

EXPLORING THE CONVERGENCE OF MINISTRY, TENURE AND EFFICACY:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF LONG-TENURED PASTORS

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

In recent years there has been an increased interest in understanding the cultivation of effective pastoral ministry. While much has been written on the dynamics of short-tenure, less attention has been devoted to the dynamics of long-tenure. Why do pastors stay and how do they perceive their efficacy is affected by this? In light of this gap, the purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experience of long-tenured senior pastors. Data was collected by a purposeful sampling of 10 participants and consisted of a combination of documentation, field notes and interviews. Data analysis utilized Moustakas' methodology in order to develop a thick description of the phenomena, rich with data; with an eye toward what insights participants' experiences could illumine for pastoral education. In the final analysis the results of the study affirmed current research on the resiliency needed to achieve long-tenure in pastoral ministry and extended previous research through the discovery that participants understood the convergence of ministry, tenure and efficacy as cyclical process sustained by the interconnected experiences of fidelity to the pastoral call and the cultivation of authenticity in community.

Keywords: Bandura, Community, Pastoral Calling, Pastoral Education, Pastoral Efficacy, Pastoral Ministry, Pastoral Tenure, Resiliency in Ministry, Social Cognitive Theory, Transformational Leadership.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The United States of America declared its independence from the tyranny of the English crown and successfully won its revolution, driven on by the fiery preaching of its pulpits (Toqueville, 2004). Later, in the same way that the hotbed of the first Great Awakening lit the fires of the Revolutionary War, so also did the Second Great Awakening provoke the elimination of the institution of slavery, the work of prison and labor reform, and the equality of the sexes in the eyes of the law (Smith, 2004). Even now the successful diversity of this nation can be attributed to its founding documents which sought to secure the Judeo-Christian values of personal liberty and interdependent community without establishing a theocracy (Kidd, 2010). Yet even with this heritage, the majority of mainline Protestant Christian churches in America are in decline (Barna Group, 2014). Furthermore if current projections are correct, what growth has been seen in Evangelical circles will not keep pace with the population growth of America (Barnes & Lowry, 2014). The Pew Research Center (2014a) has shown that Atheism is on the rise and Christianity is in decline, correlating with Christianity's declining influence in American public life (Newport, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2014b). The potential of these trends has contributed to the desire to understand the dynamics of effective pastoral ministry. This research is an attempt to contribute to that ongoing dialogue.

Background

The decline of the American Christian church did not begin recently, nor did it happen without warning. The Christian church in the west has been in decline since the late 1800s as the waning heat of the revivals of the second Great Awakening gave way to the philosophy of secular humanism in American society (Schaeffer, 1976). Elsewhere, Schaeffer notes that where

the events of the two great wars of the early 20th century should have led to another wave of revival, the sweeping embrace of the activity of religion uncoupled from the historical affective facet of belief all but inoculated the following generations to true faith. In this vein, Roozen (2004) observed that reduction of mainline churches' membership which began in 1965 had two social crises that helped drive the event. The first crisis was the social demographic changes of the values carried into young adulthood by the baby boomers and the migration of that same generation away from geographic areas which had formerly been strongly mainline. The second was the crisis of identity within the mainline churches themselves and their inability to adapt to the aforementioned changes.

Roozen (2004) asserted that at the heart of this early research into church growth and decline, two interconnected issues dominated the conversations of researchers. The first issue was whether evangelism or social justice was the primary purpose of the church. The second issue was whether or not numerical growth was even something that faithful congregations should expect. Roozen further asserted that as the decades have passed continued decline has led to the consideration of measures of vitality other than just membership. This is due to the fact that, even though it remains "the most concrete and statistically robust measure of vitality available," it still lacks the ability reveal the whole picture (para. 3). Furthermore, exploration of congregational vitality is really only one half of the equation.

Early studies conducted by Wind and Rendle (2001) and more recently by De Wetter, Gochman, Luss and Sherwood (2010) have indicated that deficiency in pastoral leadership is also often a key contributor to a lack of congregational vitality. Arn (2014) has likewise observed that a pastoral tenure of less than five years almost guarantees a lack of congregational vitality (para. 3) and Rainer (2014) has observed that a short-tenured pastorate is often integrally related to the

decline of a church, with pastors transitioning “every two to three years especially in the two decades leading to the deaths of the churches” (p. 55). According to Hicks (2010) these short-tenured pastorates are sometimes the result of such factors as finances or intentional vocational transitioning, but most often they are due to unresolved conflict between a congregation and the pastor. Furthermore Richardson (2012), drawing on years of applying what came to be known as Bowen family systems theory (Bowen, 1976) to the context of church work, asserts that when short pastoral tenure is related to unresolved conflict it produces a crisis that does not simply affect the pastor and his or her family, but also the congregation and the larger community as well.

Tanner, Wherry and Zvonkovic (2013) reported that when the experience of conflict ultimately resulted in the termination of the pastor, its psychological effect was the equivalent of post-traumatic stress disorder. If experienced often and especially in quick succession, the experience of short-tenure due to unresolved conflict can lead to a reinforcement of unhealthy organizational systems and interpersonal relationships, as well as a perpetually negative perception of self-efficacy for both the pastor and the congregation (Bandura, 1997). For these reasons conflict is often regarded as something to be avoided at all costs. However church health consultant Rendle (2002) cautioned that while it may seem counter-intuitive, this is fundamentally the wrong approach.

To understand Rendle’s advice it is instructive to consider Hirsh’s insights regarding life systems theory. Life systems theory was originally postulated by Miller (1978) and later applied by Hirsh (2006) to the issue of conflict in the church. Miller (1978) proposed that all biological systems exist in crisis and that it is this crisis that gives them health and strength. Without crisis biological organisms grow lethargic, eventually atrophying and ultimately dying. Working off of

this premise Hirsh asserted that as with any biological system, conflict in the church and around the church is the mark of health and that it should be embraced rather than run from.

Unfortunately this is made difficult when graduates from pastoral education programs feel unprepared to meet many of the challenges of pastoral ministry (DeGroat, 2008). It is especially problematic when one considers the resources expended on the pastoral education endeavor; from the investment of finances to the investment of time; pastoral education exacts a high cost (Briggs, 2014). Since a long-tenured pastorate is vital for cultivating an environment within which health and growth are possible, it is imperative that the dialogue regarding pastoral preparedness and efficacy include a well-informed discussion of those qualities which contribute to that tenure and how those qualities were cultivated. Recognition of this is what led to the extensive qualitative study of pastoral resilience performed by Burns, Chapman and Guthrie (2013).

The Burns et al. (2013) study was conducted over the course of seven years with 73 pastors representing 26 states of the United States for the purpose of discovering what it takes “for pastors not only to survive, but to thrive in fruitful ministry over the long haul” (p. 7). Their research uncovered five primary and interwoven themes for resilience in pastoral ministry which the authors’ identified as “spiritual formation, self-care, emotional and cultural intelligence, marriage and family, and leadership and management” (p. 16). The focus of their study was to discover these themes and to explore how they were cultivated in the lives of the pastors who were participating in the study. The Burns et al. study has blazed a trail forward away from the crisis of short-tenure; but there is another side to this issue which has been thus far left unexplored and that is the perspective of the long-tenured pastors. This study was an attempt to

address that gap in the research by exploring the lived experience of long-tenured senior pastors with regard to their understanding of the convergence of ministry, tenure and efficacy.

Situation to Self

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), one of the essential elements of qualitative research is that the researcher acts as the human instrument, the primary tool with which data is both collected and analyzed. Being what it is however, the processes of data collection and analysis are potentially enhanced or jeopardized by the human instrument. As such Moustakas (1994) asserts that transcendental phenomenology requires the researcher to bracket out his or her own experiences and potential biases so as to allow the data to speak for itself. Only when the data is given the freedom to speak in its own voice does it have the ability to inform, to change one's perspectives on the phenomena under investigation and to transform practice in an authentic way.

The concept of bracketing begins with the work of Edmund Husserl (Sawicki, 2011). Husserl is considered the father of the philosophical movement of phenomenology with every key phenomenological thinker who has followed wrestling with that which he established. In the vein of Platonic Idealism which prioritized ideas over things, Husserl asserted that phenomenology was the sustained attempt to describe experiences and ideas without presuppositions about the metaphysical or theoretical nature of the things they are attached to. As such Husserl believed that the researcher must suspend or bracket their assumptions in order for phenomenology to be effective. To accomplish the task of bracketing the researcher must be steeped in the professional literature so as to cultivate an awareness of current experience of the phenomena while at the same time having a measure of self-awareness regarding their own professional and personal experiences so as to be able to engage their own bias (Patton, 2002).

Professional Background

I have been involved in the pastoral, educational and administrative aspects of church ministry in some capacity for the last 20 years. During that time I committed myself to a multi-disciplinary approach to ministry, believing that the wider breadth of knowledge I possessed the more effective I could be. However having seen first-hand a great deal of church conflict and the damage an unnecessarily short-tenure can cause pastors, pastoral families, and congregations; I had become frustrated with the limits of the current body of research on pastoral efficacy. More specifically, the empirical research on pastoral ministry tends to be both sparse and is rarely reported in a peer reviewed capacity, relocating those who desire to understand efficacy to the place of reliance on conjecture and unproven theory. As such I found myself desiring to understand the experience of pastoral efficacy among those who have lived it out over the long haul, with my hope being that through solid research perhaps I can be a part of expanding the knowledge base about pastoral ministry, tenure, efficacy and ultimately pastoral education.

Philosophical and Methodological Assumptions

In addition to understanding my professional background so as to bring about an awareness of the biases I bring to the research, it is also necessary to understand how my worldview affects the way I approach the conceptualization and construction of the research. Philosophically, my worldview is anchored in the concept of a self-revealing God who has spoken through the Judeo-Christian scriptures, His Messiah Jesus of Nazareth, and His church both Jew and Gentile. He is what is real, what is true, what is good, and what is beautiful; not only is He the one who explains the answers to these quintessential questions of the human experience, but in fact He is the very embodiment of the concepts themselves (Knight, 2006).

Thus all knowledge flows out of and reflects Him and His character in that it is both revelational and reasonable.

Furthermore my belief that God is at once both transcendent and immanent, beyond us and yet with us, informs my worldview and compels me to try and hold in tension the seemingly contradicting concepts of post-positivism and constructivism (Creswell, 2007). Post-positivism in that the transcendence of God points to an objective definition of reality and truth which exists outside of our experience. Constructivism in that the immanence of God points to the highly personalized experience of knowledge (Moreland & Craig, 2003). The convergence of the objective truth and the subjective perception of truth are anything but tidy, however I believe that without it, it is impossible to really understand any phenomena. Accepting the objective without accounting for the subjective leaves one with a mechanistic world where phenomena is only understood through a reductionist utilitarian lens. Alternatively, embracing the subjective and renouncing the objective as pure constructivism does, leaves one with a world that is unknowable except where it intersects personal experience thus making it impossible to speak authoritatively about any phenomena.

Finally because the scripture teaches that God's intention for humanity was to have dominion over the earth, and that even with the brokenness of the Fall our very nature being created in His image cries out for redemption from that brokenness; I find myself precariously perched on the outskirts of the interpretive community of critical theory in that the essence of critical theory is the seeking of understanding regarding the oppression which people experience and the effort to empower them to overcome it by helping them to also understand that oppression (Creswell, 2007). As such critical theory can be said to be fundamentally concerned with freedom and hope. So while I do not agree with most of the ideas which critical theory

assumes or prescribes being established as it is out of Marxism's influence on academia, I do believe that the concept of freedom from oppression is quintessential to the divine narrative. For while critical theory views the world through a lens of oppression often being used to unfairly create false dichotomies of stratification in human society, the fact remains that the Judeo-Christian scripture also gives a view of human history which can be understood in terms of oppression. The difference is that in the former man is pitted against man, whereas in the latter man is opposed to Satan, corrupt World systems, and his own rebelliousness (Schaeffer, 1981). As such it becomes incumbent on the researcher to find those points of connection between the experience of a phenomenon and the interactions of those individuals experiencing that phenomenon which may in fact determine how the phenomenon is experienced. This is especially important in those cases where the phenomenon in question has a potentially negative impact on the lives of the participant community such as in the case of the American Christian church.

Problem Statement

According to Owen (2012) in order for education to effectively accomplish its stated goals, the curriculum and methods of instruction employed must be routinely evaluated. Yet while mainline churches of America are generally in decline and the Evangelical churches are mostly stagnant, Penfold (2012) asserts that so far pastoral education seems to have been ineffective in preparing pastors to reverse the trend. Likewise DeGroat (2008) asserts that while the leadership deficiencies which result in short-tenure have been explored for years, most seminary graduates continue to feel wholly unprepared to deal with the realities of pastoral ministry. So this then begs the question: what is it that lends itself to a long-tenured senior

pastorate and how can pastoral education prepare one for it? It was this question which lay at the heart of this study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of long-tenured senior pastors. More specifically, this study sought to understand those factors which the pastors themselves identified as contributing to their individual experiences of longevity in pastoral ministry. For the purpose of the research, long-tenured senior pastors were generally defined as pastors serving in the senior most position of spiritual leadership in a single church for a period of 6 or more consecutive years, what Burns et al. (2013) categorized as “seasoned” and “veteran” pastors, with priority in sampling being given to those who had served longest (p. 265). Furthermore participants were only sampled from those churches that had a voluntary relationship regarding pastoral tenure as opposed to those churches where tenure was determined by an outside individual such as a bishop or superintendent.

Significance of the Study

All research should contribute to the general knowledge base either by retracing the steps of other researchers or by expanding into previously uncharted scientific territory (Creswell, 2008). Creswell (2008) further expands on this by outlining the three main forms of research: exploratory, constructive and empirical. Exploratory research seeks to identify and define a new problem or theory. Constructive research tests theories and proposes solutions for problems. Empirical research tests the feasibility of a solution using empirical evidence.

Where research regarding pastoral ministry is concerned, a great deal of descriptive data has been collected over the years and used to establish definitive points of correlation. Causation however requires factors that have been established through peer reviewed exploratory research.

With so much research on pastoral ministry having been descriptive or privately reviewed, there are wide gaps that need to be filled in order for the dialogue regarding effective pastoral ministry and the education that prepares for it to be based on rigorous scholarship rather than circumstantial conjecture.

As such this study was intended to be both exploratory and constructive. Constructive in that it endeavored to establish the findings of Burns et al. (2013) by investigating those qualities which factor into effective pastoral ministry, but with the emphasis placed specifically on the experiences of long-tenured senior pastors. At the same time the study was intended to be exploratory in that it sought to describe how those qualities were cultivated along the way so as to establish factors for further study. Ultimately it is hoped that this study will enhance the ongoing dialogue regarding effective pastoral ministry and potentially be able to contribute to the development of a greater understanding of the pastoral education which prepares individuals for it.

Research Questions

The exploration of the experiences of long-tenured senior pastors was initially guided by three research questions.

(a) How do long-tenured senior pastors describe their experience of being long-tenured?

Building on Bandura's work on self-efficacy (1997), this question sought to understand how long-tenured senior pastors perceive the dynamics of their own tenure since that will influence their effectiveness in the pastorate. Among other things the goal of this question was to determine if a long-tenure was an intentional choice, an act of providence, or even a missed opportunity to do something else. Additionally it was hoped that this question might open the

door for understanding whether participants believed that their long-tenure had made them more effective or less effective and when that sense of effectiveness or lack thereof became poignant.

(b) *In what ways do long-tenured senior pastors perceive that their education prepared them for a long-tenure?* Since DeGroat (2008) observed that most seminarians feel unprepared to actually engage in the tasks of the pastorate, it begs the question of what long-tenured senior pastors found to be most useful for their own preparedness in this regard. The goal of this question was to get at the heart of what long-tenured senior pastors perceive they have gleaned from their educational experience.

(c) *In addition to pastoral education, what other dynamics do long-tenured senior pastors perceive as contributing to their experience of long-tenure?* This question sought to uncover previously unidentified factors which pastors themselves perceived as important in relation to the phenomena in question, and to see if their responses affirmed the findings of Burns et al. (2013). The hope was that this information could be used to establish routes for further explorative research and the enrichment of pastoral education.

Research Plan

Since this research sought to explore the lived experiences of long-tenured senior pastors it was conducted as a qualitative study. While there are several well accepted models for qualitative research, the phenomenological study model was employed due to the nature of the research problem and the parameters of the research questions in that there is much about the phenomena and its factors which remain unknown and under-researched (Creswell, 2007). This phenomenological study investigated the phenomena of long pastoral tenure through the cross examination of data relating to ten long-tenured senior pastors. Data was collected until theoretical saturation was reached and a thick description of the phenomena was possible (Guest,

Bunce & Johnson, 2006). Data was then analyzed with the goal of being able to outline new directions for further research as well as proposing theories for the enrichment of pastoral education and practice.

Delimitations and Limitations

Integrity compels the acknowledgement that every research study has limits to its ability to gather and analyze data. Thus it is imperative that when one begins a study they do so with an awareness of those limits and have a strategy for addressing them. Limits arising out of a phenomenological study on the lived experience of long-tenured senior pastors include the effects of academic, theological, demographic and organizational diversity as well as the diversity of temperament that resides in individual leaders. Theologically, the diversity within Christian faith can be problematic. Likewise, demographic differences arise out of the diversity of geographic locations, each with their own local history and culture, as well as their generational composition. Finally it must be acknowledged that pastors differ in their understanding of the Christian faith, their role as a pastor and the nature of their relationship to their congregation.

Addressing these limits requires the intentional delimiting of the study where possible, without damaging the study's ability to contribute to the knowledge base (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). While diversity of academic training and individual temperament was explored, it was not limited because the integration of these factors into the data is essential to understanding the phenomena in question. To address theological diversity the research included only those long-tenured senior pastors who adhere to the commonly held core beliefs which are articulated in the Apostles' Creed; but did not concern itself with theological diversity beyond this universal statement of orthodoxy. Beyond this the primary delimitation was with regard to the length of

congruent service in the senior pastorate. As previously stated this research focused on the experiences of only those pastors serving in the senior most position of spiritual leadership in a single church for a period of six or more consecutive years in accordance with what Burns et al. (2013) categorized as “seasoned” and “veteran” pastors (p. 265). Taken together these delimitations were able to address a number of the limits of the study, but not all. The issue of how pastoral tenure relates to pastoral efficacy and ultimately to pastoral education is a global one and the issue of decline in American churches is a national one. However it was not feasible at this time to conduct a study large enough that it could sample on that scale. Thus this study should be seen as one part of a larger set of studies which could later be analyzed together to address the full scope of the phenomena.

Definitions

Being a study on pastoral ministry there are a number of terms that are either unique to the phenomena or are borrowed from others for this study. The following terms are pertinent to the study and as such are listed here.

1. *Community* – Adapted from Beckwith (2004) community is generally defined here as an interdependence of relationships held together by shared history, shared values and mission, and shared group identity (p. 74).
2. *Pastoral Calling* – Adapted from Drury (2003), pastoral calling is generally defined here as the strongly held conviction that God has invited an individual to join Him in overseeing the church. While there are certainly differences among the various sects of the Christian church regarding how the call is received and affirmed, what remains constant is that a sense of calling precedes pastoral ministry.

3. *Pastoral Education* – Generally understood here as the formal method by which those who desire to enter into pastoral ministry are prepared for such work by learning how to think and communicate biblical truth in relationship to all of life; adapted from the concept of education described by Dorothy Sayers, “For the sole true end of education is simply this: to teach men how to learn for themselves; and whatever instruction fails to do this is effort spent in vain” (1947).
4. *Pastoral Efficacy* – Generally defined here as a pastor’s ability to effectively accomplish the tasks of ministry within the context of their calling; adapted from the work of Bandura (1997) on self-efficacy which postulates that an individual's belief in his or her capacity to exert control over one's own motivation, behavior, and social environment is directly related to their actual ability to produce specific performance attainments.
5. *Pastoral Ministry* – Generally defined here as the work of the pastor. According to Burns et al. (2013), there are “four core tasks of pastors: leading worship, preaching, teaching and providing oversight... Pastoral ministry requires a great variety of complex skills and talents... It affects and defines all areas of life. Work, family and personal responsibilities blur together through the week, so that pastors have difficulty distinguishing between when they are on and off duty” (p. 14).
6. *Pastoral Tenure* – Generally defined here as the length of time that a pastorate is held; adapted from the concept of academic tenure explained by the American Association of University Professors. “Tenure is a means to certain ends; specifically: (1) freedom of teaching and research and of extramural activities, and (2) a sufficient degree of economic security to make the profession attractive to men and women of ability. Freedom and economic security, hence, tenure, are indispensable to the success of an

institution in fulfilling its obligations to its students and to society” (American Association of University Professors, n.d.).

7. *Resiliency in Ministry* – Generally understood here as the ability to continue in ministry despite the experience of personal or organizational conflict; adapted from the concept of resilience, which is explained as “a stable trajectory of healthy functioning after a highly adverse event; a conscious effort to move forward in an insightful and integrated positive manner as a result of lessons learned from an adverse experience; the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten the viability, function, and development of that system; and a process to harness resources in order to sustain well-being” (Southwick, Bonanno, Masten, Panter-Brick & Yehuda, 2014).

Summary

The majority of mainline Protestant Christian churches in America are declining (Barna Group, 2014). Furthermore if current projections are correct, what growth has been seen in evangelical circles will not keep pace with the population growth of America (Barnes & Lowry, 2013). The Pew Research Center (2014a) found that Atheism is on the rise and Christianity is in decline, conspicuously correlating with Christianity’s declining influence in American public life (Newport, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2014b). The potential of these trends has contributed to the desire to understand the dynamics of effective pastoral ministry. Recognition of this is what led to the extensive qualitative study of pastoral resilience performed by Burns et al. (2013). The Burns et al. study has blazed a trail forward away from the crisis of short-tenure; but there is another side to this issue which has been thus far left unexplored and that is the perspective of the long-tenured pastors. This study was an attempt to address that gap.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

According to De Wetter, Gochman, Luss and Sherwood (2010), and Wind and Rendle (2001), one of the key causes of the decline of American Christian churches is a leadership deficiency caused in part by pastoral attrition. While there are a number of potential reasons for attrition, Hicks (2010) found that most attrition is due to unresolved conflict. Like all broken relationships pastoral attrition has potentially negative effects for all those involved; the congregation, the pastor and the pastor's family as individuals (Bandura, 1986). Tanner et al. (2013) reported that when the experience of conflict ultimately resulted in the termination of pastoral tenure its psychological effect was the equivalent of post-traumatic stress disorder. If experienced often and especially in quick succession, attrition can even lead to a reinforcement of unhealthy organizational systems and interpersonal relationships, as well as a perpetually negative perception of self-efficacy for both the pastor and the congregation (Bandura, 1997). This is especially disconcerting when one considers that pastoral educator and ministry consultant Malphurs (2005) asserted that it takes no less than five to ten years to go from being simply the preacher to actually being the pastor because the title is not the same as the role and until people trust an individual they will not follow that individual. What is more this conclusion is echoed by Arn (2014) and Rainer (2014) with regard to congregational health, by Adler (2012) with regard to influencing the transformation congregational beliefs, and by Galoji, Ahrmad and Johari (2012) with regard to a leader's perception of self-efficacy.

DeGroat (2008) noted that the basis of his phenomenological study on the experience of failed expectations of seminary students was a study which highlighted a gap between expectations formed in seminary, and the realities of pastoral life. However, while that study

illuminated the gap between expectation and reality, it failed to explore the pastors' experiences. Similarly, while there has always been anecdotal information about pastoral resilience, not until Burns et al. (2013) was there a rigorous research study of it. In the wake of Burns et al. the themes they have discovered must be established well enough to allow for further research, both qualitative and quantitative. As such it was the purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study to explore the lived experiences of long-tenured senior pastors, so as to contribute to the existing body of work regarding pastoral ministry, tenure, efficacy and education. The following review of the literature provides the theoretical framework that guided the study before addressing the subjects of pastoral ministry and tenure, historically and then within the context of the 21st century.

Theoretical Framework

According to Wolcott (1995) the theoretical framework is the guiding theory or theories that form the raw structure of a research study. Anfara and Mertz (2006) even contend that these theoretical assumptions are ever present whether we understand them or not, stating that "it is impossible to observe and describe the way things really are, free of any prior conceptual scheme or theory... without some theory of what is relevant to observe, how what is to be observed is to be named, and so on" (p. 8). Understood this way a theoretical framework acts as a guide and not a governess where inquiry and observation is concerned. Being a study about the interactions of people in relationship with each other the theoretical framework relied heavily on the social cognitive theory of Bandura (1986).

Social Cognitive Theory

Born in 1925 Albert Bandura's contributions to the field of psychology have established him as one of the four most cited psychologists of all time (Haggbloom, 2002). Alongside of

B.F. Skinner, Sigmund Freud, and Jean Piaget, these pioneers in their field each helped to expand the way theorists and practitioners of many disciplines approached the world. His early work, social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) was a first step toward social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986). In many way social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) can be understood as a response to the learning theories of his day which were heavily influenced by theories of operative behavioral conditioning and therefore fell short in Bandura's opinion of fully explaining all experiences of learning (Bandura, 1963).

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) built on the work of Miller and Dollard (1941) and was developed out of Bandura's interest in understanding the way humans learned and specifically in the willingness of individuals to imitate others. In social learning theory Bandura relied heavily on the importance of modeling for the teaching of new behaviors and posited that three regulatory systems actually control behavior. First there is stimulus which occurs prior to a behavior, provoking a specific response. Then there is the stimulus that follows the behavior, reinforcing through experience or observation, the consequences of the behavior. Finally there are the cognitive functions, the memories of previous social interactions which cause the mind of the individual to re-live the previous experience and therefore re-experience the emotions that went with the event thus provoking a repeated response. The first glimpses of this theory can be seen in Bandura's research on aggression (Bandura, Ross & Ross, 1961). In that research Bandura et al. demonstrated how children were more likely to show aggression when they saw adults do so and get rewarded for it, but how they were less likely to do so when they saw adults punished for their aggression.

