or not the same themes are present and offer further insight into best practices for women's ministry where staff are present. There may be other denominations interested in adding the position as well. Some denominations to study could include Methodist, Independent Baptist, Presbyterian, Catholic, and Assemblies of God.

### **Extend Geographical Boundaries of Study**

Another opportunity for further research would be to extend the study beyond the state of Virginia. There may be churches in other states that have implemented a women's minister position. These churches could be researched for similarities in findings related to the research questions identified in this study. This type of study would offer additional case studies to deepen the validity of theories that may develop with further research. The case study research in other states could be compared to this case study to see if the churches are similar and match the foundational theories developed through this comparative case study. Churches could be identified through state conventions similar to the SBCV or through Seminaries and universities producing graduates with Women's Ministry study degrees.

### **Church Health Assessment**

Churches can also use this research to identify areas of church health and church growth related to effective women's ministry under a staff paid position. The research and social construct already exists for youth ministry, children's ministry and other positions. However, a focus on church health related to women's ministry would be an area of interest to pastors and church leaders who are responsible for the overall growth, health, and discipleship of the church. Since the findings revealed that both church sites experienced significant church growth during the time a women's minister was on staff, opportunities exist to identify the level to which a successful women's ministry that meets the needs of women affects the overall health of the church and provides further basis for implementing the position.

### **Incorporate Third Church in Virginia**

The comparative case study research performed for this study could also be extended to include a multisite study with the third church that has a fulltime women's minister on staff to identify any patterns of commonality or differences. This would extend the foundation for theories of best practices in women's ministry with a women's minister on staff. The third church could be added as a component to encompass all SBCV churches with women's ministers on staff in the state of Virginia.

### **Staff Verses Volunteer**

A comparative case study could be performed to compare and contrast churches with women's ministry staff positions verses churches with volunteers. The women's ministry assessment would identify what a volunteer may be able to accomplish before a staff position is created. Since site two had the phenomenon of a volunteer that created awareness of the need for a women's minister on staff, this may be another opportunity for churches to begin the process of

implementing a women's minister on staff by first enlisting a volunteer. If churches were studied to identify what a volunteer could do to pave the way for a paid position, this would be beneficial to churches to first implement volunteers as a stepping stone to a women's ministry position.

### **Women's Ministry Assessment**

Women's ministry holds the purpose of meeting needs of women in the church. Further research could incorporate an assessment of all programs offered by the churches with women's ministers on staff. The programs could be evaluated by survey the women's ministry participants receiving the ministry to identify the level to which their needs are met through the programs. The surveys could be offered to women to validate the ministry offerings as an additional tool for creating a best practices guide for implementing women's minister staff positions, as well as the ministries they should offer to best meet the needs of women.

### **Publication Submission**

The researcher will plan to share the findings of this study in a publication related to this area of study. Her.meneutics is a publication offered by Christianity Today designed for women relating to topics of women in the church, in addition to other culturally relevant topics related and applicable to women. The researcher will submit an article through the Her.meneutics online request form for entry into the publication. Lifeway Women is a second publication that would be a good fit for this study. Since the study is related so Southern Baptist's and Lifeway Women is a publication for women interested in women's ministry in churches, the researcher will submit a proposed manuscript to Lifeway Women for print.



## Summary

This case study reviewed the process of implementing a fulltime women's minister position in two churches. The results illuminated the primary reasons women's ministers were employed and how the needs of women are met in a greater way with a women's minister on staff. The most important takeaways from the study pertain to value, longevity and focus.

This case study also provided a window into the process of two churches that not only successfully implemented women's minister positions, but also maintained them for time periods of between 16 and 23 years through the present. The women's ministers were brought on to begin and to grow the women's ministries in their churches. The pastoral leadership turned over three to four times, but the women's minister positions, and in one church the same women's minister, remained on staff. The value of a minister to women is evident to the pastors of the two churches, as well as the women receiving the ministry. The primary findings of the value and advantage of women's ministers on staff in a church are identified by the women receiving the ministry. The evidence of vitality and growth of the church due in large part to the focus on women's ministry in the church was also referenced.

When women's ministers are employed at a church, the ministry has already begun. Hiring a women's minister on staff immediately sends a message to the women in the church that they are valued as individuals and that their desires and opinions matter. This act alone opens the door for successful women's ministry. What naturally follows with a women's minister on staff involves focus. The women's minister is freed to research, study, and represent the women to the church leaders. In a volunteer position, obstacles exist for the valuation of women's ministry and prioritizing women's needs in the church. Volunteers do not have the time, credibility, or reach of a paid employee. Women's ministers on staff are able to spend the

necessary time and have an open door to be heard with the church leaders. The women's ministers are also trusted by women to carry and represent their needs to the church's pastoral staff.

With successful women's ministry, comes longevity. When pastor after pastor observes and experiences the benefits of women's ministry, the position remains and is retained when a new pastor, with potentially different values steps in. This shows that pastors who may not have had experience or understanding of the value of women's ministry are persuaded to not only accept, but also champion the idea once they see the way that it aids the ministry for which he is ultimately responsible. Women's ministers become an example to women in the church on how to live as a godly Christian woman and a voice for their needs to the church leaders. This allows the pastor to focus on the vision and growth of the church, rather than ministry to another gender, beyond the pulpit.

Women's ministers on staff do provide a greater resource to churches to meet the needs of women than volunteers. Women's ministers on staff hold the responsibility of the major of church membership, the women. This responsibility, coupled with the resources and focus of a fulltime position offer the greatest support to women in the church. Church growth and health are experienced through the women's ministry. Women feel more supported and valued. This drives them to grow, to serve and to be part of the church community. The women's minister position adds value to a church and pays for itself. Women's ministers are recommended for churches who would like to increase the health, growth and ministry of their church. Further study will aid in providing greater details and research on this topic to extend the benefits to churches from the results of this study.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: IRB Approval

# LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

June 5, 2014

Melissa Small

IRB Approval 1841.060514: Exploring the Current State of Women's Ministry Staff Opportunities in Churches: A Comparative Case Study of Successful Women's Ministry Employment in the Local Church

Dear Melissa,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Please retain this letter for your records. Also, if you are conducting research as part of the requirements for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, this approval letter should be included as an appendix to your completed thesis or dissertation.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

**Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.**  
*Professor, IRB Chair*  
**Counseling**

**(434) 592-4054**

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## Appendix B: Study Request Letter to Church

Date: April 13, 2014

Women's Ministry Director  
(Address Removed for Anonymity)

Dear Women's Ministry Director:

As a graduate student in the Education department at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education degree. The title of my research project is Exploring The Current State Of Women's Ministry Staff Opportunities In Churches: A Comparative Case Study Of Successful Women's Ministry Employment In The Local Church and the purpose of my research is to identify the process of implementing women's ministers into churches and answer the questions of why some churches decide to employ fulltime women's ministers. The study will also identify how women's needs are met in a greater way through churches with fulltime women's ministers on staff.

I am writing to request your permission to conduct my research at (Site 1/Site 2 Church) and contact members of your staff and women's ministry program to invite them to participate in my research study, as well as access and utilize women's ministry implementation and meeting documents.

Participants will be asked to contact me to schedule an interview and to complete a focus group. The data will be used to provide a description of the process of successful implementation of women's ministers, as well as provide a best practices guide to implementing women's ministers positions in churches. Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please respond by email to mjsmall531@gmail.com. For education research, church permission will need to be on approved letterhead with the appropriate signature(s).

Sincerely,

Melissa Small  
Primary Researcher

## Appendix C: Church Approval



April 29, 2014

Dear Melissa,

The leadership of [REDACTED] is in acceptance of your desire to conduct a research case study in regards to our women's ministry. We approve of your request to conduct interviews with the pastoral leadership and women's ministry staff, as well as observe women's events and conduct focus groups with women's ministry and participants. We will be available for correspondence and interviews for your study. We will also make documents available as they pertain to implementing a women's minister in a church to further facilitate your research.

As you conduct your study, please feel free to correspond directly with Gail Motley.

Thank you,

[REDACTED] Minister to Women

[REDACTED] Senior Pastor

*love God, love others, live the mission™*



April 23, 2014

Dear Melissa,

The leadership of [REDACTED] Church gives permission for you to come and study our Women's Ministry program as part of your research for your Doctor of Education degree. We understand that you will observe and conduct interviews and focus groups with members of the staff and congregation, as well as have access to documents that show our ministry implementation and function processes.

Sincerely,



Dr. [REDACTED], Senior Pastor



[REDACTED], Pastor of Community Life



[REDACTED], Director of [REDACTED] Women



## **Appendix D: Interview Participant Consent Form**

### **CONSENT FORM**

Exploring Successful Women's Ministry Employment: A Comparative Case Study of Two Churches in Virginia  
Melissa Small  
Liberty University  
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of a comparative case study of successful implementations of women's ministry positions in churches. You were selected as a possible participant because your church is one of three SBC churches in the state of Virginia that has a women's ministry position. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Melissa Small for the School of Education at Liberty University.

#### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to identify the process of implementing women's ministers into churches and answer the questions of why some churches decide to employ fulltime women's ministers. The study will also identify how women's needs are met in a greater way through churches with fulltime women's ministers on staff.

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:  
I will ask you to answer specific questions related to the study in verbal and written form. The interview will last about an hour and a half. You will be audio recorded or video recorded for the purpose of reviewing the interview to identify information from the questions.

#### **Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:**

The risks involved in this study are minimal. The benefits to participation will not be direct to you as a participant; however, it will offer information as to the needs that can be met for women in churches. If churches find a guide to best practices for implementing women's ministers, then ministry to women can increase in quality and quantity.

#### **Compensation:**

There will be no compensation for this survey.

#### **Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

All data will be stored on the researcher's personal computer with a password-protected login. The data has the potential to be utilized in further research on the same topic of women's ministry in churches. The data would be used to cross analyze with other data

from churches as women's ministry expands, should women's ministers be implemented in more churches. The data will be deleted from the computer when the information is no longer needed or valuable for research archives. Federal regulations require the data to be stored for at least three years. Limitations to liability would involve focus group participants who would be asked to sign confidentiality waivers, however, the privacy of other participants cannot be fully controlled, and therefore not fully assured.

#### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the Southern Baptist Convention. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

#### **How to Withdraw from this Study:**

You will be given an opportunity to withdraw from this study if at any point you feel uncomfortable participating. You would simply need to email me at [mjsmall531@gmail.com](mailto:mjsmall531@gmail.com) to let me know that you no longer want to participate in the study. Your comments and input will not be included in any data analysis and any written responses or audio/video recordings will be destroyed.

#### **Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Melissa Small. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [mjsmall531@gmail.com](mailto:mjsmall531@gmail.com). (Dr. Barbara Boothe, Faculty Advisor, [bboothe@liberty.edu](mailto:bboothe@liberty.edu), 434.546-0744.)

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

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

#### **Statement of Consent:**

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

I consent to allow the researcher to audio-record and/or video record my interview for the purpose of studying it later.

Signature:

Date:

Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**IRB Code Numbers:** 1841.060514

**IRB Expiration Date:** 06.05.15

## Appendix E: Invitation to Focus Group Participants

Hi (Site 1/Site 2 Women's Minister),

Below is a form email that needs to be emailed to those who are being invited to participate in the focus group. Would you be able to send this to those you are inviting to participate? Would you also send me your pastor's email so that I can send him an official request for the interview? I can work to schedule a time for that day if it will work for you and your pastor to participate during the day before the focus group.

Thank you,  
Melissa

Dear (Site1/Site 2) Church Women's Ministry Recipient:

As a graduate student in the Education Department at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctor of Education. The purpose of my research is to provide a description of the process of implementing women's ministers in churches, as well as a best practices guide for churches that may desire to employ fulltime women's ministers, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

If you are 18 years of age or older and a participant in the women's ministry offerings at (Site 1/Site 2) Church, and are willing to participate, you will be asked to participate in a focus group with up to 10 other women from your women's ministry program. It should take approximately 1 hour for you to complete the procedures listed. Your name will not be requested as part of your participation, but you will not be anonymous to other participating or to the researcher, because you will discuss your responses in person.

If you would like to participate, please reply to [mjsmall531@gmail.com](mailto:mjsmall531@gmail.com) with your name and contact number. I will send further information about the date, time and place to meet for the focus group. A consent document will be given to you at the time of the focus group. Please sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the focus group.

Sincerely,

Melissa Small  
Primary Researcher

## **Appendix F: Focus Group Participant Consent Form**

### **CONSENT FORM**

Exploring Successful Women's Ministry Employment: A Comparative Case Study of Two Churches in Virginia

Melissa Small  
Liberty University  
School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study of a comparative case study of successful implementations of women's ministry positions in churches. You were selected as a possible participant because your church is one of three SBC churches in the state of Virginia that has a women's ministry position. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Melissa Small for the School of Education at Liberty University.

#### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to identify the process of implementing women's ministers into churches and answer the questions of why some churches decide to employ fulltime women's ministers. The study will also identify how women's needs are met in a greater way through churches with fulltime women's ministers on staff.