Later Bandura developed social cognitive theory (1986) as an attempt to generate a holistic expansion of his earlier social learning theory (1977). With social cognitive theory

(1986), Bandura moved further away from his roots in the behaviorist explanation of human learning, towards an explanation even more reliant on cognitive personal responsibility.

According to social cognitive theory people are reflective, proactive, self-organizing and self-regulating. Thus the environment holds less sway in determining behavior and people assume a greater measure of self-determinism than in Bandura's previous model. Bandura's social cognitive theory had far reaching implications, some of which he went on to explore later as applied to organizational leadership (Bandura, 1988) and self-efficacy (1997).

With regard to organizational leadership, Bandura (1988) observed that the more an individual identifies with a mentor the more they are likely to learn from them. Therefore all training, in any organization, requires a degree of relationship based instruction in order for the transmission of the organization's culture and values to be successful. Similar to the method of education and preparation known as apprenticeship, Bandura championed a methodology that prioritized observation and experience in the context of social interactions over the approach of detached monologue-style instruction. This approach to organizational leadership and consequently to education was important because it recognized that effective leadership is fundamentally relational and not institutional, something which dovetails with what Hansen (2012) considers to be the quintessential characteristic of pastoral ministry.

Bandura likewise developed his theory of self-efficacy (1997) out of his previous work on social cognitive theory (1986) As well. His theory of self-efficacy postulates that one's experiences of success or failure influences their perception of their own effectiveness in that area and consequently their willingness to attempt similar tasks (1997). This natural expansion of social cognitive theory (1986) addresses the dynamic tension of the individual-communal relationship. In other words, every individual although personally responsible for themselves,

also exists within a network of other individuals whom together make up the community which gives context to the learning experience. Through the relationships of the community, individuals' experience responses to their ideas and actions which cause them to perceive themselves as more or less effective in a given effort. This perception of effectiveness is what Bandura (1997) refers to as self-efficacy.

One of the prevailing strengths of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) is that it allows for the multiplicity of potential influences which may enter into an individual's life. The acknowledgement that learning and decision making are more than just the memorization of information but are rather the result of life lived together, strikes a delicate balance between determinism and human freedom. Furthermore it resonates with the historical Christian emphasis of ministry in and through community. Taken together these things speak to the fact that pastoral preparation is unavoidably more than just their formal education and it is for these reasons it provides the primary theoretical framework for this study.

Related Literature

Understanding where one desires to go always requires knowing where one has been. The past is the guide to the future, pointing the way for all those who are willing to see it. Sometimes however, whether due to the pride of progress or the fear of self-revelation, the past is neglected. When this happens the present, lacking any historical context, becomes an incomprehensible enigma; and the future regularly repeats the worst possible scenarios (Santayana, 2010). This principle is why research is so important for pastoral ministry. For only when the American Christian church is willing to stare intently into the mirror seeing where it has been and where it is now, will it be able to fulfill its primary mission.

Pastoral Ministry in Context

America has been considered by many a Christian nation and in the estimation of some the very pinnacle of the integration of Judeo-Christian philosophy into society (McCloskey, 2010). Yet now its status as a post-modern and post-Christian society is becoming harder and harder to ignore (Barna Group, 2014; Barnes & Lowry, 2013; Newport, 2015; Pew Research Center, 2014a; Pew Research Center, 2014b). As Frost (2006) states, although the meta-narrative of Christendom “no longer defines Western culture in general, it remains the primary definer of the church’s self-understanding...” even though “as a sociopolitical reality, Christendom has been in decline for the last 250 years” (p. 5). The consequences of this fundamental transformation of western culture on pastoral ministry and education in America are far reaching. According to Wells (1993), where once the church was the center of the community, by the beginning of the twentieth century humanism had so privatized faith that the church had been marginalized in American society. Later Wells (1998) predicted the current situation in his critique of how the American church had either retreated into traditionalism or run headlong into postmodernism. For pastors, each shift has reshaped the cultural terrain in dramatic ways.

Pastoral Ministry as Spiritual Leadership. The roots of pastoral ministry go all the way back to the beginning of the Jewish faith when, according to Scott (2000) “leadership was in the hands of the elders, respected heads of families in the community” (p. 143). These were the older men of the community who had earned that position of spiritual leadership through lives well lived (Brown, 2008). Getz (2003) expands on this further stating that this construct was predicated on the pre-Mosaic patriarchal period in which the father was the pastor and spiritual leader of the home. As the central and foundational building block of society, this model was then adopted by the nation of Israel and later transferred by the Apostles into the organizational

structure of the messianic community (Rudolph & Willits, 2013). This basic conceptualization of the spiritual leadership of the pastor persisted in one form or another with some degree of variation for almost 1900 years, until the advent of the enlightenment planted the seeds of change which eventually brought about the first major shift from spiritual leadership to organizational leadership (Roozen, 2004).

Pastoral Ministry as Organizational Leadership. According Roozen (2004) the shift from a focus on spiritual leadership to organizational leadership was mostly in response to the numerical decline of mainline protestant churches through the middle to latter end of the twentieth century. Interestingly, Blackaby and Blackaby (2011) noted that with this change in the nature of leadership, the essential characteristics of leadership tenure changed as well. According to Wells (1995), where the focus was spiritual leadership, the pastor often became something of a statesman remaining in a single location for their entire lives. Alternatively, where the focus became organizational leadership the pastor often became something of a businessman and remained only as long as their life stage matched what the “life stage” of the organization (Cribbin, 1981, p. 48). This business model approach to pastoral ministry with its complementary business approach to pastoral tenure met with many successes, at least in the short run, but it also had its detractors. In 1971 Edge wrote that the pews of the churches may not have been empty but that they were “filled with empty people” and that “the average church member’s understanding of what it means to be Christian is so superficial as to constitute a major perversion of the gospel” (p. 45). Seeing the end of the line coming on quickly Schaeffer (1981) asked, “Is there a future for the church in the twentieth century?”

By the end of the twentieth century postmodernism was pressing hard against the American Christian church. Escobar (2003) argued that the west is now post-Christian and in

desperate need of being re-evangelized. Escobar further contended that the church needed to adopt a “missionary stance” in relation to the culture and that Christians had become like “resident aliens” here (p. 73). Two divergent but unavoidably intertwined movements which arose as the direct result of wrestling with this issue were the Emerging church (McKnight, 2007) and the New Reform (Hansen, 2006); the former opting for an fluid and open conversational interaction with postmodern society and the later gravitating toward a more dogmatic and confrontational approach. However, both movements’ strengths and weaknesses were forged by the very fact that they were as much byproducts of post-modern thinking as answers to it. In the end though, as complicated as it has been for pastors to navigate the philosophical waters of postmodernism, the organizational waters maybe worse. This is because where the older model of spiritual leadership in a community-model church gave way to organizational leadership in a business-model church during the twentieth century; in a post-modern society that also gives way to something new, something Wells (1998) alluded to as a kind of celebrity leadership in an entertainment-model church.

Pastoral Ministry as Celebrity Leadership. Celebrity leadership is a term which few pastors would use to describe their ministry, but it is a reality none the less. Furthermore, as a concept the celebrity pastor is not necessarily a new occurrence in that there have always been leaders who gained a kind of celebrity status because of their work. What is new is that in a technology rich postmodern culture celebrity is becoming the normative aspiration rather than the acknowledged exception. Mavis (2012) writes that “celebrity culture... is the narcissism culture normalized, popularized, and finally celebrated” (para 2). What is more, where pastoral ministry intersects the celebrity culture, the examples of abuse of power seem to abound (Fletcher, 2013). Again this is not to say that all pastors who find themselves in the place of

celebrity leadership are looking to intentionally capitalize on their celebrity. Graves (2012) observed in his interviews with successful American church leaders that in some ways well intentioned pastors even seem oblivious to the fact that they are profiting from such a status, even though it is intrinsic to the overall organizational structure of their ministries. Graves further observed that in this climate of celebrity leadership, it becomes increasingly difficult to differentiate between worship and entertainment. In his words, “after a few moments of prayer the band took the stage to the rousing cheers of twenty-two hundred young people ready to worship Jesus *or the band*; sometimes it was hard to tell the difference” (132).

However, despite the flaws, the American Christian church seems to grow more and more enamored with the celebrity leadership model. For proof, one needs only to look at the wealth which these leaders amass and the lifestyles they live (Duncan, 2014). In ways both overt and covert, these shifts in the nature and practice of pastoral ministry have affected both pastors and congregations. Consequently the ways in which pastors understand their ministry has changed, but so also has the ways in which churches and seminaries approach the pastoral education which prepares one for it.

Pastoral Education in Context

Historically pastoral education focused primarily on theology as the pinnacle of learning, the highest kind of instruction which anyone could receive (Clark & Jain, 2013). Theology was considered enough to equip the pastor for whatever they encountered specifically because it was learned in tandem with and as the culmination of all the other disciplines. In fact, MacIntyre (2009) argued that the failure of contemporary universities to teach students to think integratively about life and knowledge arises specifically out of its detachment of the other disciplines from their philosophical anchoring in theology. So where the pastor was previously

expected to apply their general theological knowledge to individual circumstances as the need arose, following the Enlightenment's redefining of science and theology's displacement as pinnacle of a liberal arts education the pastor's education began to shift towards what Malone, Laubacher and Johns (2011) call hyper-specialization. Consequently pastors have come to be seen as the keepers of ancient myths and legends whose real work is focused on using theology to ensure the perpetuation of private organizations rather than the spiritual well-being of their congregations (Budde & Brimlow, 2002). For although theology forms the basis of the social sciences, and without it they are incapable of making any true contribution to society, the implication of the insights of Clark and Jain (2013) for pastoral ministry, is that the segregation from other disciplines in the course of pastoral education has left pastors ill equipped to address the actual lives of contemporary men and women. To meet the challenges presented by these historical and cultural changes (Wind & Rendle, 2001), American Christian churches have begun to seek out alternatives to traditionally trained pastors and to pastoral education. Several examples of this are bi-vocational ministry, alternate training, multi-disciplinary curriculum, online education, cohorts and apprenticeships.

Bi-vocational Pastoral Ministry. Some churches have sought out bi-vocational pastors who can serve the church for less money than highly educated fulltime pastors normally need (Connelly, 2013). In addition to the financial aspect of this arrangement Connelly highlights other benefits of the bi-vocational model as a natural focus on discipleship as opposed to management, added creditability and the decentralization of control in the congregation. Taken together, Connelly sees bi-vocational ministry as a boon to the American church. However, it remains to be seen if bi-vocational pastoral ministry is more or less sustainable over the long haul.

Alternate Training. Similar to the route of bi-vocational pastoral ministry some churches have gravitated to pastors with alternative backgrounds and training, such as those with degrees in psychology or business, in hopes of finding pastors who can better serve the needs of the congregation. Once again this has proven controversial in its application. On the one hand, pastors who have backgrounds and education in other fields do bring to the table a differing set of perspectives from a pastor who has only known pastoral ministry. However on the other hand, as Drury (2003) contends, being trained specifically for ministry is similar to being trained specifically for any other profession with nuances to the role whose acquisition should not be left to chance.

Online Education. Another approach which has been explored is online education. A recent study of online education by the U.S. Department of Education (2010) highlighted both its benefits and drawbacks and though some of its conclusions are up for debate (Lack, 2014), its content applies well to pastoral ministry and pastoral education. Online education allows those seeking to enter into pastoral leadership the ability to remain where they are, working their job and remaining connected to their network of relationships. Furthermore online education allows students to easily work their way through school, effectively reducing the long term burden of debt, and in some cases allows them to further their education while in the process of actually doing pastoral ministry. The two areas of concern which distance education present however are directly related to its strength, namely the potential lack of interaction (Garrison, 2006). Without sufficient interaction with other students there is less opportunity to learn how to navigate the relational complexities of organizational leadership. Furthermore, without sufficient interaction with teachers, there is a greater opportunity for a student to complete their coursework without

ever integrating the content into their thinking (Baran & Correia, 2009; Bodden, Franklin-Guy, Gibson, Lasker-Scott, Scudder & Smartt, 2008).

Interdisciplinary Curriculum. The endeavor to develop a pastoral education curriculum that is intentionally interdisciplinary is an attempt to recapture that intertwining of knowledge that was characteristic of classical education (Clark & Jain, 2013). This integration is a reversal of what Lewis (2001) saw as the flawed separation of science and faith. Furthermore, according to Matthias and Wrobbel (2013) it closely resembles the interest in the integration of faith and practice seen in current research regarding Christian liberal arts schools. While this shift is counter intuitive for those who have been trained to think that hyper-specialization is the way of the future, it aligns perfectly with the conceptualization of theology that Aquinas (1981) set forth as the unifying principle of all true knowledge. Never-the-less the problem here arises from the lack of thoroughly established factors which form the basis of an effective curriculum (Doehring, 2013).

Cohorts and Apprenticeships. The development of relationships to enhance learning, through either peer-based cohorts or internship style apprenticeships allows students to learn in tandem with and from other learners, increasing the opportunity for modeling and collective problem solving (Parkay, Anctil & Hass, 2010). One successful example of this is seen in the Transitions into Ministry project (Wind & Wood, 2009). Pioneered by the Alban Institute, this supplementary program takes Masters of Divinity graduates and places them in internships for three years before they enter their first pastorates in order to connect them with mentors and peers so as to develop long lasting relationships and professional cohorts. Over the course of ten years this study found that these relationships were highly effective at increasing the tenure of pastors. However this is not to say that there are no drawbacks to this approach either. Whenever

people become tightly knit it is easy for the desire to please and to pacify to overtake the purpose of being mutually challenging. When this occurs it cultivates an environment that breeds failure in the face of conflict, rather than success (Rendel, 2002). What is more this approach cannot be readily applied to all people in all circumstances.

The Way Ahead

Even with these changes however, the American Christian church has continued to decline and pastors have continued to leave the ministry. In fact, recent studies of how pastors cope with the stresses of the ministry has found that on the whole pastoral burnout and dissatisfaction is on the rise (Proeschold-Bell, LeGrande, James, Wallace, Adams & Toole, 2011). Emerging from this, the issues of tension, transition, and tenure in pastoral ministry come to the forefront. These things must be addressed if the American Christian church it is going to effectively change its trajectory.

Tension: Dealing With Disillusionment. Like every other area of life, expectations and their fulfillment or lack thereof have an impact on an individual's willingness to press forward in a given endeavor (Bandura, 1997). Burns et al. (2013) found that disillusionment was an ever present issue in their study of resilience in pastoral ministry. According to Cattich (2012), the feeling of being overwhelmed is common in part because pastors are expected to function at high levels of effectiveness in a variety of roles such as counseling, teaching, preaching and management, among others. What is more, Cattich relates that pastors generally feel that while meeting these expectations causes them to sacrifice attention which should properly go to their families, their family is expected to remain above reproach regardless.

Researching this phenomenon has uncovered interesting connections between resilience, personality, tenure, and efficacy. Francis, Robbins, Rolf, Turton and Rolf (2010) found in their

study of Anglican clergy, that determination rather than self-esteem seemed to influence a pastor's resilience in the face of disillusionment. Likewise Barnard and Curry (2012) found that self-compassion or the ability to reflect on one's own shortcomings judiciously, cultivated a sense of satisfaction with the work of ministry regardless of the degree of disillusionment encountered. This research echoes the assertion of Deci and Ryan (2008) regarding the nature of self-determined motivation, namely that this intrinsic quality allows an individual to press past external rewards or punishments to accomplish their goals regardless of circumstances not being optimal. However while disillusionment due to a lack of optimal circumstances may cultivate tension in pastoral ministry, when those circumstances turn into conflict, tension often becomes a time of transition.

Transition: Navigating Conflict. Noble and Noble (2008) assert that it is always conflict which is the biggest obstacle for the church and for its leadership. According to Wells, Probst, McKeown, Mitchem and Whiejong (2012) this conflict takes one of two meta-forms: either personal, involving pastors' relationships with their family and close friends; or organizational, involving the political systems and structures of the church. However, Hendron, Irving and Taylor (2012) found that due to the nature of the secondary trauma which is part and parcel to pastoral ministry, the precipitating factors in both personal and organizational conflict are often the same. Unfortunately, as Wright (2011) draws attention to, most conflict management concerns itself with the symptoms of a crisis rather than its causes. Richardson (2012) argues that conflict understood as both natural and normal will produce health, but conflict resisted becomes a cancer that slowly kills all manner of relationships. This truth, which is imprinted everywhere in nature, was articulated by Miller (1978) as Life systems theory.

Miller asserted that all life systems are only healthy when they exist in crisis and that without crisis life systems atrophy and eventually succumb to death.

Working off the premise of life systems theory Hirsh (2006) asserts that Christians experience the reality of the life of Christ flowing through them and empowering them when they are willing to walk through the periods of crisis together. According to Hirsch it is these moments of collective crisis that forge them into a true community, an insight which aligns with the research of Galek, Flannelly, Greene and Kudler (2011) on the importance of supportive social structures for the navigation of crisis. Along these lines Rendle (2002) asserts that many times conflict is not an issue of determining right and wrong, winners and losers, but of demystifying context and perceived meaning in the pursuit of mutually acceptable resolution. Thus Burns et al. (2013) set out to uncover the art and science of resiliency needed to achieve long-term tenure and efficacy in pastoral ministry.

Tenure: The Art and Science of Resilience and Efficacy. Desiring to understand the phenomena of resilience in pastoral ministry, Burns et al. (2013) embarked on a seven year study of the lived experiences of pastors looking for themes which would provide insight into how pastors could both “survive and thrive in ministry” (p. 16). Out of their research five primary themes for resilience and efficacy in pastoral ministry emerged. According to Burns et al. these distinct but interconnected themes must be treated separately for the sake of clarity, but must be cultivated collectively in order to positively impact efficacy and tenure. The first theme, spiritual formation, deals with the ongoing process of personal spiritual maturity. The second theme, self-care, deals with the personal pursuit of physical, mental and emotional health. The third theme, emotional and cultural intelligence, deals with ability to understand others and communicate with them effectively. The fourth theme, marriage and family, deals with spiritual and relational

health of the pastor's family. The fifth and final theme, leadership and management, deals with the need for pastors to accept these administrative roles which are often thrust upon them and are often not a part of their official pastoral education.

Spiritual Formation. Pastors cannot give what they do not possess themselves. Since the primary goal of pastoral ministry is, by definition of the word itself to care for others spiritually, pastors must first be on a journey of spiritual formation themselves. While this might seem unnecessary to state, as Hansen (2012) draws attention to, with the plethora of pastoral how-to books clamoring for the pastor's attention, it can be easy to allow personal spirituality to be pushed aside in the pursuit of professional duties. Yet a pastor's primary tools to accomplish their primary goal are spelled out in scripture as prayer and the study of the Word of God; two things which it is impossible to handle for others if one has not first handled for themselves (Baxter, 1974).

As Baxter (1974) asserts, loving God with one's entirety is a lifelong faith journey of coming to know Him and making Him known through one's relationships with others. In this way biblical theology is fundamentally practical, pastoral theology and knowledge of the text mingled with devotional piety are what deepen the well from which the waters of pastoral care are drawn. For spiritual formation is to the soul what nutrition and exercise is to the body, it is the training in godliness which is necessary for the spiritual maturity which characterizes the effective pastor (Burns et al., 2013). So what does a life of training for godliness look like, and how is it fashioned?

Burns et al. (2013) found several key practices with regard to this. First, personal rituals – “precise, consciously acquired behaviors” - must be established (p. 40). Second, accountability to the Body - one or several “intimate friendships” with those who can act as “confidants” rather

than “allies” providing spiritual direction, correction and affirmation - must be implemented (p. 42). Third, suffering – which clarifies one’s “values”, increases “sensitivity and compassion toward others”, enhances an awareness of personal limitations and teaches “flexibility” – must be embraced as healthy (p. 45). Fourth, spiritual disciplines – “critical self-reflection” (p. 49), “prayer” (p. 50), “Sabbath” rest (p. 53), “repentance” and reconciliation (p. 54), and “personal worship” that precedes “corporate worship” (p. 55) - must be practiced. These things are beautifully simple but they are not simplistic. To choose the path of spiritual formation is to choose to turn aside from all other paths, even when they seem to accomplish one’s goals more efficiently.

Self-care. The nature of pastoral ministry is not like other professions. In fact it is far more appropriate to speak of pastoral ministry as a vocation than an occupation because for pastors there is never really a non-pastoral moment. Even those times which are set aside for spiritual formation, while they are primarily focused on the pastor’s personal spiritual health and growth, are never-the-less a necessary part of the pastor’s preparation for effective ministry. This holds true likewise for the pastor’s physical, mental and emotional health. Pastors must intentionally engage in self-care if they are to survive and thrive in ministry. This form of self-denial can be difficult because it requires establishing margins around one’s private life; however it is absolutely necessary because it is only by maintaining these margins that one can be assured they will not burn out in ministry (Swenson, 2004).

Establishing margins takes time and practice, but its value to efficacy and tenure is well worth the effort. Wells et al. (2012) observed that the longer pastors are in field the less personal or organizational conflict has a destructive effect on them. According to Bleiberg and Skufca (2005) this is because the boundaries which pastors establish around the individual areas of their

lives, tend to thicken the longer they are in field. Thus self-care provides a holistic conceptualization of how to guard over the interwoven emotional, spiritual, social, intellectual and physical aspects of life (Burns et al., 2013).

According to Burns et al. (2013) spiritual self-care, while partially synonymous with spiritual formation, also coincides with the aspect of emotional self-care that involves the pastor's "sense of calling to the ministry" (p. 63). Burns et al., states that the continuous doubting of one's call was almost a universal experience among the pastors involved with their research. While no solutions to this were uncovered, "two coping methods" emerged – "learning contentedness and processing questions with trusted partners" - which helped to "give comfort in the midst of ambiguity" (p. 65). In addition to these two coping methods Burns et al. found self-discovery and coming to terms with one's personality, formative experiences and individual personhood distinct from the tasks of ministry helped to solidify the sense of the call.

Further emotional self-care issues which arose out of the research of Burns et al. (2013) included the navigation of feelings of "frustration, depression and dryness" (p. 73). Frustration came from trying to handle the expectations pastors' felt were placed on them by others. Depression however was found to often have deeper roots than immediate circumstances, sometimes requiring professional counseling to be addressed fully. Dryness came from operating in an overloaded emotional capacity which made it difficult to recuperate from even when rest was possible. Establishing emotional margins to counteract these issues requires finding interventions that will restore emotional energy. Swenson (2004) provides the following "prescriptions" to "take as needed": find a good friend, get a pet, pursue the reconciliation of broken relationships, serve others altruistically, get some rest and relaxation, laugh, cry, establish appropriate boundaries and clear differentiations between yourself and others, envision a better

future, practice gratefulness, extend grace, walk in faith, cling to hope, accept and lavish others with love (p. 86).

Social self-care confronts the specter of loneliness in pastoral ministry. According to Burns et al. (2013), this aspect of self-care requires the careful and intentional development of healthy relationships. This begins by distinguishing between “allies or confidants” (p. 81). The former are those whose values align with the pastor’s but whose loyalties are divided by relational or organizational ties. The latter are those who have little to no conflicting loyalties, generally because they exist outside of the church’s organizational boundaries. This distinction is based on the reality that there are varying degrees of intimacy and connection within the concept of friendship. Recognition of this allows a pastor to develop genuine relationships with members of their congregation that are appropriately differentiated without feeling a sense of inauthenticity or hypocrisy. Unfortunately this means that cultivating an authentically intimate community of friends is very difficult for pastors, but not impossible.

To this end Burns et al. (2013), provide thoughts on the cultivation of community and the selection of friends for pastors which are worth considering. Community may need to begin in a virtual construct, with friends from outside of the pastor’s current context. A pastor should discuss with their spouse at length about those qualities which are most desirable for friendships. Pastors should not anticipate finding confidants in denominational meetings. They should move slowly when trying to cultivate new friendships, taking time to evaluate reactions to vulnerability and being careful not to overshare. Pastors need to recognize that being a pastor means that most relationships with people will require them to serve in multiple roles at varying times and therefore should always proceed with caution. In the end, friends and confidants may be best

found through pastoral peer groups, participation in which has been shown to have a profoundly positive impact.

With regard to intellectual self-care, Burns et al. (2013) highlight two areas of concern from their research. First, keeping one's mind sharp through reflection and learning as well as creative and imaginative exploration of new ideas. Second, establishing boundaries and setting aside time in ways that are congruent with personal values and priorities. As with all those whom Drucker (2006) refers to as knowledge workers - meaning that the medium of their work is abstract ideas rather than physical materials - pastoral ministry requires a well-guarded quantum of time dedicated to the process of gathering, analyzing and synthesizing new knowledge. For the pastors involved in the research of Burns et al. this was most easily accomplished through the development of "small groups or cohorts" (p. 91). A commitment to making time for this is what Moreland (2012) asserts as the activity of loving God with one's entire mind. If one takes Moreland's assertion seriously then setting aside time for intellectual self-care is not only important, it is a moral imperative. As such Burns et al. offer the following four categories they found "crucial for time commitments in mental self-care": first draw hard lines around time with family, second take a vacation with them yearly, thirdly observe a day of Sabbath rest weekly and fourthly observe an extended Sabbath rest of two to three months regularly.

Finally, Burns et al. (2013) address the need for physical self-care. Recognizing that "poor physical health translates into less effective ministry" and that part of honoring God has to do with how one uses their body. As such they call attention to the need for proper nutrition, exercise and rest (p. 98). According to Swenson (2004) these needs must be taken very seriously, because where medical advances have eradicated the infectious diseases that used to kill, those diseases have been replaced by ailments which directly result from "bad habits and poor choices"

(p. 96). In fact according to Swenson, at the time more than half of all deaths were estimated by medical authorities to be caused by lifestyle choices. Swenson's "prescriptions" for addressing the needs of nutrition, exercise and rest are as follows: take personal responsibility, establish a healthy emotional margin, establish new habits, recognize the value of sleep, develop healthy sleeping patterns while avoiding oversleeping and taking advantage of napping when necessary, decrease intake of fats and sugars, replace processed snacks with fresh fruit, avoid overeating, garden or buy directly from a local grower, drink more water, don't eat out, recognize that exercise is not one size fits all, have realistic expectations about exercise and stick with it" (p. 98).

Self-care is not optional. Burn out no more honors God than slothfulness does. Pastors will set an example for their congregations of what it means to love God with their entire heart, soul, mind and strength. Self-care ensures that the example set is one that honors God and is true to the pastor's call. "It is difficult to be healthy in a society where relational, emotional, and spiritual sickness is endemic... but healing is worth it" (Swenson, 2004, p. 213-214).

Emotional and Cultural Intelligence. Where pastoral ministry is concerned, emotional and cultural intelligence is essentially the ability to understand others and communicate with them effectively. Emotional intelligence is divided further into two parts; self - which focuses on "the ability to proactively manage one's own emotions" - and others - which focuses on "the ability to appropriately respond to the emotions of others" (Burns et al., 2013, p. 23). Similarly cultural intelligence is focused on understanding and adapting to cultures foreign to one's own. Burns et al. further explains:

CQ (cultural intelligence) requires an understanding and appreciation of current contextual forces as well as the cultural background of one's self and others. It involves

an awareness of ethnic, geographical, socioeconomic, educational and generational differences on one's perspective and behavior. (p. 24)

As such, cultural intelligence may be thought of as a socio-cultural anthropology, applied to communications theory. Together emotional intelligence and cultural intelligence present the pastoral with the need to invest themselves into the work of harnessing these qualities that are part skill set and part art form.

According to Burns et al. (2013), developing emotional intelligence begins by accepting the fact that emotions themselves are a part of human personality reflecting the image of God in man. Furthermore, like the personality, emotional intelligence develops over time heavily influence by the experiences of childhood especially in regard to one's family of origin. Developing emotional intelligence requires a commitment to emotional maturity, spiritual maturity and self-care. One must be willing to face their own faults before they can overcome them. According to Burns et al. the research unearthed "four problems and two challenges... as vital areas for ministry leaders to work on" (p. 108). The problem of being a people pleaser is what happens when a pastor disregard their own needs in an attempt to make another person happy. The problem of emotion-faking is what happens when pastors put on a façade in their interactions with people to hide their own drained emotional state. The problem of a lack of reflection is what happens when pastors lose touch with themselves and their own emotions. The problem of conflict avoidance is what happens when emotions are avoided altogether, thus cultivating resentment and bitterness. The two challenges of active listening and expressing empathy go hand in hand with the aforementioned problems because when pastors ignore their own needs they become callous to the emotional needs of others.

Once again, Burns et al. identified three key practices for developing emotional intelligence. Prayer and personal worship provide perspective on one's own emotions. Regular physical exercise has been proven to provide relief from emotional stress which in turn allows for the reflection necessary to develop emotional intelligence. Furthermore there are six specific practices for reflection that help to develop emotional intelligence: slowing down, journaling, identifying one's own emotions, exploration of family genograms, differentiation of one's emotions from the emotions of the other and openness to receiving feedback from others. Together these practices move pastors toward the goal of the maturity of the Head, Jesus Christ who exhibited "perfect emotional intelligence" (p. 128).

Cultural intelligence is sometimes thought to be primarily concerned with international cross-cultural involvement, but according to Burns et al. (2013) the ideas behind cultural intelligence are relevant even when one moves to a new region of the country, or increasingly a new borough of the same city. This is because there is no longer a monolithic construct of American culture. With the advent of globalization an individual may find themselves enmeshed in a multiplicity of cultures and subcultures. Out of their research Burns et al. identified seven cultural domains that affect pastors on a regular basis.

The personal as a cultural domain refers to the personal story of the individual, their family of origin and their formative experiences. Generation as a cultural domain refers to the influence of the historical time frame in which an individual's thinking is formed. The church as a cultural domain refers to the way that the organizational culture of the church which an individual is a part of influences the way they see life. Similarly, denomination as a cultural domain refers to the impact of the broader church community on the individual. Geography and demographics as cultural domains refer to the way that even the slightest changes within a larger

culture and still affect pastoral ministry. Socioeconomic status as a cultural domain refers to the way that education, income, lifestyle preferences and occupation shape unique subcultures. Finally, social ethnicity as a cultural domain refers to the way that ethnic backgrounds shape unique subcultures as well.

Learning to navigate these cultural and sub-cultural constructs can be daunting, but it is not impossible. Cultural intelligence theory (Early & Ang, 2003) is built on the foundation of the prior work of Early (2002) on cross-cultural competence wherein he asserted that cultural intelligence has behavioral, motivational and meta-cognitive aspects. Cultural intelligence theory (Early & Ang, 2003) asserts that there are strategies which can improve culture perceptiveness and adaptivity through cognitive awareness of cultural diversity, of body language and of emotional responses. In two studies the concept of cultural intelligence proved to be a consistent predictor of an individual's ability to succeed in multicultural settings, business, and especially international business (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008; Johnson, Lenartowicz, & Apud, 2006). Furthermore it has been promoted for its potential effectiveness in politics and diplomacy (Nye, 2004).

It is noteworthy that cultural intelligence theory is predicated on the same principles of communication theory (Dainton & Zellei, 2011) which also inform what modern missiologists call contextualization, the process whereby a missionary endeavors to go to a foreign culture and communicate their beliefs and values to a people fundamentally different than themselves (Moreau, 2012). This convergence matters because pastors like missionaries often end up ministering in cultures other than their native one. As such the insights of missiology can provide a theologically specific application of cultural intelligence theory to the work of pastoral ministry. Just as contextualization requires knowledge of the local culture in which one is

serving and the skills to employ that knowledge correctly, so also pastoral ministry in the American church likewise requires this same kind of cultural intelligence (Stetzer, 2006).

Along these lines Burns et al. (2013) assert that in order for pastors to contextualize their ministry they must develop a “cultural intelligence that includes the ability to discriminate between cultural preferences and biblical imperatives” (p. 147). In order to do this the pastor must be able to suspend judgment on those aspects of culture which are different from their own and evaluate those differences with a strong bent toward humility. A second thing pastors must be able to do to accomplish the process of contextualization is to identify those cultural values which build trust. Broadly there are five sets of values which must be identified for this to occur.

According to Burns et al. (2013) all cultures have a degree of either high or low communication context, which is to say that they either communicate predominately through non-verbal cues as with the former or the literal meanings of the words in the case of the later. Each culture also organizes around the power distance between leaders and followers with high power distance cultures emphasizing unilateral authority and low power distance cultures emphasizing collaborative decision-making. Each culture functions in relation to time either in a tightly scheduled fashion or in a looser less stringent fashion, what Burns et al. refer to as “clock time vs. event time” respectively (p. 154). The fourth value set is referred to as “Precision vs. Ambiguity” (p. 155). Here precision refers to the desire to have tight control over life and circumstances, emphasizing order and structure. Conversely, ambiguity here refers to the desire to live life in the now, unhindered by the restrictions of cumbersome structures. Finally, there is the divide between results and relationships. In the former the focus is on goal attainment and task accomplishment, whereas in the later the focus is on community life where collaboration is valued over competition making it difficult to quantify success.

The successful investigation and assessment of a new culture requires pastors to prioritize spiritual formation, personal reflection, experimentation, curiosity, a willingness to endure hardships and openness to working in community with others who are likeminded.

Fundamentally this is a missional work. For pastors who are committed to developing cultural intelligence or contextualization, are really committing themselves to being incarnated in the culture they desire to reach (Hesselgrave & Rommen, 2000). Yet as with all effective missions work incarnation is meant to connect with those who themselves are indigenous to that culture who, once trained, can then reach many others like themselves through their pre-existing networks of relationships (Escobar, 2003). In this, the inherent dignity and the beauty of diversity in God's design is honored and the pastor is able to thrive.

Marriage and Family. According to Burns et al. (2013), "one of the most significant lessons learned... was the strategic role the spouse plays in ministry life" (p. 25). They further clarify that by strategic they don't intend to evoke the imagery of tasks and functions performed for the congregation but rather the role that the spouse plays in sustaining pastors in the work of ministry. However, knowing the importance of focusing on the well-being of the family and actually accomplishing said theme is often a more difficult task than it might first sound. The conflict most churches and their pastors endure, whether organizational or personal, has profoundly negative effects on their family (Noble & Noble, 2008).

Burns et al. (2013) relates the story of a pastor's wife who told her husband that she could not help but think that she and their boys would have been better off if he "were not alive" (p. 169). Unfortunately, this is not an exception either. Davis (2007) found that pastor's wives often experience an acute sense of loneliness due to the intensely felt needs of friendship and community. Additionally Davis found that more than three-quarters of pastor's wives desired a

close friend and yet almost half felt they were completely isolated from outside support, making loneliness a normative experience. As Burns et al. point out; this situation has far reaching consequences. Pastoral ministry can be devastating for the marriage and family of pastors, and a devastated marriage and family can have a devastating effect on the efficacy of a pastor's ministry; as such the health of the pastor's marriage and family must be a priority for both the family and the congregation.

According to Burns et al. (2013) they "identified five primary challenges facing marriage and family for those in ministry" (p. 170). The first challenge identified was the normal pressures of marriage and family life which all people face. This includes the common dilemmas all families face from chores, to children's activities, to community involvement, to finances. There are many resources available for families which pastors can avail themselves of. Unfortunately many times pastors will not get the help they need because they are concerned about appearing as though they cannot meet the expectations of their church.

The second challenge identified was that pastoral ministry is not a job but a lifestyle. The fact that pastors are virtually on call twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week means that often pastors' families get the dregs of the pastor's time, a situation which cultivates bitterness and conflict in the home. Further compounding this challenge, at times pastors can build up so much negative emotional waste, what Burns et al. refer to as "emotional radiation" that it overflows into the lives of the family contaminating them (p. 173). This is one of the reasons a confidant is needed, because without healthy boundaries around a pastor's spouse and children they can easily take on the emotional baggage of every conflict and anxiety which the pastor is experiencing; but without the ability to do anything other than languish in anxiety and instability.

The third challenge is the conflicting loyalties of the home and the church. The implication of ministry as a lifestyle is that the church can easily encroach up loyalties which properly belong to the pastor's spouse and family. One way that Burns et al. suggest to counteract this potential is for pastors to recognize the strategic value of their spouse and then intentionally form a kind of partnership with them specifically for ministry. In addition to this pastors must identify and manage the church's expectations, be willing to disappoint those whose demands are unreasonable, and be aware of and thoughtful about the dual relationships that exist in the church. Finally they stress the need for pastors to prioritize the intentional support the spiritual development of their spouse and children.

The fourth challenge is the sense of abandonment that a spouse and children can come to internalize when pastors do not guard their time and loyalties appropriately. The feelings of abandonment often run deeper than of the others and remain hidden because a spouse feels they cannot confront the one doing ministry precisely because it is ministry. This causes the offense to fester and when it finally erupts to the surface in crisis conflict. For this reason pastors must address this issue proactively by investing intentional time with their spouse and family, by providing the emotional security of placing the spouse and family's needs first in all things, by establishing regular marriage checkups with a professional therapist, by practicing active listening, by exploring family of origin patterns with their spouse, and by developing connecting habits that are healthy such as date nights and hobbies. Left undone, pastors' court disaster in both their marriages and their ministries.

The fifth challenge for marriage and family which pastors' face is the need for their spouse to have a confidant. Pastors' spouses must be guarded in their relationships because while they do not hold the official position of the pastor, they are none the less "in a position of power"

(Burns et al., 2013, p. 195). There is no relationship left unaffected by this dynamic. In a very real way the pastor's spouse is also always on. Thus the expectations of the church come to bear on the pastor's spouse. The manipulations of those whose intention is to gain power will seek to influence the pastor's spouse. The complexities of dual relationships will confront the pastor's spouse. Recognizing this, it becomes imperative that pastors help their spouses secure one or several healthy confidants. Marriage is hard enough under normal circumstances, pastoral ministry potentially compounds those normal stressors; but pastors are called first to their family and then to their church. This order must be maintained for efficacy in ministry to be achieved.

Leadership and Management. “Effective pastors require a great variety of skills...” in order to accomplish the diverse array of tasks they are called upon to perform; among these are “sharing congregational leadership, building congregational community, effective administration, conflict utilization, and responsible self-management” (Burns et al., 2013, p. 26). Many pastors are unprepared or just plain uninterested in this aspect of pastoral ministry, but that does not change the reality that pastors must be effective in this way if they are going to survive and thrive in ministry. Furthermore, while much is written about leadership and management in business and professional literature, they approach these areas from a non-theological perspective. As such pastors must be cautious, judicial and intentional about how they integrate the ideas of business and professional literature. All pastoral leadership and management, without exception, must be understood within a theological framework if it is to remain pastoral in character (Peterson, 2014).

Leadership and management are two different roles and each requires their own distinct skill set. Unfortunately, where these two roles are often divided in larger ministries, for pastors of smaller ministries the responsibility falls solely on their shoulders. Ignoring this because of a

disdain for politics misses the point. Burns et al. (2013) quotes Stanford University professor James March as saying that “no organization works if the toilets don’t work... Leadership is a mixture of poetry and plumbing” (p. 199). March explains that poetry is here meant to illustrate leadership and plumbing to illustrate management, and that in almost any work of life both are needed.

Like poetry, leadership is a creative task. It involves story telling; taking the abstract which is hard for most to see and making it clear, attainable, desirable. Leadership is motivational, inspirational, compelling and transformational. Done well leadership meets people where they are and then helps them get to where they need to be. Developing this practice of pastoral ministry requires a commitment to a lifetime of learning in the areas of “reflection, hardship, systems thinking and political perception” (Burns et al., 2013, p. 201). In this context reflection involves the prayerful and meditative assessment of the ministry. Likewise hardship identifies the process of maturing through suffering as it is navigated with trusted confidants. Systems’ thinking describes the need for the pastor to understand and appreciate the relationship connections and their implications for the ministry. Finally, political perception highlights the reality that politics exists wherever people interact; the practice of perception involves learning to differentiate between interactions that are intended to further interests, jockey for power and authority, build relationship capital, or negotiate for a desirable outcome. Above all else pastors must remember that they are called to be servant leaders. Leadership, though it does necessarily involve politics must never degenerate into manipulation. If it does then all of the other lessons learned will be for naught.

Like plumbing, management is a mechanical task. It involves minding technical details, repetitive chores and administrative duties, establishing procedures and maintaining the

organization. Management is methodological, unexciting, tedious and necessary. Done well management holds the organization together and helps it maintain a high level of godly stewardship in the face of the constant pressures of life. According to Burns et al. (2013) there are five essential managerial tasks which pastoral ministry must concern itself with: “modeling, shepherding, managing expectations, supervising conflict and planning” (p. 223). The task of modeling is the setting of a daily example for one’s congregation of what it means to be spiritually mature. The task of shepherding involves getting to know the people by actively listening to their stories, providing for their spiritual nourishment by encouraging them, leading them speaking the truth in love and protecting them through biblical counseling. The task of managing expectations involves being aware of one’s own expectations as well as those of others, recognizing the root of those expectations and then establishing expectations that are open and realistic. The task of supervising conflict involves recognizing that conflict is complex, continuous and normal; to be healthy however it must be handled appropriately and the pastor is responsible to ensure that it happens thusly. Finally, the task of planning involves developing vision and mission statements and structures, the selection and development of congregational leaders, hiring and training staff, and the oversight of the governance structures of the church. Although not as romantic as the poetry of leadership, the plumbing tasks of management are just as necessary and just as much a part of the redemptive work of pastoral ministry.

Summary

Pastoral ministry is difficult; often leading to disillusionment, conflict and potentially resulting in severe secondary trauma. According to Doebling (2013) there has long been a need to develop a new, holistic and integrative approach to preparing pastors for ministry. The research of Burns et al. (2013) expanded the knowledge base with regard to the resilience which

is necessary for this and although some of their findings dovetail with changes which are already taking place in pastoral education, many do not. The future of the American Christian church depends largely on the quality of the education its pastors receive. Thus it is imperative that further research is conducted to explore their findings, specifically with regard to the way in which long-tenured senior pastors view their own efficacy and understand those factors which contributed to their long-tenure.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

Since the goal of this research was to explore the lived experiences of long-tenured senior pastors it was conducted as a qualitative study. While there are several well accepted models for qualitative research, the phenomenological study model was employed due to the nature of the research problem and the parameters of the research questions in that there is much about the phenomena and its factors which remain unknown and under-researched (Creswell, 2007). This phenomenological study investigated the phenomena of long pastoral tenure through the cross examination of data relating to 10 long-tenured senior pastors. Data was collected until theoretical saturation was reached and a thick description of the phenomena was possible (Guest et al., 2006). Data was then analyzed with the goal of being able to discover insights for the enrichment of pastoral education and practice as well as ascertaining new directions for future research. This chapter will outline the design, research questions, participants, data collection and analysis procedures used in this study.

Design

Since the factors related to the phenomena of pastoral ministry, tenure, efficacy, and education have not yet been explored to the degree that they have been fully established, it is necessary that the first exploratory steps be taken. In order to accomplish this exploration into the complexities of lived pastoral experience, the research will utilize Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenology. Moustakas outlines four essential processes for structuring a phenomenological study in such a way so as to protect against subjectivism. The first process, epoche, is the intentional bracketing of the researcher's personal biases so as to "eliminate personal involvement with the subject material" (Patton, 2002, p. 485). The second process,

phenomenological reduction, involves the development of a description of the experience. The third process, imaginative variation, is about identifying the structural themes which undergird the phenomenon. The fourth process is the synthesis of texture and structure which provides a final, thick description of the phenomenon consisting of conclusions which have emerged out of the data. In this way transcendental phenomenology stands in contrast to hermeneutic phenomenology in that this latter approach focuses on the construction of meaning from the data by the researcher themselves, rather than allowing the participants to do so on their own (Kakkori, 2009).

Research Questions

The exploration of the experiences of long-tenured senior pastors was initially guided by three research questions.

(a) How do long-tenured senior pastors describe their experience of being long-tenured?

Building on Bandura's work on self-efficacy (1997), this question sought to understand how long-tenured senior pastors perceived the dynamics of their own tenure since that influences their effectiveness in the pastorate. Among other things the goal of this question was to determine if long-tenure was an intentional choice, an act of providence, or even a missed opportunity to do something else. Additionally it was hoped that this question might open the door for understanding whether participants believed that their long-tenure had made them more effective or less effective and when that sense of effectiveness or lack thereof became poignant.

(b) In what ways do long-tenured senior pastors perceive that their education prepared them for a long-tenure? Since DeGroat (2008) observed that most seminarians feel unprepared to actually engage in the tasks of the pastorate, it begs the question of what long-tenured senior pastors found to be most useful for their own preparedness in this regard. The goal of this

question was to get at the heart of what long-tenured senior pastors perceive they have gleaned from their own educational experience.

(c) *In addition to pastoral education, what other dynamics do long-tenured senior pastors perceive as contributing to their experience of long-tenure?* This question sought to uncover previously unidentified factors which pastors themselves perceive as important in relation to the phenomena in question and to see if their responses reinforced the findings of Burns et al. (2013). The hope was that this information could be used to establish routes for further explorative research and the enrichment of pastoral education.

Participants

Following Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval of the research plan (Appendix A), participants were selected through a purposeful sampling derivative of respondent driven sampling which is itself a recent modification of snowball sampling. Snowball sampling originated with Goodman (1961) as a method for sampling where in the participants' own networks of acquaintances are used to expand the sample pool causing it to grow in the same way a snowball does when it rolls. One of the advantages of snowball sampling is that it allows access to hidden populations that are normally outside of the reach of researchers using conventional random sampling methodology; however this same approach can often lead to very biased sampling (Kurant, Markopoulou & Thiran, 2011). According Kurant et al. two issues that arise out of a situation where only the most accessible parts of a target population are used in a research sample are that the conclusions drawn from such research often lack a degree of trustworthiness because researchers have no way of knowing whether or not their sample is representative of the whole population or not and because of the potential lack of data from unrepresented members of the target population. A third issue that arises from snowball sampling

is that while it may lend itself to an extensive coverage of a target population, the fact that participants will most likely refer others who resemble themselves may result in a sample that is deceptively homogenous.

Respondent driven sampling was developed to address these issues. Salganik and Heckathorn (2004) assert that respondent-driven sampling has been shown to allow researchers to make unbiased assertions from snow ball samples. Used primarily for quantitative research, respondent driven sampling uses a mathematical algorithm to counterbalance the potential for bias in snowball sampling. For the purpose of qualitative research however the concept of discriminate priority selection as presented by Patton (2002) will accomplish the same goal of establishing diversity within the sample until data saturation, the point in data collection when no new themes emerge, has been reached. Employing discriminate priority selection is intended to engender a research sample of the target population that is heterogeneous with regard to age, ethnicity, geographic and denominational backgrounds.

First, several potential participants were identified based on the researcher's personal contacts within the target population. These potential participants were contacted and asked to join the research. Upon completion of the eligibility questionnaire (Appendix B) they were then asked to refer other potential participants who would likewise be contacted about participating in the study. A target sample size of 10 to 25 participants was planned for but data saturation was attained in 10 (Guest et al., 2006). Since recent evidence from Guest et al. that no empirical rational exists for the common recommendations regarding the number of interviews to be conducted and since having investigated the concept of theoretical saturation in a quantifiable way, they found that no new themes emerged after relatively few interviews; it was determined that this was an acceptable cut off.

For the purpose of this research the sample was also limited to only those pastors who adhere to the doctrines outlined in Apostles' Creed, who serve in churches where the initial contracting of the pastor and the length of the pastoral call is determined by the congregation and the pastor, and who have served as the senior pastor for six or more consecutive years in a single church congregation. The use of the doctrines outlined in Apostles' Creed ensures that participants are in fact adherents to the historically recognized Judeo-Christian faith. The limitation of the nature of the pastoral contract and relationship is necessitated by the fact that if the congregation and the pastor do not have the ability to determine tenure then asking why a pastor has stayed is a moot point. Finally the stipulation of six or more consecutive years is based on the research about longevity and efficacy (Arn, 2013; Burns et al., 2013; De Wetter, et al., 2010; Rainer, 2014; Wind & Rendle, 2001).

Procedures

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) consists of members of the educational institution whose responsibility it is to review all of the institution's research proposals so as to ensure the ethical behavior of researchers and the safety of any human participants involved in that institution's research studies. All researchers who will be working with human participants must apply for and receive IRB approval before they may begin collecting any data for their research. This process can take anywhere from one to two months depending on the complexity of the project. This study took just over six weeks to obtain IRB approval (Appendix A). Following IRB approval and pilot testing of the interview questions (Fassinger, 2005) data was collected using documentation, interviews, reflective memoing and field notes so as to insure triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Potential participants were contacted through email to determine interest and eligibility as well as being asked to refer other potential participants for the study who were subsequently contacted in the same manner as the first (Appendix B). Following a determination of eligibility, copies of applicable documents were collected and interviews were conducted. After interviews were conducted and the recordings transcribed and analyzed, they were member checked by participants for accuracy. Focus groups had been intended for further data collection but scheduling with participants proved to be unfeasible despite best efforts to do so.

The Researcher's Role: Personal Biography

As the human instrument (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), I become a factor in the study from the beginning. Bracketing myself, my bias, and my passion is necessary to ensuring that the research is not tainted (Moustakas, 1994). According to Patton (2002), to accomplish the task of bracketing the researcher must be both aware of the current experience of the phenomena under scrutiny as well as being self-aware of their own bias. These biases, often seen in the approach to the task of research, emerge from the influence of the researcher's personal life experiences. For me it was the influences of my childhood and my interactions with the American Christian church which presented the greatest potential for tainting the data with bias.

In the narrative of my family much of what pertains to my biases and passions can be seen relatively early. My mother conceived me out of wedlock and with the predetermined intention of getting an abortion. I believe that God in His mercy prevented that from happening, and my mother took on the responsibilities of a single parent until I was three when she married my stepfather. We were not rich, but I remember thinking that we lived like simple kings, rich in what mattered. My childhood was filled with conversation and reading, hard work and service. My mother's great gift to me was her encouragement of intellectual development and critical

thinking; more than once I saw her challenge the status quo despite what it was going to cost to her. My father's great gift to me was the encouragement to live a life of authentic love; he was the kind of man who literally gave the shirt off his back more than once and he used to say that no real man will care if what you have to say is true if you are not willing to help him put food on the table so he can feed his family. It was these earliest memories that helped to define for me what it means to seek justice and mercy, to be loving and compassionate, to live in faith rather than fear. Thus the sum total of my life experiences has fostered in me the unrelenting determination to question everything and to pursue truth where ever it leads.

Unfortunately most of my experience with pastoral leadership in the Christian church has not been so good. I have seen more than one example of deficiency in leadership and the damaging consequences of that deficiency, including my own. I have remained a part of the Christian church because I believe that God's design for His church is both reasonable and attainable. My desire is to see the church reach that potential and I have come to believe that the key to doing so lies in the training of pastors. For years I have sought to dissect and diagnose the problems as I saw them, choosing to look at the symptoms of the problems and try to dig my way back to their root cause. This combined with the fact that the vast majority of the writing on the subject of pastoral ministry is not peer-reviewed, had left me with many preconceived and anecdotal ideas about what causes a church to fall apart and a pastor to fail; too many in fact for me to approach a study of pastoral ministry from that angle.