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:  
I will ask you to participate with a group of women from your ministry group to answer specific questions related to the study in verbal and written form. We will then compose a discussion related to the questions answered to further elaborate on your answers. You will be audio recorded or video recorded for the purpose of reviewing the interview to identify information from the questions. The discussion will last for one hour.

#### **Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:**

The risks involved in this study are minimal.

The benefits to participation will not be direct to you as a participant, however, it will offer information as to the needs that can be met for women in churches. If churches find a guide to best practices for implementing women's ministers, then ministry to women can increase in quality and quantity.

#### **Compensation:**

There will be no compensation for this survey.

#### **Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records.

All data will be stored on the researcher's personal computer with a password-protected login. The data has the potential to be utilized in further research on the same topic of women's ministry in churches. The data would be used to cross analyze with other data from churches as women's ministry expands, should women's ministers be implemented in more churches. The data will be deleted from the computer when the information is no longer needed or valuable for research archives. Federal regulations require the data to be stored for at least three years. Limitations to liability would involve focus group participants who would be asked to sign confidentiality waivers, however, the privacy of other participants cannot be fully controlled, and therefore not fully assured.

#### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or the Southern Baptist Convention. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

#### **How to Withdraw from this Study:**

You will be given an opportunity to withdraw from this study if at any point you feel uncomfortable participating. You would simply need to email me at [mjsmall531@gmail.com](mailto:mjsmall531@gmail.com) to let me know that you no longer want to participate in the study. Your comments and input will not be included in any data analysis and any written responses will be destroyed. The photos and audio or video recordings will be maintained because other participants' responses will be noted from those recordings.

#### **Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Melissa Small. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at [mjsmall531@gmail.com](mailto:mjsmall531@gmail.com). (Dr. Barbara Boothe, Faculty Advisor, [bboothe@liberty.edu](mailto:bboothe@liberty.edu), 434.546-0744.)

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

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

#### **Statement of Consent:**

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

I consent to allow the researcher to audio-record and/or video record my interview for the purpose of studying it later.

I consent to allow the researcher to take my photograph for the purpose of documentation and to recall the observation setting at a later time.

Signature:

Date:

Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**IRB Code Numbers:** 1841.060514

**IRB Expiration Date:** 06.05.15



## Appendix G: Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

### *Questions for Pastors and Women's Ministers*

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1. What is the philosophy of ministry at your church?
2. Please describe the process of implementing a women's minister in this church. How long did the process take?
3. At what point did you know you needed a fulltime position to accomplish the needs of women's ministry at your church?
4. Were there any challenges that made implementing a women's ministry position difficult? What were they? Financial? Social?
5. What would you recommend for other churches looking at adding a women's ministry position?
6. What was the expectation in adding a women's minister?
7. How do you believe a women's ministry position can greater meet the needs of women in the church setting?
8. In what ways would you say a women's ministry position can strengthen a church if implemented?
9. How does your women's ministry contribute to your overall philosophy?
10. Is the ministry financially self-sustaining? How do you budget your ministries?
11. How are the women's needs identified?
12. How do you measure the effectiveness of this program in meeting those identified needs?
13. How do you prioritize their needs?
14. How do you measure their needs?
15. How do you measure success with your women's ministry activities and programs?
16. How much did your church grow overall when a women's minister was added?
17. How much did the women's ministry grow?
18. How does women's ministry fit into your discipleship process?
19. What is the planning process for the programs you incorporate?
20. How did you develop your programs?

## Appendix H: Standardized Focus Group Survey Questions

### *Questions for Women's Ministry Participants*

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1. I feel that my church's women's minister meets my expectations in fulfilling her role as a women's minister.
2. I believe a women's minister position greater meets the needs of women in our church (than if there was not a women's minister on staff).
3. I believe that having a women's minister strengthens our church as a whole.
4. I believe that being ministered to as a woman allows me to play a more vital role in my church.
5. I believe our church and our women's minister is aware of my needs as a woman.
6. I feel that my needs are prioritized by our women's minister.
7. I feel that my church's women's ministry activities and programs meet my needs.
8. I feel I am being discipled and growing in my faith through our women's ministry offerings.
9. I believe that having a women's minister allows me to work through life's struggles in a greater, more victorious capacity than I would without a women's minister on staff.
10. I believe our women's ministry program is more effective than those without a women's minister on staff.

---

(Likert scale: 1-Strongly Agree, 2-Agree, 3-Neutral, 4-Disagree, 5-Strongly Disagree)