This research was intentionally designed to begin from a starting point I was unfamiliar with, directed toward a goal that till recently I had been unconcerned with. Thus this study began with healthy ministry and attempted to understand how it came to be that way, with the underlying premise being that health is the natural state of the ministry and our focus should be

on it rather than its lack. This paradigm shift in my approach worked to counterbalance the bias I brought to the subject matter, this combined with the accountability of member checking, peer review and triangulation of the data should ensure that the results of this research into long-tenured senior pastoral ministry are untainted.

Data Collection

The data collection process did not begin until IRB approval had been secured. As soon as IRB approval was secured, pilot testing of the interview and focus group questions was conducted with several former pastors who met the criteria of the study. Several potential participants with whom I am personally connected were then contacted by email to determine interest and eligibility as well as being asked to refer other potential participants for the study who were subsequently contacted in the same manner as the first (Patton, 2002). Following the determination of eligibility and signing of the informed consent affidavit (Appendix C), applicable documentation was collected and interviews were conducted.

Although it required many hours of travel by car, all interviews were conducted face to face so as to be present with the participants where their ministry took place. This allowed me to see what participants see and walk where they walk every day of their ministry; both in the church and in the community. Part of this process of taking field notes involved narrating videos to record my observations as I walked through participants' churches and drove through their communities and then using reflective memoing to bracket myself out when data analysis started. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Appendix D). The process of collecting field notes and conducting interviews took between 3 and 8 hours for each participant, with one instance where the pastor had to leave mid interview so as to give a parishioner a ride to the mechanic. Focus groups had

been intended for further data collection but scheduling with participants proved to be unfeasible despite best efforts otherwise.

Documentation

Due to the scope of this study, it was not viable to spend copious amounts of time investigating the environmental factors which framed the context of participants' long-tenure. These factors were delimited for where possible but the context still needed to be investigated as much as was possible. To this end, documentation was collected from participants, including both hard copies and web based information about the church and the community in which it was organized. From these documents general information about the context of the participants' experiences of long-tenure were able to be extrapolated.

Interviews

Interviews with participants were then conducted using semi-structured questions (see Table 1 and Appendix E) to get to the rich descriptions of the phenomena needed for data collection (Kvale, 1996). Since part of the goal of this research was to explore and expand on the previous research of Burns et al. (2013), interview questions were connected to their work pertaining to pastoral resilience. These interview questions sought to have participants describe their experiences as long-tenured senior pastors with regard to how they got to where they are and how they understood their effectiveness as pastors in relationship with that process. After the interviews were conducted, the recordings were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist and member checked by participants for accuracy prior to analysis.

Table 1. Interview Questions

1. Why did you choose to become a pastor?
2. What does a normal work week look like for you?
3. How would you describe the history and culture of the church in which you serve?
4. How would you describe the overall health of the church in which you serve?
5. What kind of struggles have you faced in your time as the senior pastor of this church?
6. So why have you decided to remained in pastoral ministry at this church?
7. What is your understanding of the concept of a long-tenured pastorate?
8. What are your thoughts on the fact that your tenure is considered a long-tenure?
9. What do you believe contributed most to your long-tenure?
10. What other factors, such as the church or community culture, do you believe contributed most to your long-tenure?
11. What are your thoughts on the following areas which have been identified as having strong influence on ministry, tenure and efficacy?
 - a. Personal spiritual formation?
 - b. Physical and psychological self-care?
 - c. Emotional and cultural intelligence?
 - d. Marriage and family health?
 - e. Leadership and management skills?
12. In what specific ways do you think your tenure has contributed to or influenced your effectiveness in the pastorate of this church?

Data Analysis

As a transcendental phenomenological study, the process of data analysis followed closely the guidelines set forth by Moustakas (1994). All participant interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim by a professional transcriptionist following the signature of a confidentiality agreement (Appendix E). All identifying markers of the participants were removed and participants given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity. Transcripts were then compared against the digital recordings for accuracy so as to retain the original dynamics of the conversation (Riessman, 1993; Seidman, 1991). Finally, the interview transcripts were member checked for accuracy with participants given the opportunity to provide feedback if they so desired.

Once the transcripts were ready the documentation, the interview data and the field notes from the interviews were analyzed using the adaptation of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of data analysis prescribed by Moustakas (1994). This approach uses the four stage processes of epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and the synthesis of texture and structure in order to allow the themes of the research to arise naturally out of the data collected. Analysis was be conducted multiple times; the processes repeated with each interview and ultimately with the data as a whole, taking into account the reflective memo logs which recorded my biases, opinions, feelings or thoughts on the phenomena during data collection.

Epoche

Epoche, a Greek word which means to stay away from or abstain, is a necessary precaution which the researcher as a human instrument must take to avoid tainting the data (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Epoche is defined by Patton (2002) as the intentional bracketing of the researcher's personal biases and preconceived ideas regarding the expected

outcomes of the study so as to “eliminate personal involvement with the subject material” (p. 485). Due to my proximity to the phenomena under investigation the whole of this study involved a great deal of this reflective contemplation in order for me to continually set aside those ideas and assumptions which I had with regard to my experience with pastoral ministry, tenure and efficacy (Creswell, 2007). I engaged in this process of epoche before and after each session of data analysis, journaling my journey of discovery, so as to assist with the task of retaining the integrity of the bracketing process. This step in the process of data analysis can be seen in chapter one’s situation-to-self subsection, chapter three’s personal-biography subsection which explores my prior engagement with the phenomena and in Appendix D where I provided to excerpts from my reflective memos.

Phenomenological Reduction

In phenomenological reduction (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994) the researcher attempts to develop a description of the experience that reflects the data as a whole. This was done through the technique of horizontalization wherein each statement about the phenomena is given equal value and opportunity to weave the narrative. To accomplish this each participant’s data was approached separately and their transcripts reviewed three times so as to allow an awareness of the raw data to expand. Each expression of the participant data was open coded utilizing the in vivo coding approach so as to retain the essential character of the data and keep it from being tainted by any researcher bias. This process of phenomenological reduction resulted in more than 600 individual codes.

Imaginative Variation

Imaginative variation was then used to identify the structural themes which undergirded the participants’ lived experience of the phenomenon with the goal of establishing what the

essence of the phenomena actually is (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). Doing this effectively requires that the researcher use their imagination to get at what is needed for the phenomena to remain what it is, and likewise what can be separated from participants' experiences that will leave the phenomena unchanged. To accomplish imaginative variation I separated the non-repetitive invariant horizon statements in the data from the repetitive ones with the data from each participant separately before turning my attention to the data as a whole. All repetitive statements were then gathered together and used to establish thematic units of meaning. The end result of this was the distillation of the in vivo codes down into two themes each with two sub themes.

Synthesis of Texture and Structure

The final process of data analysis requires that the researcher endeavor to develop a synthesis of the texture and structure of the themes of the data by fashioning a thick narrative description of the phenomena (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). The textual description is intended to focus on what participants experienced, while the structural focuses on how they experienced it taking into account the environment in which the phenomena occurred. This process of synthesizing texture and structure was accomplished in two steps. First I completed a textual and structural synthesis for each individual participant. Then I completed a narrative description which was a composite of all participant data. These textual descriptions employed direct and verbatim references from participants to illustrate and to make comparisons and contrasts of the various individual experiences of the phenomenon. The end result of this synthesis of the texture and structure of the data was a composite that provided a holistic representation of the essence and meaning of the lived experience of long pastoral tenure.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is needed in qualitative research so as to ensure that the study has a degree of validity (Lincoln & Guba, 1996). This is especially important given the fact that the qualitative researcher, as the human instrument, is considered to be far more likely to fall prey to the subjectivity inherent in qualitative research methods than those who do quantitative research (Creswell, 2007). As such Lincoln and Guba assert that the trustworthiness of a study hinges on its creditability, transferability, and confirmability. To this end creditability was strived for through the processes bracketing and reflective memoing which set the stage for a heightened awareness of potential bias and maintained the same awareness throughout the research. Secondly, credibility was attempted through the triangulation of the data collection processes with documentation, interviews, reflective memoing and field notes providing data from several different sources. Finally credibility was pursued through the use of member checking and peer review. For the member checks, each participant was given the opportunity to review the transcripts of the data collection and discuss the analysis. Furthermore they were invited to give feedback if they so desired. For the peer reviews the research was reviewed by several colleagues who are long-tenured pastors as well as the members of this dissertation committee. Transferability was likewise attempted through the use of thick and richly detailed descriptions of the phenomena so that readers would be able to ascertain points of connectivity between their own contexts and the research data. Finally, for confirmability a detailed trail of data collection and analysis which recorded the process of decision-making for the purpose of reproduction by other researchers has been assembled.

Ethical Considerations

Whenever research is conducted, regardless of its potential benefit, there is also an inherent potential for harm. Protecting research participants from that potential harm is an essential part of the researcher's responsibility to the population they will be working with so as to maximize the benefit to that population and reduce the potential damage (Creswell, 2007). To accomplish this, the research was conducted with anonymity and confidentiality. The transcriptionist was required to sign a non-disclosure agreement (Appendix F). Additionally pseudonyms were used for all participants. Finally, all data collected was kept secure and locked away with all electronic data backed up in a secure, password protected location.

Summary

This study was designed to contribute to the existing body of work regarding pastoral ministry, tenure and efficacy. As such this transcendental phenomenological study sought to explore the lived experiences of long-tenured senior pastors. This chapter has outlined the design, research questions, participants, data collection and analysis procedures used to investigate the phenomena. The final goal was to discover insights for the enrichment of pastoral education and practice as well as ascertaining new directions for future research.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

This transcendental phenomenological study was conducted to explore the lived experiences of long-tenured senior pastors. To this end the study was framed by three research questions.

1. How do long-tenured senior pastors describe their experience of being long-tenured?
2. In what ways do long-tenured senior pastors perceive that their education prepared them for a long-tenure?
3. In addition to pastoral education, what other dynamics do long-tenured senior pastors perceive as contributing to their experience of long-tenure?

This section will address the data collected to answer these questions; first dealing with the participants whose stories provided the data, followed by the themes which arose out of those stories.

Pastoral Portraits

The 10 participants in this study represent a wide variety of personal, professional, denominational, cultural and geographic backgrounds and perspectives. For the purpose of the research, long-tenured senior pastors were generally defined as pastors serving in the senior most position of spiritual leadership in a single church for a period of six or more consecutive years. In accordance with the delineation of Burns et al. (2013) two participants were “seasoned”, having been tenured between six and 14 years, while eight were “veteran” pastors having been tenured for more than 14 years (p. 265). Participants were sampled from those churches that had a voluntary relationship regarding pastoral tenure with three being Presbyterian Church of

America, two being Evangelical Methodist, one Church of God, one Assemblies of God, one Non-denominational, one Southern Baptist Convention and one Anglican Church in America. Four of the participants pastored in rural communities, four in small towns and two in suburban neighborhoods; a distinction determined based on population of communities and balanced with their proximity to major metropolitan centers (City-Data, 2014). Five of the participants pastored churches in Pennsylvania, one in New York, one in Maryland and three in North Carolina. Six of the participants pastored congregations of 150 or less, while three pastored congregations of between 151 and 500 people and one pastored a congregation of between 501 and 1000. Of the participants, nine were male and one was female. Four of the participants were between the ages of 35 and 55 while the other five were between 56 and 75. Three of the participants earned their certification through a denominational course of study. Six of the participants have graduate degrees, five seminary degrees with one of these starting out at Bible College while the other four earned bachelor's degrees in non-ministry fields and the sixth graduate degree also not being in a ministry related field. Three participants have post graduate degrees, but of these two are doctorates in ministry and one is a medical doctorate. Taken together discriminate priority sampling (Kurant et al., 2011) resulted in a pool that was relatively diversified, though certainly not exhaustively so (Table 2).

Table 2. Participant Overview

Name	Gender	Age Range	Community Culture	State	Denom	Cong. Size	Tenure	Pastoral Education
Adam	Male	56-75	Suburban	PA	PCA	0-150	Veteran	Seminary
Ben	Male	56-75	Rural	PA	PCA	151-500	Veteran	Doctorate
Chris	Male	56-75	Small Town	PA	COG	151-500	Veteran	Bible College
David	Male	56-75	Rural	NY	EMC	0-150	Veteran	Denom. Course of Study
Eli	Male	35-55	Suburban	MD	PCA	0-150	Veteran	Seminary
Fitz	Male	35-55	Small Town	PA	AOG	0-150	Veteran	Denom. Course of Study
Gabriel	Male	35-55	Small Town	NC	EMC	501-1000	Seasoned	Denom. Course of Study
Hayden	Male	56-75	Rural	NC	N/A	151-500	Veteran	N/A
Isaac	Male	35-55	Rural	NC	SBC	501-1000	Veteran	Doctorate
Jessica	Female	56-75	Small Town	PA	ACA	0-150	Seasoned	Seminary

Adam

Adam is an 18 year veteran pastor at a Presbyterian church in a suburban community of Pennsylvania. Adam's church is a 40 year old congregation of 35, multi-generational in its composition, predominantly Caucasian in a community that has had a transient population for several decades. Adam says that the church,

...started off as a flag waving "We are the conservative Presbyterian Church; we don't ordain homosexuals, we're not pro-gay, we're traditional; and if we preach the Bible, everyone will come to us." That was in '75. In '81, we were the only PCA church, in '81

the denomination merged with another denomination which happened to have a church in Murrys ville and a church in Penn Hills, there was a church over in Pitcairn that also came into the PCA so instead of us being the only PCA conservative, evangelistic church, we were now one of six and there was nothing unique about us, of the area. So all of the sudden we became a stodgy, angry church. In '84 another PCA church was using this building with us, another group, and we really thought they would merge with us. They were here for almost two years and then they left and bought their own building and we got really blindsided and I think at that point we lost all of our confidence and from '84 until now, we've always been very tight economically, fairly small, just a conservative, "we're the moral majority" and that's long gone.

However even with this adversity Adam has a constant smile as he recounts the long and sorted history of his church; always speaking in terms of "we" and "our" because as he puts it, "as a pastor, the church becomes part of me, all of it... its history becomes part of my history".

As a man, he is painfully honest about his own shortcomings, including the time he spent traveling to Philadelphia on a bi-weekly basis for counseling to deal with his bitterness over past treatment in the ministry. He is also more than willing to laugh at himself and the foolish decisions he made early on in his ministry. Most of all Adam is in awe of the grace of God and the love of God's people for each other and for him as their pastor. As he put it,

...this congregation has done a phenomenal job of loving me again, and again, and again, and again, and again, and again and forgiving... I'm serious on that, I'm amazed at how gracious this congregation is; there is no doubt in my mind that they love me...

It is this very thing that has him convinced that he can do anything God asks him to.

Ben

Ben is a 21 year veteran pastor at a Presbyterian church in rural Pennsylvania. Ben's church is a congregation of between 200 and 250, multi-generational in its composition, predominantly Caucasian in a community that has had a non-transient population since the church was planted in 1975.

The gentleman here who planted the church, started this church and came out with a small group of people out of a Deer Creek church, but he had pastored that core group for 27 years, in the Deer Creek church and then that core group came out and started this church, they, and then he stayed here for 19 years.... He'd come home in the afternoon and play with his kids and they'd bring their kids and he realized, "goodness we've got like 30 kids here we got to do something, let's make this something we do all the time." So now they are active in the community, providing an extensive and free children and youth program in the summers that register over 300 kids and hosting disaster response trainings for the state several times a year. In his time as the pastor, Ben's church has faced its share of struggles; however the majority of them have been what he describes as "growing pains". Issues of space and stewardship of resources, of training volunteers and of finding ways to connect older and newer members are high on the list. Ben smiles easily and is quick to laugh. He knows the struggles of the ministry but has made peace with it. At one point he remarks about the fact that after one church where he served for ten years and then another which he served for five, he genuinely did not think he would be at this one all that long. Now as he closes in on retirement he is reflecting on what he has learned and beginning to try to find ways to help his church transition from his leadership to its next pastor.

Chris

Chris is a 24 year veteran pastor at a Church of God congregation in small town in Pennsylvania. Chris' church is a congregation of approximately 500, multi-generational in its composition, predominantly Caucasian with some minority presence in a community whose population has remained virtually unchanged for a several decades. Prior to his coming, the congregation had a history of conflict and a track record of being hard on the pastors with the majority of them only staying for a few years at a time.

When I came here it was running 125-130 people.... They had been without a pastor for two years.... They had, at one point in their history gone from about 230 people down to the 130 people.... I think part of that had to do with the economy.... It wasn't all conflict... I was 30 years old, so I was young, I was like 20 years younger than anybody that was on search committee that chose me to come in as pastor.... I came in knowing that they probably distrusted leadership and it would take a while to gain their trust...

He smiled broadly as he relayed story after story of struggle, some concluding with his failure to lead well and some with the exhilaration of success, but all a part of the transformation of his congregation from an inward looking organization to a mission focused community of faith. Chris says that when he first came he only had "a vision of pastoral ministry in general", but the longer he has remained the more God has given him "a vision specific this church"; one that "continues to grow and expand even as the congregation does".

We're learning that conflict's not always bad. Um, that it can be a good thing when there is difference of opinion and diversity causes you to look at the bigger picture and I always tell the church, you know the church family is a lot like regular family, that the sign of a healthy family is not of the absences of conflict but the how you handle the

conflict. And so we're learning how to handle the conflict better. And so we respect differences of opinion, don't always agree but we try to work for common ground... so this is one of the most unique, caring, group of people that I've ever met.

David

David is an 18 year veteran pastor at an Evangelical Methodist Church in a rural community in New York. David's church is a congregation of less than 50, multi-generational in its composition, predominantly Caucasian in an area whose population and economic status has been in decline for the last several decades. While the church has been Evangelical Methodist since 1958, it was actually started in 1888 with many of the original buildings edifice still intact. The classic architecture is balanced however by the updates. The audio-video system is rather cutting edge for such a small and rural congregation with a pastor who is so close to retirement. David however is not interested in such things, having taken early retirement from the mill he worked in most of his life so that he could focus more on the needs of the congregation. His heart belongs these people and to this place. Long before he became their pastor he attended here, in fact the tears welled up in his eyes when he recounted how he came when he was in his 20s at a time when he thought he was going to lose his marriage and his children to his alcoholism. David even remarked at one point that he had the chance to leave and pastor a church elsewhere but his love for this place and these people constrained him. The congregation had been larger once, fallen to 15 when he first took the reins in 1996, grew to the 90s before dropping down to the current 40.

A lot of people moved, left New York. I think the last census they said like 500,000 people that have left New York state because of taxes, stupid laws that they don't like, so I mean, you know, now if you're a hunter you can't hunt unless the shells that you buy

you have to sign for them, sign for every shell you buy. And our governor, he's about as atheist as you get even though he's a Roman Catholic, his comment last year was, that if you don't agree with abortions, if you don't agree with homosexuality, then you have no place in New York state.

Yet the numbers are not David's first concern. His primary concern is that the people who remain faithfully love God and continue to faithfully carry out Christ's mission to love others.

Eli

Eli is a 27 year veteran pastor at Presbyterian Church in a suburban community in Maryland. Eli's church is a congregation of approximately 80, multi-generational in its composition, predominantly Caucasian in an area whose population has been in decline for the last few decades. The church itself was birthed out of a bible study in 1978, had two pastors prior to Eli and had no set meeting place for more than a couple of years at a time until he led them to purchase and renovate their current building in 1998.

Bible study started in '76, it was organized in February of '78. They met at the Holiday Inn for about five years until they bought the Union Hall of the Textile Mill that was taken south had 5,000 members, Union didn't need the Union Hall, that union had actually in the '30's bought a Jewish Synagogue when the Jewish population shrunk, so we wound up getting a Jewish Synagogue basically. We had to really clean it up from the smoke and stuff in it. So we were there from about '83, I came in '87, we then sold it in '93, in August we worshipped in Seventh Adventist building from September of '93 until November of '98 and then purchased this and then in 2003 we added that addition in the back, paved the parking lot, put in larger bathrooms.

Eli asserts that one of the advantages to this is that “the congregation has always been open to walking in faith and doing various ministries”. Not only has Eli’s church only had three pastors, but Eli has only pastored one church. Having started out at Michigan State for chemical engineering and pre-law he turned down an engineering scholarship so he could switch majors to Humanities before heading off to seminary. It was in seminary that he became convinced of the value of the pastorate and so again shifted gears from looking to teach to looking to pastor. In the end he came to Maryland and has never seen any reason to leave. The early days had their share of struggles but according to Eli, all through life there are struggles so you just have to choose which struggles you will see through to their resolution.

Fitz

Fitz is a 17 year veteran pastor at an Assemblies of God church in small town in Pennsylvania. Fitz’s church is a congregation of approximately 100, multi-generational in its composition, predominantly Caucasian, located on the main street of a small town. At first glance one might even drive by without realizing the church is even there, situated as it is within a renovated theater with virtually no parking anywhere close by and few external identifying markers. Inside however, one finds a much updated and artistically decorated space which is actually rather large. Fitz is the second pastor of this church and has actually been the pastor longer than the founding pastor was. Even though he was brought in as a part of a pastoral succession plan, within a few years of the founding pastor’s return to the mission field Fitz began to deal with conflict as he tried to lead the congregation in new directions.

I was only the second pastor. The guy before me founded the church which there were, we were a relatively young church at that point you know so we didn’t have 100 years’ worth of history like some churches have and a hall of pictures and paintings of pastors

on the wall or anything like that. But yet there were still things that were here that were very much the former pastor; whom I love, I don't have issue with him it was, it's just every pastor is going to be different. You know and I didn't see that I was young I was a young guy.

These changes were slow and painful, with the church taking almost 10 years to complete the transformation process. Having grown up in the area, left for several years to be an airplane mechanic in the military and then returned to work with his father in a tool and die shop, it can be said that to some degree Fitz has been in this area his whole life. Yet he claims that it was never about sticking close to home, but rather about being faithful to do what needed to be done where ever God wanted him.

Gabriel

Gabriel is an eight year seasoned pastor at an Evangelical Methodist Church in small town in North Carolina. Gabriel's church is the largest congregation in this study with approximately 850 people and a fairly new multimillion dollar facility. It is multi-generational and multi-ethnic in its composition, reflecting a transitioning rural community where the population is rapidly growing and diversifying. Gabriel relays the history of the church as,

A very vision-casting type church from the very beginning.... It was somewhat of a circuit rider church in 1917, --- had a vision, he had a place in the mountains... and he came... and started a camp meeting and they were an independent movement and he left here after that and went to Thomasville and started in Thomasville then came back here and served this movement being a camp meeting... he was an amazing person, great fired up preacher but he's kind of a circuit rider. He was part of the Methodist Church and he actually was instrumental in starting the camp meeting that's down in Florida as part of

the United Methodist Church today. I can't remember the name of it but anyway, so he came here and planted this movement I'm going to call it that because it was not a church at that time then it developed into a church.

They were Pilgrims Holiness/ People's Methodists... did not join the Evangelical Methodists until 1964. So from almost that point forward they had the same pastoral leadership which was... very solid, very genuine, and very loving and so the culture that he cultivated was a very family type, tight knit, loving relationship type church which is beautiful. So he was here for 38 years and then you had another pastor that followed him... but he just like myself, had an amazing, grounded base of strong firm believers to build upon, very fortunate to have the foundation that was built in 38 years.

Gabriel's own father came to the Christian faith at one of this church's summer camps when he was a child and years later when Gabriel's father left pastoral ministry, the family returned back to the town. Gabriel said that he attempted to leave the area as soon as he was old enough, but ended up returning because he knew God wanted him there.

He began attending the church and was asked to be the youth pastor in 2001. In 2005 when the pastor at the time resigned he was asked to fill the pulpit and a year later, he was asked to become the senior pastor. So with a historic record of being on mission and of pastoral stability Gabriel hit the ground running. Since 2006 the church has hired four other fulltime staff members, expanded to an additional campus and built a new facility. Gabriel dreams big and invites others to dream big with him believing firmly that when the prayer of faith connects with a willingness to serve then anything can happen.

Hayden

Hayden is a 27 year veteran pastor at a non-denominational Family Integrated church in a suburban community in North Carolina. Hayden's church is a congregation of approximately 225, multi-generational in its composition and multi-ethnic in its composition in a community on the out skirts of an area where the population is rapidly growing and diversifying. The church was started in 1987 as a split from another church, something which Hayden is neither proud of nor condones.

Early on Hayden was asked to be the senior pastor, something for which he was unprepared at the time, but the church grew as he grew. They stumbled along the way with financial issues and theological issues as well as settling on where to be located and how to be structured, but they took these conflicts in stride seeing them as opportunities to fine-tune the ministry. One of these conflicts is what led them in 1993 to adopt a model of ministry that later would be connected to the National Center for Family Integrated Churches (2015), a group that promotes a stripped down approach to the church. Hayden said that the local college gave them an opportunity to meet there but,

They gave us this one space to meet so we didn't have room for Sunday school classes, we didn't have room for children's church so by default those programs at least on Sundays fell away. And we realized after several months that we really didn't miss them and at the same time God was giving us a desire to train up our own children. Several of the families in the church were homeschoolers and they were saying, we were all saying to the other guys you know what, it's our responsibility, children are our call.

Deuteronomy 6, Ephesians 6, I mean we're the ones who are supposed to train our

children and so God was bringing that vision into the church at the same time he was taking away the programs...

Low and behold we became a family integrated church and didn't even know that term, that term didn't exist in 1993.... First time I heard family integrated church was in 2003 or 2004. So yeah we were family integrated 10 years before it was even talked about, but we still had some stuff on Wednesday nights and eventually that fell away and we went to home groups. We were still doing some things on Wednesday but then we got rid of those and started doing home groups that are also family integrated.

As the years have gone by Hayden's church has steadily grown from a handful of people to over 200, at one point releasing a sizeable group to go and start a new work in a neighboring community only to have more people replace those who had left almost immediately. Not everyone is looking for a church like Hayden's where there are no programs and entire families sit together for worship, but for Hayden this simplicity is exactly what he is looking for.

Isaac

Isaac is a 20 year veteran pastor at a Southern Baptist Church in a suburban community in North Carolina. Isaac's church is a congregation of less than 100, multi-generational but predominantly Caucasian in its composition a community on the out skirts of an area where the population is rapidly growing and diversifying. He tells of how initially the church was,

A typical traditional Southern Baptist church. The average age, the average members age was about 65 and there were about that many members. So it was a real struggle in those early years to attract any younger families.... And so we just really had to be patient and wait on God to provide for that.... I like to say my first ten years here was a very traditional church with a choir, and Sunday school, and committees and everything; and

then the second ten years, the second decade was during which time I was working on my D. Min. and I did a lot of research into discipleship and in ministry teams and the church grew into a Ministry Team church.... So that served us for about ten years and it kind of grew around my doctoral research and so this was kind of like the lab for that and it really, really did well for about ten years.... And that brings us up to where we are right now and we're again in transition moving more toward a family integrated model... And we've lost people because of that.... So we're pretty low right now and it's, the last year and a half have been the hardest by far of the 20 years that I've been here.

Isaac grew up in the area and completed an undergraduate in biblical studies through a distance learning program before moving away to attend seminary. After seminary he felt the need to return home. Isaac's church was started in 1977 and had four pastors until 1994 when Isaac was hired. His first ten years at the church the average age of the people there was 65 and he struggled to find ways to attract young families to come and stay. Approximately ten years in though, the church began to transform from a traditional model to service model as small groups began to meet and minister together around the community. Now the church is beginning to shift again as Isaac's leadership has grown and changed the way he looks at ministry. These transitions have actually been the most difficult experiences in Isaac's pastoral tenure, causing him to struggle with depression and anger, questioning his efficacy in the ministry; wondering what God is doing and how he is supposed to join Him in that work.

Jessica

Jessica is a 14 year seasoned pastor at an Anglican Church of North America in a small town in Pennsylvania. Jessica's church is a congregation of approximately 40, multi-generational in its composition and predominantly Caucasian, located on the main street of a historic

community. Jessica said that the community, “used to be twice as big as it is, and when the mills closed the local economy tanked and many people had to leave to find work.” The church was started in 1850 as an Episcopal church and in previous generations had a far bigger congregation. Unfortunately, theological conflict and a history of pastoral transition every few years left the church very unstable. As the instability took root, not only did ministry become nonexistent but the physical property began to suffer as well.

I interviewed with the vestry and there were a lot of clues to me that things had been not good here. Three different times people asked me if I was interested in coming here for a year or two to get some experience and then go to a bigger church and I kept saying, “no”.... Well, it turns out, between 1949, when a long-term pastor retired and when I came here in 2000, the average length of stay for a priest had been less than 2 years.... So it was very much a revolving door.... Their self-esteem was in the basement...

When Jessica came to the church, many were not keen on the fact that she was a divorced 53 year old woman, but the fact that she was willing to live in the virtually abandoned parsonage and take on the pastorate, in a bi-vocational capacity quieted the dissension. While this is Jessica’s first pastorate she was far from being unfamiliar with the world of ministry.

Growing up Jessica’s father was a chaplain in World War II and afterwards served in a number of places such as Ohio, Japan, France, North Carolina and Virginia. Additionally he worked with people and churches from a number of different denominational backgrounds as they moved from place to place. In every place watching her mother and father minister side by side, making the necessary sacrifices to meet the needs of the people, left an indelible impression on Jessica. By 16 she was in college and by 19 she had graduated and was teaching elementary school in Louisville KY where her husband was attending a Baptist Seminary.

After two years at the Baptist seminary Jessica's husband switched to the Episcopal Church and shortly after became an army chaplain. During this time Jessica finished her Masters work in counseling and started her MD in Pediatrics. As her residency requirement loomed the prospect of her husband's alcoholism and predatory abusiveness to their children became an issue she could no longer ignore. When she pushed him to get help he abandoned the family and left her as a single mother to raise their two young children. After her residency Jessica took a position as a civilian doctor with the Air Force in Japan. While there she helped with the chaplain services on base and the chaplain encouraged her to consider pursuing ordination in the Episcopal Church.

Returning to the states Jessica found that where she had previously struggled with conservative social norms as a woman, now she was forced to struggle with liberal theological norms as a conservative Biblicist. In the end the Episcopal diocese refused to recommend her for seminary training but through a series of unexpected events she was invited to study in an Anglican Seminary. It was upon completion of her Masters of Divinity she was then recommended to her current church.

Results: Phenomenological Descriptors of Long-Tenure

The interview questions for this research were structured in such a way as to allow for an open dialogue about pastoral ministry, tenure and efficacy (Kakkori, 2009). This allowance resulted in the emergence of two main themes: 1) Fidelity to the Pastoral Call and 2) The Development of Authentic Community. Likewise, each of these can be subdivided. With regard to fidelity to what participants' referred to repeatedly as "the call", descriptors tended to coalesce around the concepts of the pastors' personal journey of faith and the conviction of their role as what Chris referred to as the "agent of transformation". With regard to the development of

authentic community, the descriptors which emerged dealt with the pastors' investment into their peoples' lives and the way they became "rooted down" into their churches and communities through the response of the people to that investment.

Theme One: Fidelity to the Call

Pastoral Calling is quintessentially a Christian phrase. Not that the concept of a calling began with Christianity or even that it is only used by Christians; but in general only those who are familiar with the language of the Christian Faith ever employ the phrase and as such it can appear to be an ambiguous term at first. With regard to pastoral calling its meaning is not entirely all that different from what one would expect; it is the belief that God is inviting or "calling" an individual to join Him in overseeing the church. While there are certainly differences among the various sects of the Christian church regarding how the call is received and affirmed, what remains constant is that a sense of calling generally precedes pastoral ministry. So it came as no surprise that every participant in this study spoke of their calling when asked about why they desired to go into pastoral ministry. Adam put it this way:

I had no other choice. The Lord made it very plain that I was supposed to go in to the pastorate. The first time, I had my degree in mechanical engineering and I was at the end of my junior year and I went home, it was actually Easter vacation and the pastor at my home church said, have you thought about the pastorate? I said no and I don't want to and that settled it. All summer it just kept hounding at me and hounding me and I was like, ok if you get me into seminary, that's pretty significant, I didn't realize it's not real hard to get into most seminaries....

[But] after every church I become unemployed, and so I pursue a new call from nowhere. And the last time before this one, I'm selling cars, and I'm walking around the

parking lot saying, okay Lord, I've been out of the pastorate for two and a half years, if you don't give me someplace by the end of the summer, I'm done. And frankly I wanted to be done, and by Easter I was here. I didn't send any application out, I didn't send anything out, there were no dossiers floating around, there was no phone calls being made, there was nothing, and when that kind stuff is going on that's when you say, "ok, yep, that settles it, you're not allowed any place else this is where the Lord wants you." The Lord won't let me go. I've pumped gas, I've served as a custodian, I've driven a school bus, I have sold cars, I have worked in a warehouse, I have done multiple things and the Lord has never let me stay for it. Every time someone comes knocking and says we would like to have you be our pastor.

Ben's response to the question of why he pursued pastoral ministry was similar.

I was chosen.... My senior year I was converted and I had problems with my family... they pretty much... cut me off.... The women in that church paid for me that senior summer after I graduated to go to camp, Seneca Bible conference... and man it was just a life changing thing to be at Seneca with the different speakers and missionaries and I got to know one of the counselors who was really only a year older than me and he was going where I was going to college and so he got me into inter-varsity.... I found myself more interested in that than my own Education Major and I continued, I did my student teaching, and did well, got an A for my student teaching semester and I even had the job offered to me... [but] I felt so ignorant in the scriptures and I wanted to go to Seminary just to get more grounded so I could be a better teacher and that.

Then I went to the one year Seminary and I thought, you know what, I don't want to go into a room and teach the same subject to kids for 4 classes and do that for the next

30 years and so after we did that, and I did an internship that following summer... and that was it. I just knew I had to do it, I just knew I had to do it I just knew I would not be able to, even though I'm a big advocate for vocation and whatever the guys in this church are finishing carpenters, that God's called them to that and they glorify God in that, and they do, they really live a good Christian life, and others, I believe in that, and I could have been a teacher that serves the Lord, but there was no rest in thinking I was going to do that. In fact there was a time I tried to do it for a Christian School part-time and it just confirmed it, no I got to be in the ministry. I've got to be preaching and teaching.

For Chris it all began when he was around 17 years old and he first felt like God was calling him to full-time vocational ministry.

I wasn't sure what that was and I didn't want to accept that. I'm an introvert by nature.... Ended up going to Ohio for electronics school, made that for six weeks and quit. And then came back to ---, which was home and worked with my dad at a door company he did on the side and then got a job at --- where I worked in the shop and did maintenance.... Did that for five years, loved it but always had that nagging sense that God was calling me into the ministry and it just wouldn't leave and I can remember we were driving down the road one time in my car and that song came on, whatever it takes, I 'm willing to do, I'll trade the sunshine for rain, comfort for pain, and I just started bawling so bad cause I knew I wasn't surrendered and I pulled the car over and just said, "okay", I really need to get serious about this....

At that time I had met my wife to be and she had a call, she thought it was the mission field, turned out to be my support and her own mission and her own work, ministry. So I just always had that nagging sense I couldn't escape God's calling on my

life, it's hard to explain. So probably six months into our marriage we started getting serious you know, this is what God's called us to do we need to get on it, we started looking at different colleges and places to go and we finally landed on one. So I resigned from my full time job she resigned as a full time dental hygienist and we went to Ohio without having jobs without having a place to live. We packed up in a 6x12 U-Haul trailer and the rest is history.

For David, the call took more time.

We grew up, or my mother grew up as Baptist.... I went because my mother told me I had to, my mother drug me to church and it got to a point where I rebelled against that... about 11 or 12 I started smoking, getting drunk and as the years went along it got worse, just it got to a point, just before, the reason God touched my heart, I was so bad into alcohol that... it ruined our life. God allowed us to pull it back together and that's how we ended up here....

We joined the church as parishioners and then my pastor... he came to me on Wednesday night in that little back room, I showed you, it was a nursery, he took me back there and he says, I think God wants you to go into the ministry, with all your background that you have, you can reach so many people because you've experienced that,... and without hesitating, I still remember this like it was yesterday, I said "ok" and so --- got me started in a course of studies and it went from there.... It amazed me how God provided the time, we used to have a lady who came here, she was sweet she was like a second mother to me... her husband had died several years before. Whenever she had a problem she would call and ask me to come up if I could, she would say, "I know you're probably busy doing your studies, but could you help me?" I would always put my

work down and go up to her place, and she would be apologizing to me that, she just didn't have anyone else that she could call and I would say, --- don't worry about it, God will provide the time I need to get the studies done, he's in charge not us.

She was my first real funeral that I really got involved with.... I was the first one out of the funeral home that day... went out to the car and I just cried my heart out and I had a talk with God, and I said, "if it's like this God, if every time I lose somebody and I feel this way, I don't want nothing to do with ministry" He knew my heart, he knew the pain that I was in right at that moment or in that time, and I think God understands.... I actually went to the conference one year... and told them I couldn't finish this course of studies... and they informed me that refused to accept my resignation and I needed to go back and get back into the course of studies and finish my studies....

[Then] right before I took over the pastoral job here, I had psoriasis of the liver, I was dying. I was on a liver transplant list but the last time I was to Rochester to the hospital, the doctor come in and... he says, "I have some bad news and I have some good news." He said, "The bad news, you're not ever going to see us again, the other... something supernatural has happened to you, you have a brand new liver." So at that point I was like "Ok Lord, if this is what it took for you to put me where I needed to be I'll take it."

For Eli it all began at Michigan State University where he was double majoring in Chemical Engineering and Pre-Law:

It was my first year there, I began to grow in my faith and got involved with Campus Crusade and became bored and dissatisfied with my engineering studies, and impatient in one sense.... Meanwhile, I was in the Campus Crusade Action Group, in was in a

navigator Bible study and I was also leading a small group Bible study and that's where I was finding my fulfillment and joy and I was, I just sensed the intellect the Lord had given me was that it was something that I could use for him.... And so I talked to my parents that summer and they allowed me to turn down an engineering scholarship that I received and to change my major to prepare for pastoral ministry. So I switched to Humanities.... The pastor of the reformed church, that I did not go to, I would meet with him periodically with other students even though I didn't go to his church... but I met with him and he strongly urged me not to go right to seminary he said, "You need to get out in a church for a while and experience life like normal people do, college is a protected environment and seminary is even more protected if you're going to minister to real people you need to do that." So, I took his advice, and I worked for two and a half years in regulatory compliance for their medical products division....

I originally went to Seminary thinking I would become a Seminary professor, I thought my gifts were teaching, but --- in Homiletics and Pastoral Theology convinced me of the value of the pulpit ministry and the importance of the local church... Also when I graduated, even though the faculty wanted me to go on for doctoral studies, I was physically exhausted, spiritually exhausted, and financially exhausted, I didn't have money to move to another town to pursue doctoral studies and so I was looking for a call and it took a year and a half, the faculty would have thought I'd been the first one to go, I was at the top of my class in Seminary, but I was actually the last one to get a call, but God was using that time I think to prepare me for here.

Fitz's story began less than 10 miles from where he now pastors.

I grew up not far from here... just 5 or 8 miles, joined the military - I was a mechanic an F-111 crew chief, if you want the fancy name, but I was an airplane mechanic - did that for two years... met my wife and we ended up moving back here. So we had a lot of roots here.... We came back here for work, predominately and because we didn't really have the mindset or ambition at that point to be in full-time ministry. So I came back here, worked with my dad, ended up working in tool and die and did that for five years before really, really feeling the call for full-time ministry....

I always felt some sense of calling you know. I didn't know what that looked like or what it would end up being but from pretty early, early teens, but leaving high school I really didn't see a way forward in that, there was no money, no finances to do that. So my options kind of narrowed down to joining the military or going to work, so I went into the military.... When we got married and moved back here we started working with the teens of this church.... I was working full-time and then doing ministry on top of that.... I was working all through that time period with... an online school through the Assemblies of God and so I was doing my training, doing my classes; there were requirements to eventually be credentialed, licensed and ordained. The A/G [Assemblies of God] breaks it down into three levels. So I got credentialed when I became the senior pastor and just continued on my education... until I was finally ordained.

Likewise Gabriel, who at 14 felt drawn by God, but didn't want to pursue the ministry, spoke of how he went from working at an industrial laundry facility to becoming a pastor:

I grew up in that training world and it was kind of interesting a lot of fun, I learned a lot, a lot of practical application. Learned a lot from some old gruffly guys and that just kind of developed and they took an interest in me and just started training me in different areas

of the company and I grew from that and moved into, graduated from high school, I was clearing like \$410 a week and going to high school full time and so you know it was great but it created a love for money and a realization that I could make more money doing that and so I quickly advanced from there and was able to move up through the ranks. I did technical training; I did all kinds of training, things I had to be certified for to be eligible to serve at that capacity... it was actual Technical School training and it was paid for by the company and it was all part of that game plan and so it was pretty cool, very neat, very focused. I just continued to advance to General Manager, actually number one in the company but there was an owner above me.... But then there was that experience at the Brownsville revival when I was 23 that just continued to develop and just a stronger sense of God's presence and then it was like a responsibility of, okay when are you going to do it, not if, not can you, not will you think about it, it was like okay, there is an appointed day and appointed time and it's time for you to get yourself in gear.

That's kind of what I remember feeling or thinking or it seems like, those are the kinds of conversations I started having with my wife. It wasn't honey I really need to do this, it was like, ok our plans have to be, I don't know when or how, but our plans have to start to move towards this.... It was like I couldn't not do it.... But it was still hard, it was terrible, my pride, my satisfaction of accomplishing what I was accomplishing and being able to be rewarded at that level and you know I went through a time it was almost like a withdraw, cause in the world when you've got a good job like that and you can make money, you can do something to make more money, the more you perform the more you make and I haven't seen that in ministry, not at all. So I had to change; I had to change my thinking about money and I still do it.

For Hayden it began when he was 15 at what he referred to as an “old fashioned revival meeting”.

God chose me.... I was in a revival meeting in my Southern Baptist church... and a man was there, I don't remember his name and I really don't remember anything he said but I knew that night that God was putting his finger on my life and saying I want you to follow me and be a pastor. So from that point forward that was kind of the direction. I took a little bit of a left turn when I was in college kind of went the prodigal, you know far, far country for a little while but it was always in the back of my mind that God had called me.... So I was working on a master's degree in communications finishing that up, she [Hayden's future wife] typed my thesis for me actually I paid her for it, so yeah at that point until I met her I was thinking about getting a Ph.D. and teaching college, but when I met her I realized, the Lord reminded me of who I was and what he had called me to do.

So I started coming to --- with her because that's where she's from, from --- we'd drive up here every Sunday and go to her church. And I really liked her pastor; I'd never heard anybody teach the Bible like he taught the Bible and so was really intrigued by that so we got to know each other. He really liked me so about a year later he asked me to consider starting a youth ministry that would not be a youth ministry to the church but kind of a youth ministry to the community.... So we started this youth ministry and we did that for two years... for two years basically I was an evangelist and preaching all over the place and it was during those two years that God really began to give me a desire to be in one place with one group of people to help them to grow in their faith and grow myself in my faith...

When asked about why he went into ministry Isaac replied,

Why did I choose to become a pastor? Basically short answer was God called me....

When I got out of high school in '84 I went to community college. I got a business degree, an associates in business... from '84 until 1990 I was working shift work at a local factory. Living at home and saving money, spending some but saving some and that's how I basically paid my way through Seminary....

In my 20's I began to sense an internal calling and I wasn't sure what God wanted me to do, it just grew and I started preparing and was already serving the Lord at the local church I grew up in and doors continued to open and I began to pursue preparation and education and even in Seminary I wasn't sure what area of the ministry I was going to go into but God led me into the pastorate.... My pastor he first directed me to ---, and this was back in the early '80's, he first directed me, no I'm sorry the mid '80's, to the --- Home Bible Institute because he had gone through it as well, and just to get a foundation on Bible knowledge and basic doctrine....

When I completed my Bachelors I felt a need to have more and that's when I moved to ---. In my last year at Seminary I began to send out resumes in this area. I felt called back to this area and I would, some churches would have me come and do a trial sermon and this church called me for that and then called me upon my graduation in spring, called me to be an interim. I guess since this is my first church and I had not pastored they wanted to try me out to begin with. It was probably good idea and so my wife and I graduated in May of 1994, got married in July and I started pastoring full-time here in September of '94.

Jessica perhaps had the longest road to the realization of her calling.

I couldn't not do it. I had felt a call back when I was a teenager, but it was very confusing because at that point women were not ordained in the Episcopal Church. So, I wasn't quite sure what to do with it.... In college I met my future husband and I wondered if part of it was, if my call was to be a pastor's wife, because my parents had worked together in ministry, my mother never had a formal title in church.... We moved back to Florida and we were in Florida for three or four years... before he made the decision to go into the military....

There had been problems with the marriage from relatively early on, he was reared by, in a broken home by alcoholics and I see now from, you know, the perspective, that he does not know how to sustain a relationship.... So there were difficulties from the word go. Which got worse when we had a child.... So medical school was not the cause of our divorce but the occasion of it. It's one of those things where I looked at it and I said, I can't do this and also I did not feel safe leaving the boys alone with him.... So it was one of those things where I had to look at the whole picture and say, how much of a marriage is this, and I have to keep my children safe.... I went to Medical School and then wound up doing my residency at the Mayo Clinic in MN, in Pediatrics and then as a volunteer went into the Air Force....

So I served as a volunteer in the Air Force for a little over three years in Okinawa Japan. While I was there, there was no Episcopal Chaplain on base, but there was a church a church of the Nipon-Saku-Hi, which means Japanese Catholic Church, but it is part of the Anglican Communion.... Right before I left there to come back to the United States... we got a new priest in.... He said, after he had been there for about a week, "Jessica why aren't you ordained?" It was like, oh man, now I have to deal with this issue

again. It wasn't two weeks later that someone else in a completely different setting said, "Jessica you ought to be ordained, you should be a priest." I came back to the United States, moved to Virginia again, Norfolk, just happened to be the case, worked for a private practice there for about three years. Found an Episcopal church close by... and within a few months had a new priest and within a month he said, Jessica you ought to be ordained, you know when one person says it, it's their opinion, when three people say it, you start saying, ok God do I need to deal with this....

So I went through the pre-ordination process in the dioceses of Southern Virginia, which is where I was living.... At the end of the process there was a final interview.... The thing that got me was when they asked me, if I thought that homosexuality was an acceptable alternative Christian lifestyle, and I said, "No I think scripture is clear on that," and that was the kiss of death, and I knew it. They sent me away to discuss and then they brought me back and offered me the opportunity to go to eight group therapy sessions to change my un-Christian attitude towards homosexuality....

I had served on the board of the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer, previously, and maybe was still on the board then, so we went to this conference and the speaker was the President of the seminary.... Several people spoke to him and said, you should talk to Jessica about going to seminary she was turned down by Southern Virginia, because she's too conservative, she's too orthodox.... So, I came here that was in January or so, I came here in March for their visitors' day, or visitors weekend, and admittance interview and was accepted and moved here in August and started seminary.

What was a surprise was that when participants were asked about how they survived the adversity of ministry, each participant, in one form or another, spoke of being anchored by this same calling. Fitz comment summed up the sentiment well:

There have been plenty of times that I've wanted out of the ministry not just out of this church... there are far easier ways to make a living. You know, unless you feel called specifically into the ministry I just can't even recommend it because there's going to be, it's got to come from much deeper than your desires, out of a deeper place than your will. So that's what's kept us.... Everything boils down to calling for me and I think if God would move you out of a situation or call you into something else then length of tenure has nothing to do with anything, if you're feeling that God is moving you.... Personally that's my conviction.... The right tenure, it's just the calling.

I could see where for instance, if someone was called and gifted and all that to start churches it would totally make sense for a pastor to start a church, get it up, get it running, and hand it off to someone who has the gifts that are more pastoral more than evangelist or you know, whatever term you want to put on that but a church planter might not be the long-tenured pastor. It just depends on what the Lord has planned for them.... Look at the apostle Paul, well he didn't pastor a church, but he planted many, many churches and he gave oversight to that and to a degree he was a pastor, he was a spiritual father but you think of you know, Moses, Joshua, those guys were in for the long haul and so what's the Lord got for you?

As such I chose the phase fidelity because it most accurately sums up the full breadth of the participants' experiences.

Fidelity is defined by Oxford “faithfulness to a person, cause, or belief, demonstrated by continuing loyalty and support” (Fidelity, 2015, Def.1). So for the pastor they are called to a person - Jesus Christ, and to a cause - the work of the church. In this context demonstrated loyalty is a key part of the definition because participants’ descriptions of their experience of long-tenure did not consist of an intuitive or romantic conceptualization of their “calling”, but rather one that asked them to commit to a specific way of thinking about themselves and their work. This is what produced the journey of faith and the philosophy of ministry which Chris identified as being “an agent of transformation”.

The Pastor’s Faith Journey. For the purpose of this research, faith has been understood predominately through the lens of the Apostles’ Creed (Appendix B) as the essence of what participants believe. For the participants this belief has led to a life of servant leadership in pastoral ministry, a desire for personal authenticity and focus on the work of Christ (Baxter, 1974). The full scope of that life is the journey of faith which here identifies the first of the two subsets of the theme of fidelity to the call. It is, as Ben put it, “easier to see God’s Hand in retrospect” and as such recognize how everything has worked together to bring about the current result. Likewise Chris said, “At times you don’t know why things are happening and then you’re able to go back and say, oh that’s how that worked.” Furthermore Isaac asserted that, “at the end of the day we have to trust in God’s sovereignty over the church” and David also that, “things happen that we will never understand until we get to heaven and then it won’t matter anyway, we always have those things that we wonder about but know that God’s in control.” Three of the things which the participants saw clearly within the context of their faith journey were the influence of mentors, experiences of adversity, and the awareness of their own needs.

Mentorship. Mentorship has already been identified as an important facet of preparing pastors for the ministry (Wind & Wood, 2009). As such it came as no surprise to hear each participant reported some kind of mentor relationship in their life who helped them understand the ministry. For some this mentor was a pastor, for others a professor, and in the case of Jessica her most influential mentors were her own father and mother. At one point she remarked that when contemplating decisions to be made she would “wonder what dad would do...” Similarly, when David described his time in the Evangelical Methodist’s course of study he said that what attracted him to it the most was the “sense of family” which resulted from the care and interest shown by the older pastors. In the case of Fitz his mentor was the founding pastor of his church who took him under his wing early on and encouraged him to obtain his certification through the Assembly of God’s distance education program so that he could become the pastor there. For Isaac there was the example of his childhood pastor and his parents.

My pastor, who actually led me to Christ when I was about seven years old, he’s still pastoring the same church. He started pastoring there in 1972 when I was six years old and so ’72 to ’14, 42 years. He’s still pastoring there... My parents are, let’s see they got married in ’64 so I guess they recently, no I’m sorry they got married in ’62 so they’ve been married 52 years.

Furthermore He has continued to seek out mentoring relationships, having connected with fellow study participant Hayden some time ago.

I found that in those earlier years, the first 15 years or so, when I was meeting so regularly with my traditional Southern Baptist pastors, we’d meet every week for prayer... so much of the time spent with those pastors was a brag session, and if you had a good Sunday then you bragged and you know it really wasn’t an encouraging

situation.... It had become very competitive in a bad way... and so that's some of the, but I haven't found any of that with my relationship with Hayden.

We started meeting and I basically said you know what.... You got 20 something's who are serving the Lord... and now I'm facing teenage years and I want to learn and so I basically met with him and I think this is hard for pastors to do, I basically placed myself under him as a learner, because a lot of time as pastors we don't think anybody can teach us, we don't think any other pastor can teach us anything you know what I'm saying. So I just, and I learned a lot and as I've met him and other pastors who are a little bit outside of my traditional box it's been refreshing.

In each case the mentor helped to shape the participant's thinking about what it means to be a pastor and to do the work of pastoral ministry.

Overcoming Adversity. Each of the participants in this study relayed stories of adversity and personal tragedy which helped to shape their understanding of themselves and their calling. For Gabriel there was his need to come to grips with being a workaholic and the damage that did to his family as well as his wife's struggle with cancer. For Jessica there was a divorce, medical problems, a life time of negative gender bias and when she finally began training for the ministry she was ridiculed for believing the bible. One such example Jessica gave of this was her time doing Clinical Pastoral Education.

I picked it deliberately because part of it is to get people comfortable in the hospital setting... I'm real comfortable in the hospital setting, having spent many years there. And I tended to work with children and young families, and so I deliberately chose a retirement community to have the experience of working with the other end of the age

spectrum. And you do some ministry and they talk about it to the residents, visiting, if you happen to believe in that sort of thing, praying or reading scripture.

Sadly of the people I was with, they thought I was just a real throwback because they were very liberal. Three of them bragged that they had gotten out of seminary or they were getting out of seminary without studying any Old Testament because, said they, that's so worthless that applied to those people back then, if God were writing a book for us now it would be entirely different. So very liberal, gave me grief for saying grace.... Things got only weirder....

At the end, the last time we were supposed to talk about what we had learned... And I said... "I've had it reaffirmed for me... that God is trustworthy.... I came, I went to seminary with the intention of paying for my schooling with the income from selling my house in Virginia.... I didn't have that money. So I've been working part-time for a medical practice, I've been working Saturdays and I've been living on that, and it comes to about \$750 a month before taxes are taken out. So I didn't have money saved to cover this summer, and my meals are taken care of pretty much, here, and so on and so on, twice during the summer my checkbook has gotten down to less than \$100 and I still have to pay my utility bills and so on back in ---, and so all I could do was say, okay Lord you know my need and I trust you to meet it.

Once I got a check in the mail, it was forwarded over from a teenager that I had lent money to back when I was living in Virginia, I figured I would never see it again, and here was a check, and thank you for helping me when I needed it. Then when it happened again just a couple of weeks ago, when I got a letter from my insurance company saying we were reviewing, auditing last year's insurance things and we

discovered you overpaid, you were overcharged last year so here is a check in refund. So the faithfulness of God, that he's trustworthy."

Well they were appalled. They were appalled on several things. One, that this one guy said, "You mean you think God is involved in your puny little life?" And I said, "Yes! How about the place in scripture where it says the hairs on your head are numbered and not a single sparrow falls, yes, yes I do think that." And then one of the others said, "How did you dare come here not knowing that you had enough money?" And I said, "I feel He has called me to this you know and so he's trustworthy, he's proven himself trustworthy before. And so I trusted him to take care of me."

For Chris there was a struggle for he and his wife to even find the finances to attend Bible College followed by a short and conflict ridden first senior pastorate.

We both liked our jobs, but we weren't at peace with where we were at. There was this nagging emptiness that we weren't doing what we were supposed to be doing. So we both made the commitment to quit our jobs... and they had promised us a trailer on campus but when we got there that trailer wasn't there so they said if you wanted a place to stay we have this trailer, but it's in bad shape.... We got there a month before school started and so I spent that month... I just remodeled the whole inside of the trailer.... At Christmas, we got bills that are stacking up, really just burdened. I didn't think we could do this and I remember sitting in my parents living room just weeping that we didn't know how we're going to make ends meet what's going to happen and my dad said, we'll pay for your bills don't worry about it until you get a job. And I said, that's great but we're not going to accept that, if God called us into this he's going to provide for us without you having to support your adult children.

And so we went back to college and within 2 days, the church that we were attending offered me the associate pastor position and my wife got a full time job and that was just more affirmation that this was what God wants us to do. So we did that for 4 years and... that kind of stuff, even though it happened so long ago when you recall it, it's like yesterday.... I would like to tell you that I never doubted God again from that point on but that didn't happen, it really though, it was, it remains one of those events in my life that hey God was faithful when it looked like it was impossible and no matter what I'm going through I can trust him.

Nine of the ten participants in this study had a background in non-ministry work at some point prior to their pastorate with Jessica and David both working bi-vocationally for part of their tenure. Additionally, five out of the ten participants told of significant experiences with church conflict prior to becoming pastors with each participant describing some kind of struggle to get into the good years of their ministry. Eli spoke of several conflicts at the beginning, with one of the worst being the fallout of a marriage between a deacon in the church and the church treasurer.

I was only here three weeks and the female treasurer of the church showed up at my home crying about a horrible marriage relationship with her husband who was a deacon and the president of our board of trustees, telling me this horrible marriage relationship, none of which had been told to me when we came. So she was not able to function as the treasurer, she would sometimes delay two or three months before making deposits, she hadn't balanced the checkbook in over a year, but if we took the treasurer-ship away from her, her husband would have used it to emotionally bludgeon her, so it took us three months to figure out a way for her to resign and give it up. So on one Saturday at the end

of August, the chairman of the deacons and I sat down with the checkbook and balanced it, before I came they had \$15,000 in Savings and \$15,000 in Checking, that was a year prior, then they basically didn't have a pastor for nine months so you'd think they would have been probably in the money, well we looked at the books, payday was two days later on Monday, and we had \$17 in the Checking account. Now we still had \$15,000 in Savings, but she just had not been paying attention and because of her emotional struggles at home.

Things came to a head when he pushed her down the stairs of his office, told her to get out, his female business manager was his best friend, he was married, she was married, but it was nothing wrong with having a female best friend who wasn't his wife and it was all his wife's fault because she wasn't meeting his needs. If she would just clean up her act, he would clean up his act... that December our session filed charges and sent them by mail to him, he got so mad he actually cleaned up his act and pretended that he was changing for about three months.

And so we backed off of the charges based on his commitment that he was going to try and work on his marriage, that he was going to be involved in church, and he was just setting it up so that in May one day she was at work... so he got some of his employees to come over and he took all the furniture he wanted and moved out to another apartment, called his credit card company said that he and his wife were divorced and to cancel her cards, which they were not divorced. So we charged him with contumacy, well we charged him with abandoning his family and he, at that point he was just ignoring us. We did make a public announcement that he was suspended from the sacraments, and the whole church stood behind the session. He was our biggest or second largest financial

backer, but from the time that he was suspended from the church through the rest of the year our giving was consistent month after month.

Furthermore while long-tenure was an intentional choice for some, other participants relayed that there were times when feelings of doubt, depression and anger plagued them. Chris relayed how, after seven years of pastoring the church, the congregation voted against something he believed to be the will of God and it took him back personally.

I actually had the selfish thought, “Hey I’ve been here so long you guys are still treating me this way, come on.” I didn’t voice that, I voiced that to other pastors you know, and they said, “Yeah what’s the deal”.... I didn’t like it, it ticked me off but I had to treat people with respect and forgive and it’s turned out good you know. And I kept reminding myself there’s people in this church that don’t always get their own way and they’re pretty gracious about it and I need to be the same way as a leader.

Isaac spoke of how,

This year, I have with the people that have left over the last year, year and a half, this year as I’ve said has been the hardest for me and I am trying to, I am right now I am trying to come out of depression right now, okay, and burn out. It’s kind of like when, through the years when you’d lose a family here or there it’s just typical church life but when you’ve given yourself to something and to people for so long and then to see a significant number of them to leave over a short period of time, it’s hard not to take personal. And so I’ve been struggling with forgiveness and because and also for me anyway when that happens I tend to withdraw and pull into the own little cell, my own shell or what have you okay. And I realize that that’s you know, some people say yes

that's normal, yeah but it's also selfish because we are called not to, you know we are called to love God to love others and it's hard to do that in a shell.

So the Holy Spirit is leading me out of that right now. So to answer your question this has been the first year, the first time in 20 years that I have entertained the thought, well maybe it's time to move on.... I do have a, I still have a burden for this church it's just that the personal struggles are basically holding me back right now. So I'm waiting on the Lord and just, and serving him and seeking him right now and that's basically what you have to do through a transition. I don't believe in just running out and doing anything rash, but I want to be in God's will so that's where I am right now, in the biggest struggle of my tenure here.

As Hayden put it,

That's the thing I tell young guys who think they want to be a pastor. I say you know you make sure that this is a calling. If it's a calling of God then you can go through anything if it's not a calling then you can't get through anything, you'll bail on the first difficult trial. The pastor that I had when I was 15 and when I first felt God calling me into the ministry kind of disciplined me for a few years and I'll never forget when I told him you know I think I'm going to be a pastor, he said, "Well Hayden here's my advice, if you can do anything else do it. If you can do anything else do it." And what he meant by that was don't be a pastor because that's a raw deal. What he meant was if you can you know if you can put yourself in any other position then you're really not called. You know if you can be happy if you can be satisfied doing anything other than being a pastor then you're really not called. If it's just a career choice; let's see I could be a librarian, or I could be a fireman, or I could be a pastor, then hmmm, it's really not a calling. So for me

there's never been a choice I've stayed here because that's where God has set me down...
the best place for ministry is where God has set you down.

In line with the conclusions of previously discussed research (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Francis, et. al., 2010), these struggles played out in the lives of the participants in this study to their benefit; refining them and giving them a strong sense of self-awareness.

Self-Awareness. A humble self-awareness marked all participants in this study, an important correlation with previous research by Barnard and Curry (2012). Each one in their own way recognized that while they were gifted to do the work of the pastorate, they also had a need for continued spiritual and personal growth. So even though each one was in a place of high authority, they also welcomed the stimulation and accountability that came with voluntarily submitting themselves to others whom they trusted to keep them on track. As Hayden put it,

If I had been the solo pastor all by myself with no other men to help me in the Word and to encourage me during those really dark times.... I don't know if I would have continued. I mean I know God's called me and I said earlier, I can't do anything else but at the same time it was those other brothers who stood with me.... Surrounded by those other elders who were with me... I attribute it to that, the Holy Spirit's grace and mercy to me to help me to grow up and then the presence of other godly men who have been there to encourage me, walk with me and help lead.

Likewise, Gabriel spoke of how "temptation is too easy to fall into when you try to do this on your own." Additionally, all of the participants intentionally pursued continuing education, three of them earning terminal degrees in ministry, the rest choosing to learn informally through peer-based cohort groups.

In addition to the accountability of being under authority, each participant spoke of the ongoing work of developing the leadership skills necessary for working with people; a combination of what Burns et al. (2013) refer to the values of cultural and emotional intelligence; and leadership and management skills. Adam spoke of how early on he thought that leadership meant “getting my own way”, and how that led to a lot of issues which were not resolved till he adopted a “servant-leadership” approach. Ben referred to how the elders at his church had helped him curb his tendencies to be a “micromanager” and encouraged him to “practice giving responsibility away” and “allowing others to lead.” Chris spoke of how early on he tried to learn better leadership skills from a business perspective but found that too often the “time management approach did not work because it made people into interruptions.” Isaac spoke of how,

Emerging cultural realities necessitate new tools and new skills to use those tools... So after 10 years here I realized that I could not take the church anywhere else unless I got some new tools. So after 10 years that’s the reason I entered the D. Min. Program. I basically received what I received in the M. Div. and I could not take the church, I was strong in theology and Biblical exegesis, which I got a lot of at Seminary. I was very weak in leadership and discipleship and administrative areas. So when I went back to do my doctorate, it was to attack my weaknesses. Because after 10 years I was well aware of what my weaknesses were.

Ben asserted that he had observed too many pastors coast out their time as they closed in on retirement and he wanted to do whatever it took to avoid that for himself.

The reason I did my D. Min. is that I just saw so many guys my age start to coast at the end and start to live off their own little library and don’t have to engage and don’t have

to, I've always kept involved with reform, a form of a pastor's group that would study and pray together and sharpen one another and still do that. So I thought I want to still learn some things so I might as well do the D. Min.

Likewise, Jessica and Gabriel, even with their proven track records of successful leadership in non-ministry enterprises, spoke of how they intentionally pursued growth in this area. At one point while Jessica was talking about her preference for collaborative leadership in the church and she commented that, "you get to the point that you realize you don't have all the answers and that's when you begin to value shared ideas."

Finally, as a part of their self-awareness each one recognized their need to live within the margins, in order to honor God with their time, finances, bodies and family; what Burns et al. (2013) refer to as the values of self-care and marriage and family care. As Ben put it, "family must always come first, take care of them and take care of yourself or you won't be able to take care of anyone else." Adam spoke of how the tipping point for him came when,

We were going to a church revitalization conference, we had signed up for it and they had 10 pastors that had come down to spend a weekend. Spent three days together just to see okay is this the group of men we want to work with. Everyone was passed except me and they said to me "your temper is too strong, you need to get some counseling before you are even touching this." So I went to a counselor in Philadelphia every other week drove to Philadelphia for two hours. It really helped me, it helped me get a handle on grace, a handle on just who I am, that began to change my marriage. Before that I was breaking my wife's heart and since then I've changed that around and we now have a real marriage.

Similarly Chris noted that, with regard to his family, the ministry was “their ministry” and that “the church will only be healthy if the family is healthy”. Fitz also stated that, “My family is planted here... my kids, this is the only place they’ve known, they’ve gone to the same school, they have the same friends and we’ve valued that over the years.” Perhaps this is why Eli stressed that all decision making about one’s activity in the pastorate “needs to consider the impact on your family”. For Ben long-tenure is not only enhanced by focusing on the family but it also cultivates family health.

I see guys that bounce, well I mean maybe God is calling them I don’t think everybody is going to be long-term, but I see them, the kids are five years in this school and then five years in that school. Even if they’re home schooling them, they’re five years in this church with these kids, they’re five years in a church with those kids and they never really have the opportunity to put roots down in a community... and also knowing that people are sensitive to your family needs and you have support, you have a support group here that, you might not want to run away from that.

For Hayden even the very organizational structure of the church is about protecting his family, as he put it, “being a family integrated church eased the stress on my family because we were able to focus on being a family in community with other families rather than trying to manage a bunch of programs.”

An Agent of Transformation. In the mid to late 20th century Stanford professor Mischel (Mischel, Ebbesen & Raskoff, 1972) developed the marshmallow test which showed that children will choose delayed gratification if they know there is a greater reward on the other side of that choice. Interestingly this study produced further studies which showed that children who were able to wait longer for the preferred rewards tended to have better life outcomes as

measured by SAT scores (Mischel, Shoda & Rodriguez, 1989), educational attainment (Ayduk, Mendoza-Denton, Mischel, Downey, Peake & Rodriguez, 2000), body mass index (Schlam, Wilson, Shoda, Mischel & Ayduk, 2013) as well as resistance to addiction (Casey, Somerville, Gotlib, Ayduk, Franklin, Askren, Jonides, Berman, Wilson, Teslovich, Glover, Zayas, Mischel & Shoda, 2011). Each of the participants in this study understood fidelity to their calling within a similar frame work of delayed gratification, choosing to persevere in adversity because they believed they were called to more. They recognized that, in the words of Chris, they were meant to be “agents of transformation”.

No matter what I was called to be a change agent.... I believe we all are, but, I believe it depends on your situation, what that transformation is going to look like.... Yeah but to be honest with you I didn't know what the culture was when I got here. I learned that after I got here, you know, one of the first things I did when I got here was I grabbed any annual reports I could find, studied them, I listened to the older folks stories, I would spend time listening, um, I just dug anything I could dig in to, the history of this church, I learned it, and that helped me understand where they were at, at that present time.

For every participant their calling to pastor the church was more than just the conducting religious services; it was about developing the community of faith. They did not see themselves as being there just solving problems, but to cultivate life. As Jessica put it, “it is a powerful thing to be connected to the universal church through prayer and the word... what I have experienced I want them to experience.” The philosophical underpinning of this agency of transformation was expressed most thoroughly in the comparison of pastoral ministry and marriage.

When asked to describe his understanding of long-tenure, Eli spoke of how pastoral ministry like marriage is a choice.

A long tenure is a long time relationship; and for me, I don't think it's inherent in the word tenure, but it's also a long-term commitment. I have always viewed church membership as being like a marriage that it's a commitment made before God, and I view the pastorate as a similar type of commitment and so I don't think church membership should be taken lightly and people, because whenever somebody leaves it's like a divorce, there's always pain.... You choose to get married and normal people don't get married thinking they'll just get a divorce if they don't like the arrangement anymore... so I think like a marriage you hang in there and work out your problems.... Divorce is a weighty thing; separation hurts everybody involved... this is not a profession where you just change jobs, if you leave a church you devastate people... not only in your church, but your own family as well.

To this end, Eli relayed how his family had chosen to “settle in” by buying a house and investing in the community by “doing business with local people”. What is more Eli relayed how:

My session is very committed, was very committed to the church and very committed to the Lord, and very committed to me. They were very supportive of me, and accommodating when I was new out of Seminary. They gave me room to grow, but they were also appreciative and supportive and each individual elder had their own flaws and weakness but I knew what I had. Twice I was asked to go, to put my name in at First Reformed. The first time it was a school issue with my kids, I just didn't feel I could move them and the second time I just felt there was more work here to do. You know while it was a bigger church, and more prominent pulpit, none-the-less there was work here for me to do, we had just started our prison ministry and I felt that, I know what I have here, they still want me, there's still work, I would like to stay.

Similarly Fitz said that one of the keys to making it past the early conflict he experienced into the good years of ministry was that he had “out lived and outlasted everyone who was upset...” and he did so because he had “chosen to be content”

We never felt the call change... we asked the Lord, we didn't go looking but we asked, and He didn't released us so we stayed and here we are.... But it took five to seven years to even to do anything here, so if we would have bailed out at five or seven we would have left without having experienced the good part of it... it took nine years to get to the good stuff.”

Isaac likewise stated that, “feelings can't be the basis for decisions... you have to wait on God for everything.” Adam put it this way:

I'm here for the people. I'm here to love the people. I'm here to serve the people. I'm not here for my job. I'm not here to get something from it. I made a decision when I left mechanical engineering that I am not here for the pay. If I was in for the pay I'd go the other way. And so I'm here just to love the people....

You don't know people until you've known them for a very long time.... I wish pastors realized when they've been there five years they've not been there. I wish I would have realized that.... When you're dealing with an 85/86 year old man it's going to take you longer to get to know him than it's going to take you to get to know someone who's 30... for the young guy if they've known you five years you've known them for a quarter of their life or 20% of their life. You talk to an 80 year-old; they've known you for 10%.

You're a newbie still.... So I'm in for the long haul.

Jessica spoke of how in relationships we either choose ourselves or we choose the other person. Having seen the destruction of selfishness first hand with her ex-husband and with her

background in pediatrics, she framed this same sentiment in the words of the Hippocratic Oath (National Library of Medicine, 2012) stating that she was committed to “do no harm.” Jessica further explained her perspective saying:

Issues of significance require a long term view of leadership.... There had been such a series of short time people that there was a power vacuum, and nature abhors a vacuum, and so several people had sort of stepped into that... there had been some unhealthy power things and it was interesting because my older son said, after I had been here five or six years, “Mom you need to go or they’re going to get so fixated on you and how you do things that it’s going to be hard for the next pastor.” And I said, “In some ways I would say yes”, but... “I feel as if I’m a splint on a broken leg and it’s healing now, and it hadn’t healed in years, and it’s healing now and if I leave too soon if the splint gets off too soon, you re-brake the leg and it will be even harder healing again”.

Hayden said that “the first 10-15 years I was trying to figure out what I was doing”. As such he spoke of how he encourages young men who are in ministry.

I would encourage guys, say, “hey hang in there”, especially if you’re a young pastor just starting out you know you’re 25 just coming out of Seminary you don’t know what you’re doing. No way that you know what you’re doing and you’re not going to know what you’re doing for many years.... If you want to see these people grow and mature than you have to grow and mature along with them and that it just takes time.

Likewise when Chris reflected on the lessons learned from the closing of his grandmother’s church he made the observation that those pastors that had “successful ministries” were there for “10 years or more”, but towards the end the average tenure was “four to five years at the most”

Summary. In what may perhaps most clearly illustrate the link found in this research between a pastor's faith journey and their philosophy of transformational agency as the connective tissue in the fidelity to their pastoral calling, a recent study by researchers at the University of Rochester (Kidd, Palmeri & Aslin, 2013) revisited Mischel's marshmallow test with a new factor reminiscent of Bandura (1986) added in. Children were divided into two groups with the one given a broken promise prior to the administration of the test and the other given a fulfilled promise prior to the administration of the test. The outcome showed that the latter group was able to wait up to four times longer than the former group. This seems to indicate that where relationship with one who promises future reward is healthy, there is a greater chance of the child making a choice to delay gratification. For the participants in this study it was likewise their individual journeys' of faith which framed their understanding of pastoral ministry and their philosophy of that ministry as an agent of transformation. This in turn caused them to looking beyond disappointment, adversity and even self-doubt; instead setting their eyes on the hope of the promise of authentic community.

Theme Two: Authenticity in Community

When asked to describe their understanding of how their tenure impacted their efficacy in ministry, participants returned to their understanding of the nature and implications of their pastoral calling to help them articulate their definitions of ministry itself. As such although each pastor had different approaches to the work of the ministry, they all shared the same core values. Eschewing such standards as finances, facilities and attendance; every single participant spoke of the primary litmus test for efficacy as being the existence of healthy relationships in the church. This is not to say that they were unconcerned with numbers, but that success had to be framed properly. As Gabriel put it,

Success is more than just counting heads.... I care about numbers because every person matters to God so every person should matter to me... if we aren't going to care about reaching those people God cares about then we shouldn't be here.... I feel like we've gone deep and wide. There was a point and time, in the quick growth process - we're still growing and we still want to grow, but - I think we were going too wide and so we needed to go a little deeper... it's cool to manage a building, cool to have a cool vision, it's fun to have the newest building in town or to have a church that's full. It feels good, it talks good, it presents well in the community but that wears out too, so there has to be something more. I'm very convinced that it's the something more that carries through.

For Fitz, growing his congregation past 100 may never happen due to parking issues but he is convinced that this does not mean that the church cannot be vibrant so long as there is always "fresh vision". Likewise, as Isaac points out, "the church can't be allowed to only be a weekly meeting or a bunch of programs housing people run by a group of burned out volunteers... the church has to be an actual community." These kinds of vibrant relationships which produce authentic community grow out of the transformational ministry of the pastor as they invest in their people, over time becoming rooted down into their churches and communities, as people respond to that investment.

Making an Investment. The idea that leadership is not a right but something one must earn has been repeated so often that it is practically a cliché (Burns et al., 2013), and yet it is exactly the lived experience of every participant in this study. Each of the participants articulated that earning the right to lead meant earning the trust of the congregation, and that that trust was not earned quickly or easily. Rather trust was earned by investing themselves in the

lives of their people. In this vein Fitz spoke of how there is a tradeoff between the thrill of the new and the stability of the known.

I think that trust from that length of time is a contributing factor. People know what you're going to do, I guess you know, I assume that there would be an early excitement to a new pastor. Just to get on board because of the thrill of something new, but I think the other side of that is that there's excitement but not necessarily trust. If you've been there long enough, you've worked together long enough you know there's a friendship there, there's trust, there's relationship.

Isaac also asserted, "For a pastor to lead a people there has to be a level of trust and there has to be a depth of relationship for real leadership to occur."

Speaking specifically to this issue Jessica said that it took her approximately five years of investing in the lives of the people in the church to break through what she termed "the Labor verses Management dilemma... you see until then it was us against them... which makes the pastor the enemy." Recognizing this union mentality existed in her church so as to incline the people to be wary of her at best and hostile at worst, Jessica committed herself to becoming "intertwined in the lives of these people and intertwined in the lives of their families." In considering the impact of her tenure she said,

there was resistance to my coming, but over the years, over the years of me being here, there is not a family in the parish except the newest one who has been coming for three months, that I haven't visited one of them in the hospital, done a funeral for a relative, been with them while they were waiting to hear new about a biopsy, or this, or that, or the other, I am now entwined in the lives of these people. I'll, someday I will move away

and I'm sure my neighbors next door won't, but they'll remember that I'm the one who met with their kids, prepared them for baptism, and baptized them.

Similarly, Adam spoke of how he had to lose control in order to gain control because the church needed to see his willingness to put them before his plans. As he put it,

When I came in here there was a very strong... elder/deacon and it was his way or the highway. And I just, he just was making some arbitrary things that I didn't think was helpful and he and I frequently clashed, often times with a fair amount of volatility... the little conversation I finally had with him was, "You and I are like two rams butting heads. The point when two rams or two deer butt heads is that one is trying to impose their rule on the other. One wants to chase the other one out." I said to him, this was a session meeting our board meeting and I said, "I'm done. I'm bowing I'm hitting my knees, you win, I am done with butting horns there is no more boom, it's over you win every time. I give up, not quitting; it's just your way."

That was a very, very difficult meeting for him... he didn't know how to deal with that, that's a pretty graphic presentation... and there were some other things brought up in the meeting and it was very difficult... but I should have done that a long time before. I just realized it was not Christ like and it was time for me to be the servant, it was time for me to lay down my life, it was time for me to say hey I give up it's you Lord. You take care of this. That really that transformed the relationship I had with him, that transformed in a large way the church.... In many ways this church is healthier than it's ever been. In many ways this church is more vital, has more future than it ever has.

Participants predominantly framed the experience of investing in their congregations in terms of loving their people and of acting as the conduit of God's love through a ministry of presence.

Falling in Love. For the participants in the study, authentic community began with authentic compassion. David summed it up with one phrase, “fall in love with your people... love grows with time as you get to know your people... listen to them... love them... put them first.” Adam described it this way,

I come to the congregation, here I am, this is who I am, and I know who you are and I’m going to love you, and what I mean by that is I’m going to seek your best again and again and again...

Ben similarly asserted that he was convinced that “everything hinges on relationship... you have to be there long enough to hear people’s stories and they have to believe that you want to hear their stories.”

When you’re in a church doing ministry to people there is sense that you earns chips, and there are times when you literally have to cash those chips in.... And I don’t mean to look at it in a crass way, that way, but in reality that’s a part of what the ministry is, that’s how they normally trust you and if you’re in and out in a short period of time I honestly don’t know how you can get to really know people.

I had a couple that had a mentally handicapped daughter and they would do foster care for handicapped teens, nobody wants handicapped teens and they would take them and they would just, I always thought they were so sensitive because they had a daughter that was handicapped and then I find out that they had a son who would have been my age, that when he was two, he got up to a porcelain heater in the house, an old farm house and his pajamas caught fire. He’s two, he doesn’t know, and he ran downstairs and he was ablaze.... There was no burn center at Mercy hospital back then, they treated him the best they could but he died.... I then knew, of course these people are so tender towards

kids that have handicaps and all that, and that took me years before I heard that story and you don't learn that with a short-term pastor, unless you're an exceptionally relational guy, and I think even if you are, the problem is you don't have the time. I think even if you do get into deep relationships with your people you can't possibly do it with all of them, just because of the time limitations.

I have guys here that I've buried that were WWII decorated heroes, that nobody in this church had a clue that these guys were decorated war heroes. You know when I found out? I'd been here like 15 years.... These are just ordinary little guys walking around the church, not even big guys... receiving some medal of honor for that and never saying a word. So some of those things, if you're long-term you get to know your sheep better and you get to appreciate more and your more involved in their lives and they in yours.

With authentic compassion, participants were able to offer comfort to their people through the ministry of presence.

The Ministry of Presence. Holm (2009) postulated that hospital chaplains should understand their ministry as one of mediating the presence of God for patients. Similarly, the consensus of the participants in this study was that ministry is more than sermons, it is loving people and it is time spent with the people. Eli articulated it this way:

I learned early on that intelligence isn't enough... you have to actually care about the people.... It takes a while to get to know somebody and ministry is not just preaching a sermon and showing off how much you know, it's shepherding a flock and a good shepherd knows his sheep and a good shepherd loves his sheep.... A lot of guys who go to Seminary have these ideas of being this great preacher and teacher and so they really

focus on preaching and teaching, visitation and things like that on their data forms is always low down, but emergency visitation should be your number one priority because when people are in a crisis, if you are there for them mediating the presence of God to them you will never have a better opportunity to minister God's grace and to build strong relationships.

One example of this perspective was relayed in a story he told of his early ministry at the church.

One of our members... his wife had MS. She was not supposed to smoke, but she did. My wife and I were getting ready to leave for our first vacation... On Sunday night, there were all sorts of fire engine sounds, in the area and we got a phone call at 10:15 pm from a ruling elder telling me that through a convoluted set of circumstances he had heard a rumor that there was a house fire for a family whose name was pronounced similarly to this member's name in a location that was just off of the street they lived on and he thought we should investigate. We did and it turned out it was his wife. She had been smoking and the ash fell on the couch next to her.... She got the top ash, but the cinder burned its way into the couch and she was in a room where there was an air conditioner and it was just pouring oxygen in and the couch underneath her apparently burst into flame.... So I got there the house was half burned down, we found out where this man was, he was in a neighbor's living room, this elder and I walk in and he's just sitting there with his hands like this, he looks up I said, are you alright, he looks at me and says, "What are you doing here you're supposed to be on vacation?" I said, "No I'm supposed to be here." So the session kept the pulpit supplied for the next weekend, but I stayed in town and ministered to the family.

Adam's take on this aspect of pastoral ministry was summed up with two words, "be there". He illustrated this with a story about a parishioner waiting for a heart transplant.

Before they would let him have a heart transplant he had to have someone to be power of attorney. He had no one that would be power of attorney for him. The day before the surgery and he has to have someone sign. So I said okay, and I signed. Over the next year and a half he was part in the hospital, he was out of the hospital for maybe a month or two. I visited him almost every day. He had two large dogs. I walked the dogs every day. I fed the dogs every day. He, when he came out of the hospital before he went back in again for a second transplant, heart transplant, he stayed in my home. He was in his own apartment for maybe a month. Finally I made a decision to pull the plug. People watched that and that's when I finally heard people starting to say, you love us. Because let's face it, when you're 80 years old, 70 years old, one of the things you want from your pastor is he's going to be there to bury you. He's going to do it with love and he's going to care for you and I've watched it again and again and again with older people dying. I'm there. You need me I'm there.

Summary. Participants identified the process of investing in the lives of their people as the key to their efforts to cultivate authentic community. As Hayden put it, "because we are in relationship they see how I live and know that my faith and my family's faith is authentic". Isaac further stated that "time builds the kind of relationships which allow the pastor to be free to lead and to explore what works." As with Chris who said that his "vision for the church developed over time..." there was a consensus that the nuances of the ministries of each church, indigenous as they were to each church, were the result of these relationships (Moreau, 2012). Likewise Gabriel stated that, "relationships hold everything together... so you have to know your people,

how they think and what they need... you have to love them and challenge them and then work beside them because if they believe that you love them they will want you to lead them.” This response to participants’ investment of themselves into their congregations is what participants’ repeatedly referred to as being “rooted down” into the church and the community.

Rooted Down. Just as a tree’s root system generally extends twice the distance of its branches, so also did the participants in this study consistently describe the growing efficacy of their ministries in terms of being rooted down into the community; rather than referring to numbers or finances as measures of success in ministry. Particularly Ben spoke of how he would advise pastors to consider the metaphor of the tree.

If I wanted to grow an apple tree in my backyard and I went out and planted it and then decided in about three years you know I don’t think I like that apple tree there, I’m going to move it over here. I dig it up and move it over here and then I leave it there for a few years. Then I say, you know I don’t think I like it there either, there’s just something about that, where it’s at in the yard, I’m going to pick it up and move it over. You will never get apples off that tree, you just won’t and so I tell them, take your time and get plugged in because you need to deep roots in this church.

Similarly Adam stated, “When your people come to believe that you are there for them you earn the right to be heard.” Echoing this each of the participants shared stories of how pouring their life out for the church had led to earning the trust of the congregation. David asserted,

Congregations become dysfunctional because they change pastors every so many years instead of falling in love with their pastor.... Longevity I think is important for churches especially today with everything that’s going on, people don’t want to keep changing

from pastor to pastor trying to figure out what's going on they want their pastor.... I think people need that kind of connection with a pastor.

As Fitz said, "Time produces trust... doing life together... working together... people begin to know what to expect from you." It is at this point that participants began to experience the expansion of their influence as they became the nexus of their congregations and elder statesmen in their communities.

Becoming the Nexus. It was the process of knowing and becoming known, the experience of authentic community, which participants identified the gateway to greater efficacy within the church. Eli identified this period of ministry by saying that "this is the point at which the pastor is the nexus of the church... it moves and changes around him, around his vision." Adam relayed how his investment in the congregation had led to being able to leverage greater influence.

I stopped in one family's home and just simply said "We haven't seen you, you've disappeared for years you need to come back. You know dad, your daughters going to marry someone just like you. Do you want them to marry someone who doesn't go to church? Do you want your son to think that's what a man is, doesn't go to church?"

....part of that was that they've known me for 16 years. I could do it, if it was another pastor, I'm not sure. I think we probably would have lost most of those kids if there had been several pastors in and out of here.

Hayden also spoke of how "the best years... where we've seen the greatest impact and fruit has really been the last 10 to 15."

The first 10 to 12 years I was still learning, I was still growing in my own gifts, I was maturing, sometimes not as quickly as my wife and others wanted me to you know. I was having all these kids and not really knowing how to be a good father. I was learning how

to do that and so you know I really think it was only after I turned 40 you know in my 40's I started feeling like okay now I know what I'm good at, I know what I can do. I can see some fruit and now I'm 57 so really the last 15, 15 years or so have been the most fruitful.

I think that if you're in a place for a long enough time you see kids grow up, you see marriages happen. I've had the privilege of marrying a number of young couples in this church. I've had the privilege of baptizing a number of, you know dozens of children who have grown up in this church and come to know Christ. I've had the privilege of burying and preaching the funeral for a number of members.... So the benefit of being in one place for a long time is that you get to see the whole spectrum and you get to be there to help people grow in every area of their life.

Eli said that he knew things were changing in the church when the core leaders stopped referring to the previous pastors when discussing issues in the church and instead began asking him what he thought. Upon reflection he realized, "practically speaking I had been there longer than either of the previous pastors, my history was eclipsing their history and I was becoming the pastor of recent memory." Gabriel similarly spoke of the impact of relationships on efficacy:

Surrounding myself with great people and being ok with being in the lead but not always having the answer you know.... So we celebrate together, we accomplished the answer... If you only lead to the level of your capacity then your church organization, your business, your life, your family will only grow to that level. You've got to be willing to step out of that and go broader with leadership.

Isaac also spoke of how "there is a level of trust that only comes with time."

A depth of relationship only comes with time... over a long period of time the church has kind of been a laboratory and I've been able to lead in a couple different directions, and I hate to use the word laboratory but... it's afforded me to be able to lead in some bold, new directions that I really don't think that a short tenure pastor would ever have that freedom.

Ben spoke of how things happen for long-term pastors that do not happen in the first five to seven years; like what happened when the associate pastor at his church before he came was voted down from becoming the new pastor.

When I got here that family they really loved this guy, he'd been a part of the kid's ministry and he'd been youth director here for years and so they all left, all five of them left, in fact we even had dinner with all five of them here before they left the church. So I knew them here in the community and years later, 10 years later, I hear that he had a heart attack and so I called them up and got in touch with the guy and the family and they had jumped around from church to church and so there was nobody giving them any sort of spiritual guide, so my wife and I spent time with them and the next thing I know this family's back after 10 years, back in the fold, but when they come back, their kids are all married and have families and they all come back to the church now too, and that would have not happened if this church would have had a new pastor every five years, because the next guy wouldn't have even known, wouldn't have had a clue who this family was. Things like that, other things, other seeds that are planted that sometimes don't come to fruition, just contacts you make, people you know, people you see in the community that realize you're here long-term and then when something tragic things happens and stuff, they know the pastor.

In addition to this increased influence in the church, participants also spoke of how their influence expanded in the community at large due to their long-tenure.

Becoming an Elder-Statesman. In addition to the growing trust of the church and the requisite freedom which accompanies that trust, participants in this study also identified an expanding influence beyond their congregations which they believed was directly related to their long-tenure. Jessica told a story which illustrated this well, of how when she found herself in the hospital at one point, her nurse whom she had never met before specifically asked to care for her because of Jessica's ministry connection to the nurse's niece. Chris commented, "We have been in the community so long it seems like people have forgotten that I did not grow up here." Other examples of this which participants shared were opportunities for community and government leadership, denominational leadership, the oversight of church planting here in the states and overseas and the training of people overseas for ministry. Hayden spoke of how this has opened up opportunities for him with other pastors and missions work overseas.

When I'm with a bunch of pastors I'm usually the one who's been around the longest and so that's a good feeling because I know that now my position.... I see my role now as not just a pastor of a church but also I have an opportunity to invest in younger pastors and to help be an example to them and I get emails from younger pastors and pastors that I have a relationship with from all over the country, and I'll get emails or phone calls from them asking me how do you think I should deal with this problem or that? So God has given me a different, he's expanded my ministry now to be kind of an encourager to younger guys....

You know we're involved in different good works in the community; feeding hungry people at the homeless shelter, speaking to them. I do a worship service with me

at the rescue mission and we're involved in missions, not just here but around the world. I've taken I don't know how many different people from the church to Africa, to Columbia, South America different parts of Africa and so missions is important and it's part of who we are as a church so that also has contributed.... We sent a family of nine to live on an island off the coast of Carnahana three years ago; today's the third year anniversary of them leaving. They have seven children they live in a house he built with his own hands on an island where there is no running water, electricity is variable and they have made a tremendous impact on that island.... I'm going out in January and meeting with them and doing some preaching and teaching.

Eli, who has likewise experienced an ever widening sphere of influence both in his local community and through international missions work, described how in his mind it all came back to long-tenure.

I haven't walked away, I've been here through hard times, through good times, and so I think there is a respect and a love that would not be there and without which my ministry would not be effective. Just being intelligent is not enough, if they don't know that I love them... but if they know that I love them then they are more willing to listen and I think a long tenure just like a long marriage, the longer you are there the deeper your relationship is. It's not always the bright enthusiasm, you know; you change pastors every two to three years there is that honeymoon, you have all these honeymoons, but then after the honeymoons come all the divorces. So you don't have maybe the decibel level of glee but there's that deeper stronger commitment and that respect that I think and also a credibility in the community as the community knows. People that I don't even know but they know that I'm the pastor of this church and it makes a difference, especially in a dying

community like this.... I didn't walk away from them; I didn't use them to go on to bigger and better things.

In addition to the pastor's own expanded influences Ben spoke of how his tenure had provided him with the opportunity to help others grown in their own ministry and through that, they expanded the ministry of the church as a whole.

There is a guy here in the church that along with this camp we run... they used to do wilderness trips, we had a group of guys that loved to camp and had a guy that is one of my elders... and he said you know one of my goals has been to retire at 49.... And so he and I went on what our denomination calls a vision trip where they help send us to a field so we went to visit one of our missionaries who we support from our Presbytery, a missionary who went to Chile, been there many, many, years. He took us all around to what was going on down there and we fell in love with this one little church, it's the southern-most Presbyterian Church in the continent, in the whole world really because it's down under, and he developed a relationship with them and then --- came back and so he routinely, four or five times a year does these trips. We'll do it with college students, we'll do it a trip to the west branch of the Susquehanna for families, like fathers and daughter or fathers and sons, we've done it for home school groups because they need the field trips and stuff and we've done it then we'll go to like maybe go hike. We've done it with the church down there, go down and work with the church and maybe teach Sunday school, teach VBS, train women, train officers and then they'll end up hiking the National Park at the bottom of the country or in Argentina, we've taken groups to Siberia and worked, in fact we don't even work with just our own missionaries, we've worked with a Baptist minister in Siberia and took a group there, and we've done....

The other thing we've done is we host disaster response training here once a year for our denomination. You can't just, you know if there is a Tsunami somewhere you just can't hop in a plane and go there and say, I'm going to help them. You have to be approved by the federal government and our training, our denominational training is an approved first responder training and so --- went and got the first responder training and found out that they were paying this exuberant amount of money to rent a camp and so we let them come here for free because we have the acreage ... And that's all happened from me getting to know him long-term and helping him to realize his desire and call to do ministry.... And I don't think it would have happened if somebody were to come in and been here five years and somebody else came for 5 years and somebody else came for five years to be able to see that, and that's become, we're really well known for that ministry too.

Interestingly however, these experiences of expanded influence almost seemed like afterthoughts for the participants, as though they themselves were not altogether concerned about these achievements; their focus remained, as it ever was, on fidelity to the pastoral call and to the development of authentic community. Chris said that early on he thought seven years was a long time but that it actually it took him seven years before he felt like he actually had roots in the community; where he was respected as part of this community and not just an outsider.

They begin to believe that you really truly care about them and the community. That you're not just here for your own self-interest... this is where God is calling me.... I've had opportunities to go elsewhere to larger churches and just haven't felt led, I've built so strong of relationships that it would be hard and difficult to leave. I always tell people God would have to put a layer of dynamite underneath me to uproot me from here.

Jessica also spoke of how living in the community was important because it made her a part of the community.

I don't know how many times a little voice has said, that's Dr. Jessica, or the mom has said, she is your doctor, so in a sense I'm part of the community in a way that predecessors hadn't been, and I think that's important.... I think has made a difference.

Likewise Fitz stated:

I don't understand short tenure.... It's just, why move, why change something that's working, if it's working? I would be the same guy and people are people so if you leave because of problems you're not going to find a better solution or different, or something different somewhere else. So why uproot everything? People just need to do what God asks them to do... and if we're within the calling of God then we're working within our gifts with a surrendered will and to me that's the sweet spot of ministry.

Summary. For every participant, their understanding of how their tenure impacted their efficacy in ministry was intrinsically connected to their understanding of the nature and implications of their pastoral calling. As such, although each participant had different approaches to the work of the ministry, they all shared the same core values, primarily that their first responsibility was to cultivate healthy relationships in the church by loving people. Thus the vibrant relationships which produce authentic community grew out of the transformational ministry of the pastor as they invested in their people and became rooted down into their churches and communities, as the people respond to that investment.

Summary of Findings

This transcendental phenomenological research on the lived experience of long-tenured pastors sought to better understand the convergence of ministry, tenure and efficacy. As such the

study began with three research questions. First, how do long-tenured senior pastors describe their experience of being long-tenured? Second, in what ways do long-tenured senior pastors perceive that their education prepared them for a long-tenure? Third, in addition to pastoral education, what other dynamics do long-tenured senior pastors perceive as contributing to their experience of long-tenure?

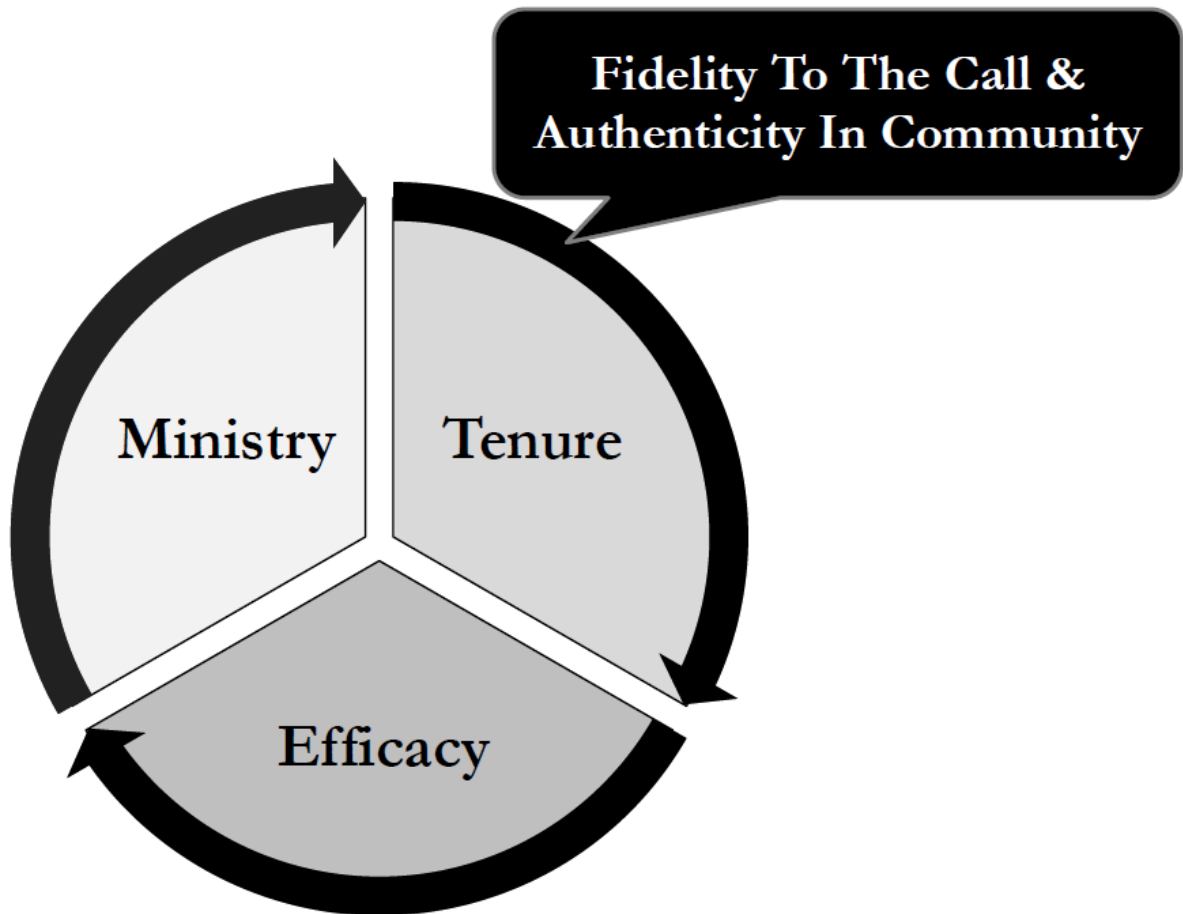
The first question regarding how long-tenured senior pastors describe the experience built on Bandura's work on self-efficacy (1997). The goal was to understand how long-tenured senior pastors perceive the dynamics of their own tenure since that influences their effectiveness in the pastorate. What was found was that while in some cases long-tenure was an intentional choice this was not necessarily true in all cases; in fact some of the participants relayed that there were times when feelings of doubt, depression and anger plagued them. However, every participant did intentionally choose to be faithful to their calling rather than go elsewhere because of their feelings. Additionally every participant believed that their long-tenure has made them more effective.

The second question regarding the ways in which long-tenured senior pastors perceive that their education prepared them for a long-tenure was based in part on the findings of DeGroat (2008) who observed that most seminarians feel unprepared to actually engage in the tasks of the pastorate. Participants were not asked outright about their education. Interviews provided ample opportunity however for its inclusion as questions about their personal journey into the pastorate and their understanding of that work were fleshed out. In the final analysis however, this research did not find any substantial relationship between ministry, tenure, efficacy and any particular model of pastoral education. This is not to say that the participants did not see the value of education, in fact every participant was committed to continuing to educate themselves

to meet new challenges in the pastorate. Rather, this is due to some extent, to the fact that participants did not extensively self-identify formal education with regard to their perception of the convergence of ministry, tenure and efficacy. As such there is no basis upon which to draw any particular conclusion. In some ways this continuing uncertainty as to which aspects of pastoral education lend themselves to efficacy in pastoral ministry speaks to the need to be open to exploring alternate approaches to pastoral education and training so as to discover best practices for pastoral education as a whole.

The third question regarding what other dynamics long-tenured senior pastors perceived as contributing to their experience of long-tenure sought to uncover previously unidentified factors which senior pastors themselves perceived as important in relation to the phenomena. To this end the research specifically set out to either confirm or disprove the findings of Burns et al. (2013) regarding resiliency in ministry for the long-tenured. Over the course of data collection it became obvious that the participants had wrestled with the five themes even if they were unfamiliar with the vocabulary of the Burns et al. study. For all participants the concepts of - spiritual formation, self-care, emotional and cultural intelligence, marriage and family, leadership and management - had been integrated into their thinking. Predominantly however what emerged from analysis of the data was that participants understood the convergence of ministry, tenure and efficacy as a cyclical process sustained by the interconnected experiences of fidelity to the pastoral call and the cultivation of authenticity in community (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Understanding the Convergence of Ministry, Tenure and Efficacy



CHAPTER FIVE: DISSCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

When I began my doctoral studies in 2009 I had just finished a Masters of Divinity degree and I knew that I wanted to be involved in the education of pastors. As I completed the coursework for the Doctor of Education and started to focus on dissertation topics however, I was struck by the lack of rigorous, multi-disciplinary, peer-reviewed research that had been done in the area of pastoral ministry. Thankfully, much has changed just in the last few years and there is now a great deal more research available on the work of pastoral ministry than there was just a short time ago. Never-the-less there remains much work to be done if we are to inform pastoral ministry with the rigorous scholarship that will engender the practical spiritual leadership needed to reverse the decline of the American Christian church (Penfold, 2012). To that end, this chapter will address the implications of this research before looking at its limitations, the gaps which those limitations leave and recommendations for further research.

Summary of Findings

This research study regarding the lived experience of long-tenured pastors sought to better understand the convergence of ministry, tenure and efficacy in pastoral ministry. As such the study began with three research questions. First, how do long-tenured senior pastors describe their experience of being long-tenured? Second, in what ways do long-tenured senior pastors perceive that their education prepared them for a long-tenure? Third, in addition to pastoral education, what other dynamics do long-tenured senior pastors perceive as contributing to their experience of long-tenure?

The first question regarding how long-tenured senior pastors describe the experience built on Bandura's work on self-efficacy (1997). The goal was to understand how long-tenured senior

pastors perceive the dynamics of their own tenure since that influences their effectiveness in the pastorate. What was found was that while in some cases long-tenure was an intentional choice this was not necessarily true in all cases; in fact some of the participants relayed that there were times when feelings of doubt, depression and anger plagued them. However, every participant did intentionally choose to be faithful to their calling rather than go elsewhere because of their feelings. Additionally every participant believed that their long-tenure has made them more effective.

The second question regarding the ways in which long-tenured senior pastors perceive that their education prepared them for a long-tenure was based in part on the findings of DeGroat (2008) who observed that most seminarians feel unprepared to actually engage in the tasks of the pastorate. Participants were not asked outright about their education. Interviews provided ample opportunity however for its inclusion as questions about their personal journey into the pastorate and their understanding of that work were fleshed out. In the final analysis however, this research did not find any substantial relationship between ministry, tenure, efficacy and any particular model of pastoral education. This is not to say that the participants did not see the value of education, in fact every participant was committed to continuing to educate themselves to meet new challenges in the pastorate. Rather, this is due to some extent, to the fact that participants did not extensively self-identify formal education with regard to their perception of the convergence of ministry, tenure and efficacy. As such there is no basis upon which to draw any particular conclusion. In some ways this continuing uncertainty as to which aspects of pastoral education lend themselves to efficacy in pastoral ministry speaks to the need to be open to exploring alternate approaches to pastoral education and training so as to discover best practices for pastoral education as a whole.

The third question regarding what other dynamics long-tenured senior pastors perceived as contributing to their experience of long-tenure sought to uncover previously unidentified factors which senior pastors themselves perceived as important in relation to the phenomena. To this end the research specifically set out to either confirm or disprove the findings of Burns et al. (2013) regarding resiliency in ministry for the long-tenured. Over the course of data collection it became obvious that the participants had wrestled with the five themes even if they were unfamiliar with the vocabulary of the Burns et al. study. For all participants the concepts of - spiritual formation, self-care, emotional and cultural intelligence, marriage and family, leadership and management - had been integrated into their thinking. However, this study found that primarily participants perceived a relationship between their understanding of the pastoral call, the length of their tenure, the cultivation of authenticity in the community of faith and the extent of their pastoral influence.

Discussion

Since the Enlightenment when religion and science were set in false opposition to one another, pastoral ministry as a religious field has been largely exempted from empirically evaluation (Grenz & Olson, 1993). While much has been discovered in recent years such as with the studies of DeGroat (2008), Burns et al. (2013), Wind and Wood (2009); much remains to be discovered. Wind and Rendle (2001) showed that the American Christian church was not receiving the leadership needed to meet the challenges facing the ever shifting culture. Likewise, Doehring (2013) has asserted that there has long been a need to develop a new, holistic and integrative approach to preparing pastors for ministry.

DeGroat (2008) addressed the need to close the gap between what seminarians were taught and what they actually experienced in the pastorate. Wind and Wood (2009) found that

seminary graduates who went through a period of structured mentorship did quantifiably better in their future ministry than their counterparts who had not had the same apprenticeship.

However recent studies of how pastors cope with the stresses of the ministry have found that on the whole pastoral burnout and dissatisfaction is on the rise (Proeschold-Bell et al., 2011).

Finally, the research of Burns et al. (2013) expanded the knowledge base with regard to the resilience which is necessary to reverse the trend of pastoral burnout and attrition, however more research is needed to confirm and expand their findings.

With these concerns in mind this research sought to understand long-tenured pastoral ministry through the stories of the pastors themselves. Thus this research was framed by the social cognitive theory of Bandura (1986). Bandura's recognition that learning and decision making are more than just the memorization of information but are rather the result of life lived together, learning within and through social contexts, resonates with the historical Christian emphasis of ministry in and through community. Fully understanding the convergence of the phenomena of pastoral tenure and efficacy requires this recognition in order to discover all of the factors involved.

This research found that the participants in the study had all come to terms with the tensions and realities of pastoral ministry; regardless of how unprepared they might have felt at the outset (DeGroat, 2008). Participants' fidelity to their calling produced determination (Francis et al., 2010) and self-compassion (Barnard & Curry, 2012) in the face of adversity and disillusionment. Likewise this research found that the participants had learned how to navigate and weather both personal and organizational conflict (Wells et al., 2012) by seeing these transitional times within the larger narrative of their personal faith journey (Hirsh, 2006; Richardson, 2012). Finally, this research reinforced the findings of Burns et al. (2013) with

regard to the resiliency needed to achieve long-tenure and efficacy in pastoral ministry for although none of the participants were familiar with the research of Burns et al., they had all interacted with and integrated the themes of resilience in some way throughout the course of their tenures.

In addition to these ways in which this study confirmed and corroborated previous research, it also extended previous research by engaging long-tenured senior pastors in an effort to discover what they understood to be at the core of effective pastoral ministry. Thus for participants in this study, what was found was that not only had they moved beyond many of the struggles identified as plaguing short-tenured pastors, but that they had done so by coming to terms with their calling. Each participant's philosophy of ministry, their vision for their church, the health and depth of their relationships; all flowed naturally out of their fidelity to their pastoral call and their commitment to cultivating authentic community.

Implications

In transcendental phenomenological research, the researcher does not give voice to the voiceless so much they weave a narrative tapestry of the participants' experiences, allowing participants' voices to be heard as one (Kakkori, 2009). This distinction is subtle but profound. For in the case of the former the researcher exerts an undue influence over the data which results in an often unseen manipulation of the participants experiences for a preconceived purpose. In the case of the latter, the researcher allows the participants to flesh out meaning on their own and thus empowers their collective experience to inform and enrich the larger community free of any personal agenda. In the case of this study the narrative which has emerged from the research is one that has implications for pastors, congregations those who are invested in the work of pastoral education and ordaining bodies.

For Pastors

Looking at the results of this research on the convergence of long-tenure and efficacy, two implications for pastors stand out to me. First, if fidelity to the call is one of the themes of this experience, then it becomes extremely important that pastors have a very distinct conviction regarding their calling. This is both a personal and group issue in that no one can tell another how to understand their experience of faith and yet until the call is affirmed by others it is intuitive at best and not a something that will hold up to scrutiny. Perhaps this is why Burns et al. (2013) identified a sense of the call as an ongoing struggle for pastors (p. 63) which was moderated by contentedness and healthy peer relationships (p. 65). In addition to conviction regarding calling, pastors need to have a well-defined philosophy of ministry.

A well-defined philosophy of ministry is the practical outgrowth of one's theological convictions. Thus a properly developed philosophy of ministry should prepare a pastor to confront the realities of the work they are called to do. Considering that pastoral ministry has been likened here in to marriage then just like getting married it would be foolish to enter into a pastoral role without first aligning one's expectations with reality. It is worth noting the following from B. Burns (Personal Communication, March 18, 2014), regarding their exploration of time frames for pastoral resilience in their study (Burns et al., 2013):

At the same time, we had received some anecdotal data from another SPE (Sustaining Pastoral Excellence) program that had also flagged this issue. The director of the Covenant Church (denomination) shared with us that he had observed pastors left the ministry at two time frames: after about five years in ministry and after about 14-16 years in ministry. When asked why he thought this was the case, he replied that those who left after the first five years seemed to think that the pastoral ministry wasn't what they

expected. And he said those who left after 14-16 years had concluded, "This has been a good gig, but I can't see myself continuing in this, or my family continuing in this, for the rest of my working life. I found these timeframes fascinating for another reason. Earlier in my life I had been involved (and had done doctoral work) in the area of separation, divorce, and remarriage. What I learned during that research is that while marriages can fall apart at any time in a marriage, separation and divorce often group around two time frames: about five years of marriage and between 14-16 (up to 18) years of marriage. I won't go into all of the reasons here why this is the case except to say that I suspected that life issues faced at these junctures also impacted the decision to stay/leave pastoral ministry.

Just as pastors prepare individuals for the realities of marriage, giving them tools to help them navigate the journey ahead, lest their marriage become shipwrecked by disillusionment and dysfunction; so also should pastors endeavor to avail themselves of the tools needed to ensure that their ministry is long and fruitful rather than haphazardly press into it without forethought or preparation.

For Congregations

Similar to the implications of this research for pastors, I see two main implications for how congregations interact with their pastors. First congregations need to consider how they can help a pastor to achieve resiliency on both professional and personal fronts. Although salary was not a primary concern for any of the participants in this study, salary does indirectly affect two main areas of motivation (Maslow, 1943). Salary makes resiliency possible by providing for those anchor points such as purchasing a home or having reliable transportation, without which a pastor may feel unstable and devalued. Similarly, when pastors come out of bible college or

seminary with debt, it almost always has a negative impact on the family and therefore on the pastor's ministry as well (Briggs, 2014).

Additionally Burns et al. (2013) recommends professional sabbaticals and personal vacations, continued education and personal boundaries for the pastor and his family. Anticipating these things and working them into a pastor's job description and salary package would be a way to establish a climate of respect and encourage the pastor to make the kinds of choices that may lead to greater efficacy over the long term. As Eli commented, "The congregation has been supportive of my ministry... why would you walk away from something like that?"

The second implication for congregations which I see arising from the research has to do with the time it takes to build healthy relationships. For each participant, ministry was the natural outgrowth of their fidelity to their calling. Thus each pastor's vision for their church developed over time, after they were already rooted in the congregation and community. What this research found was that in these participant's churches, the discussion of mission drove the organization. If truly effective ministry takes place in and through the loving relationships of an authentic community then the time needed to cultivate those relationships must be afforded to the pastor so that the discussion of mission can actually happen. In this way, just as the metaphor of marriage applies to the pastor's mindset, it also applies to the congregation's as well; for inviting a pastor to lead without first aligning expectations with reality will most likely lead to disappointment and dysfunction.

For Pastoral Education

Pastoral education may perhaps be the most important of the areas of implication for the results of this study at this time. This is because most often an individual obtains their education

before they ever begin the work of the pastorate (Harris, 2009). It is here that formal pastoral formation begins in earnest and here that the most basic assumptions about pastoral ministry are either challenged or affirmed. As Cha and Oscar (2015) assert, how those who oversee this process understand professional and personal success and how they communicate those values must therefore be considered. They further assert that the approach to pastoral education among the American church has been “primarily shaped by a set of questions and categories that emerged from primarily European and Anglo North American church contexts” (p. 91). When we consider this, compounded by the fact that the context of European and Anglo North American churches has shifted dramatically in the last several decades; it reveals a need to rethink assumptions and to restructure both curriculum and instruction accordingly.

Part of the process of rethinking and restructuring pastoral education will need to take seriously the results of the Burns et al. (2013) study. Pastoral education must facilitate the development of a strong theological undergirding to a practical philosophy of ministry that takes into account the need for both professional and personal conceptualizations of success. Thus in addition to the emphasis on spiritual formation which is already being done through biblical and theological studies, and the emphasis on leadership and management which is already being done through administrative studies; there needs to be greater emphasis placed on self-care, cultural and emotional intelligence, and the health of marriage and family. As Wright (2011) asserted, if causes of crisis can be addressed prior to the onset of crisis, then the navigation of those times can be made easier. This principle applies perfectly to pastoral ministry. For the difficulties are well established, but as Wells et al. (2012) has indicated and this research has affirmed, they are not adversities which cannot be overcome. These crises can be opportunities for personal and congregational health so long as pastors understand the philosophy and practices that can lead to

ministry efficacy. As Isaac described, “As our culture becomes more first century I can see the church having to be more first century and decentralized.... I believe that our Seminaries need to be fully awake to that reality and prepare guys for that.”

Finally, this research did not find any substantial relationship between ministry, tenure, efficacy and any particular model of pastoral education. This is due, to some extent, to the fact that participants did not extensively self-identify formal education with regard to their perception of tenure and efficacy, and therefore gave no basis upon which to draw any particular conclusions. This continuing uncertainty as to which aspects of pastoral education lend themselves to efficacy in pastoral ministry speaks to the need to continue to be open to creatively exploring alternate approaches to pastoral education and training so as to discover, implement and disseminate best practices.

For Ordaining Bodies

Formal education remains by its very nature, institutional; despite valiant attempts to integrate adult learning theories of collaborative and mentor integration into curricula (Taylor & Kroth, 2009; Tinto, 1975). As such, no matter how much it is optimized it will remain unable to accomplish what it is not designed to accomplish. This was in part the impetus behind the Transitions in Ministry study done by Wood and Wood (2009) which found that a three year mentorship program used to supplement a Master’s of Divinity course of study increased the likelihood of pastoral resilience and efficacy significantly. Wong and Chee (2011) similarly found that there is a strong relationship between the theory and practice of pastoral ministry and as such the process of learning is not truly complete until the pastor is actually able to apply what they have learned through formal education.

Considering this, and the fact that all the participants in this study spoke of a relationship with a mentor who helped shape their thinking, and the work of Bandura (1988) showing the importance of relationship in learning; it may be time for Ordaining Bodies to consider their role in this aspect of the process of pastoral preparation. When reflecting on his pastoral tenure, Fitz summarized this concern well.

I was senior pastor at 24, 25 years old.... It's made me who I am, but I wouldn't advise anyone to do it.... I'm not second guessing God's calling or God's timing or God's provision or any of that stuff, but you know if I had a high school kid sitting here saying I feel called to the ministry I'd tell him, you need to go to Bible college, you need to put that time in, you need some firsthand experience in ministry and you need to go get involved somewhere before you really take on that much responsibility.

Like clinical pastoral education or medical residency, the American Christian church may profit from incorporating an intentional mentoring structure into pastoral preparation. This could prove to be costly, but if the issues of tension, transition and tenure are to be resolved in a positive way it will need to be addressed.

Study Limitations

This transcendental phenomenological study of long-tenured senior pastors was delimited to only those who adhered to the commonly held core beliefs articulated in the Apostles' Creed and whose length of congruent service in the senior pastorate was in a church where that role was one of voluntarily association. Even with this the research presented herein was still limited in its ability to gather and analyze data. Some of those limits such as the effects of academic, theological, demographic and organizational diversity as well as the diversity of temperament that resides in individual leaders were delimited where possible through

discriminate priority sampling (Patton, 2002) while being conscientious not to damage the study's ability to contribute to the knowledge base (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). However because the issue of how pastoral tenure relates to pastoral efficacy and ultimately to pastoral education is a global one; and because the issue of decline in American churches is a national one; it was not feasible at this time to conduct a study large enough that it could sample on that scale.

This study should be seen rather as one part of a larger set of studies which could later be analyzed together to address the full nature of the phenomena. Future studies should investigate this same research with an emphasis on minority ethnicities and geographic locations. Furthermore, over the course of the research other questions which beg inquiry began to arise as well. Concerns such as the lack of the congregations' voices in this dialogue; the possibility that tenure can actually be so long as to pass a tipping point at which the pastor becomes ineffective or worse detrimental to the ministry; the necessity of determining how the mantle of leadership can be passed more effectively from one pastor to the next; and lingering questions about whether or not the nature of pastoral ministry has been too narrowly understood.

Recommendations for Future Research

Since the purpose of research is to expand the knowledge base, then good research will always provoke more research (Creswell, 2008). This section explores the aforementioned concerns which are left needing to be addressed due to the limits of this study and the issues forced to the surface by it. The following discussion will deal with widening the lens of this research, with looking at the other side of this research, and with expanding this research into the areas of succession plans and the way we understand the parameters of pastoral ministry.

Widening the Lens

One of the known limits of purposeful snowball sampling is that it can easily lead to a homogenized sample (Kurant et al., 2011). In obtaining participants for this study, every attempt was made to ensure the greatest diversity possible within the sample. Unfortunately, although some aspects of diversity were achieved, others were not. Participants were both male and female, married and unmarried, of various ages and cultural backgrounds. They represented six different denominational and theological backgrounds; Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Anglican, Pentecostal and non-denominational. Furthermore they pastored in a variety of rural, small town and suburban settings in four different states; New York, Pennsylvania, Maryland and North Carolina.

Never-the-less, some aspects of diversity are still lacking. Six denominations are not every denomination and four states are not even close to a full representation of the nation. What is more, no metropolitan settings are represented in this data nor are there any pastors from African-American, Hispanic-American, Asian-American or Native-American ethnicities represented. Additionally, none of the research participants were pastors of congregations that numbered over 1000. Research among these groups could cause new factors to emerge, and even if no new factors were to emerge, those studies would be invaluable for strengthening the conclusions of this research.

The Other Side: Congregational Stories

Another concern with regard to the limits of this research is that there is a whole other side to the phenomena of long-tenured pastors which must be explored in order to fully understand it. That other side is the stories of the congregation; the lack of their voices in this dialogue needs to be addressed because where the pastor may view their experience in one way

the congregation may view it in another. Perhaps the congregation will see the experience in complementary terms and perhaps they will not. Either way it would be a gross oversight to neglect this aspect of the phenomena. What is more, in hearing the congregations' voice we may be able to better ascertain how to train pastors to embrace those things which will make them more effective in the ministry. Research of this kind would most likely need to be done with individual congregations, perhaps as case studies or a group of case studies due to the large amount of data that would need to be collected (Creswell, 2007).

When Long-Tenure Becomes a Barrier to Efficacy

This study looked at the benefits of long-tenure for pastoral efficacy, however what I have heard repeatedly from those with whom I have discussed the study is, "what if a pastor stays too long?" As Isaac remarked,

One of the struggles of a long-tenure is the tendency toward complacency.... And so you kind of have the battle against a rut and a battle against complacency on one hand and you also have on the other hand the need for lasting relationships and trust.... And you know I don't know what the ideal length of time is because I've never left a church.

At the outset of this research I fully expected to find that most pastors stayed in their ministry because it was comfortable and not because it was effective. What I found was the opposite however; as each participant I interviewed essentially told me that long-tenure was not the goal of their work so much as the result of it. None of the participants interviewed were against moving on if they believed that God was calling them away, but none were looking either.

So the fact that the idea of staying too long is one which keeps surfacing and the fact that the participants in this study all referenced the willingness to move on, it seems that looking deeper into this issue would be worthwhile. A study of pastors for whom longevity has become a

barrier to efficacy would however be a difficult one which would need to be handled with the utmost sensitivity because asking a pastor or church to participate in a study about their own failure would most likely not be received well. None-the-less, it is an important gap in the current body of research about pastoral ministry especially with ministry researchers like Rainer (2014, p. 59) postulating that the most productive years of a pastor's ministry maybe between six and twelve. What is more, insights about this would most likely dovetail with the insights gleaned from a study of successful succession plans.

Leaving a Legacy through Succession Planning

Recognition of the importance of long-tenure in turn begs the question of how a church can secure a transition from one long-tenured pastor to the next. Ben was the first participant to draw attention to this when he spoke of how he had seen other pastors and churches suffer through pastoral transitions following long-tenured pastorates.

Somebody needs to do a D. Min. or a doctoral study on how you transition from a long-term pastor to the next guy, because every one of the long-term pastors I knew... the very next guy who came in was, I just started calling them a sacrificial lamb.... Almost every one of those cases the guy only lasted 2 years, and then it turned out the next guy could come in and continue where the first had failed, so there wasn't a well-planned transition. Ben also followed a short-tenured pastor who had himself followed the planting pastor of the church. After 46 years with the congregation the planting pastor was on staff as pastor emeritus when Ben was hired. Having seen what happened to his successor, the former pastor spent the first six months of Ben's tenure going out on visitation with him.

I knew after we visited the first family, what he was doing.... I'd hear stories like, the first family, we go down to the basement to see his woodshop and we see all his block

walls, and he says, yeah I remember when I was building this and pastor came by and I was just laying block and he just come in, took off his sports coat and rolled up his sleeves and laid 3 layers of block with me that day.... However when we went to leave... he looked at them and he said, “So why don’t we have our pastor pray and read the scriptures to us.”

Ben was convinced that this act of passing the mantle was part of what allowed him to pastor the church with relatively little conflict from early on and had spurred him and his church’s leadership team to begin looking at developing a succession plan for him.

Ben’s thoughts on succession however stood in stark contrast to the skepticism about succession planning which I encountered when I interviewed Fitz. He showed disdain for the whole concept of succession planning because he himself was brought into the senior pastorate succession plan that proved to be very successful, initially. Yet his early ministry still involved a great deal of conflict following the completion of the transition period. Fitz’s summarized it this way:

The problem with a succession plan is that people embrace the successor with the expectation that he will be just like the former pastor, but that’s just not realistic... something changes when a man goes from being an associate to the senior pastor... and shouldn’t it? Shouldn’t we want our leaders to be always growing?

The last participant to bring up the concept of succession planning was Gabriel. Even though he was the shortest tenured of all the participants, he had conversely seen the greatest growth in his congregation. Like Ben he also talked about being supported by the pastor emeritus at his church when he took the reins of leadership following another pastor’s short-tenure. Yet even though he

was not the successor, Gabriel spoke of “the inheritance of great spiritual legacy” and how he was able to hit the ground running when he first took over the pastorate of his church.

It was just quick, everything was, it was like the moment of confirmation and then boom, ok here we go.... So they stepped out in faith on several things and.... So it was now the hopes, and the dreams and the leadership started to take action and it was pretty cool how it happened. There was no fighting, and begging and pleading and well you’re so young and let us help you make this decision even from that point it was like ok, let’s go.... But I think it’s in the DNA of this church to do what God’s called it to do.... I think there was some huge investment and it’s just fulfillment and I just get to be a part of that for now.

So we haven’t just arrived, I believe that from day one there were some amazing things that were brought to this place and spoken to this place and prayed over this place and I just believe it’s a slow up, watch God fulfill kind of thing. So I think we have fruit, we have very fruitful, I think our ground has been taken care of here you know what I mean? I have good soil samples here; it’s productive soil, so that kind of lessens my abilities because probably anyone could be obedient to do some amazing things here.

For this reason Gabriel spoke of his desire to be ready to pass the mantle to his successor as well.

I sense the need to think, to lead, to be watching and not looking for a nest egg for myself but to pay attention that my level of leadership continues to accelerate not plateau and to be prepared that when or if it ever plateaus that I can release it and see it go further than ever.... I want to be here this effective and when I’m no longer here this effective someone needs to be here in a greater level of effectiveness, I don’t know... but I think it’s an open handed kind of consideration anyway... cause this is really not my gig anyway you know.

Taken together the experiences of Ben, Fitz and Gabriel present a situation which deserves thoughtful reflection. If pastors stand to benefit from a succession plan, then it would be worth knowing how this can be done in such a way as to avoid the falling out experienced by Fitz. A study of those churches and pastors who have attempted to navigate these waters would expand the dialogue on this, especially if that study considered both the successes and the failures.

Rethinking the Parameters of Pastoral Ministry

Finally, what has bothered me the most since starting this research was the awareness that were the Apostle Paul were alive to be interviewed, he would have been disqualified by the parameters of this study. It is preposterous to entertain any notion of efficacy in ministry that would relocate the Apostle Paul's ministry to failure and yet by the standard of the research on pastoral ministry reviewed in the course of this study that would seem to be the only viable conclusion. Following my fourth interview, I recorded the following in my reflective memos: "Considering what I am hearing from these pastors I am beginning to wonder if we should not be distinguishing between pastoral and apostolic ministry just as we do between pastoral and evangelistic ministry." This consideration, that perhaps our contemporary understanding of ministry is too myopic, was the impetus for this section.

In the Apostle Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus he writes that God "gave some as Apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11, New American Standard Version). Interestingly, in the Greek, the first three times the word and is used it means "in addition to" (And, 2000a), while the final time word and is used it is placed between pastor and teacher and it is actually a different Greek word which also means "in addition to" but with cumulative force (And, 2000b) thus revealing the intention of binding these two together into one. So this provokes a curiosity. If the Bible addresses

differing types of leadership which are together to equip the laity for ministry (Ephesians 4:12-16) then why does the American Christian church seem to be intent on funneling all people who claim to be called to the ministry into only one or two of these subsets? Is it possible that some personality traits are designed by God for an area of leadership which by its very nature differs from the pastor-teacher leadership, and if so then why does it seem that pastor-teacher leadership is the majority focus of pastoral preparation at this time? If Ephesians 4:11 is in fact descriptive of what the ministerial leadership of the church should look like then it would necessitate a whole different approach to the preparation of ministerial leadership.

Removed as we are from the ancient usage of the original biblical languages, perhaps we have lost a practical understanding of the subsets of leadership identified by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4. If we accepted that the closest correlative to apostolic ministry in the New Testament which we have in the American Christian church is church planting (Patterson & Currah, 2003). Likewise what if we consider that in the same way that the prophets of old spoke into their contemporary culture seeking to call the people of God back to the Word (McConville, 2008), so also scholarly use of empirically driven insights can invigorate orthopraxis. Furthermore, if we accepted that an evangelist was anyone who was compelled to find creative ways to communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a broken world, then what if we approached evangelistic leadership as a kind of activism. Consider how Ensler (2015) describes activists:

An activist is someone who can't help but fight for something ... not motivated by the need for power or money or fame, but in fact driven slightly mad by some injustice, some cruelty, some unfairness, so much so that he or she is compelled by some internal moral engine to act to make it better"?

This differentiation of roles, responsibilities and corresponding expectations should be considered in the larger conversation of pastoral ministry and education. Not only would these individual areas need to be explored but also their interaction with each other in order to shed light on the implications of this for the ministry of the church and for those who lead it.

Summary

This transcendental phenomenological study on the lived experience of long-tenured pastors sought to better understand the convergence of ministry, tenure and efficacy. Looking back I see my growth as a researcher and a pastor. My biases were exposed, my assumptions challenged and my skills honed; often in very uncomfortable ways. I realize now that when I began I was somewhat anti-long-tenure; it was unspoken but definitely there. My pride and arrogance consistently unsettled me as I traversed from initial expectations to the realities I was confronted with in each interview. After every interview I left thinking, “that is the kind of pastor I want to be, the kind of pastor I want to help others become”. Every participant in this study was an elder-statesman, who had paid a high price for living congruently with their convictions.

I was even more startled when I began to compare the data from the individual interviews and discovered that many of the factors which I anticipated would have a deep impact on tenure were in fact not significant at all. There was no set pattern among participants with regard to their personality or learning style. Nor was there a set pattern among participants with regard to their age and gender. Some came from spiritual or religious childhood homes while others did not; some had previous pastoral experience but not all; and some pastored in a fairly conflict free congregational, but again not all. Some participants benefited from good salaries with vacation and sabbatical time, but some were bi-vocational and rarely took time off. In fact, there was no discernible difference between those who followed rigid schedules and those who never seemed

to stop working. Not even prior family connection to the location where the participants' were ministering was identified as a key factor in their long-tenure.

What I set out to discover was how pastors' understood the experience of long-tenure, if they believed that being long-tenured had made them effective, and if so then how and why. What I discovered was that the relationship between ministry, tenure and efficacy was not linear as I had assumed it would be, but rather cyclical. What I expected was that I would be told that ministry plus time results in efficacy. Instead, while the results of the study affirmed the findings of Burns et al. (2013) with regard to the resiliency needed to achieve long-tenure in pastoral ministry; it also extended previous research through the discovery that long-tenured pastors understood the convergence of ministry, tenure and efficacy as a cyclical process sustained by the interconnected experiences of fidelity to the pastoral call and the cultivation of authenticity in community.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPLICATION APPROVAL**LIBERTY UNIVERSITY**
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

July 29, 2014

Joshua C. Strunk

IRB Approval 1912.072914: Exploring the Convergence of Ministry Efficacy and
Tenure: A Phenomenological Study of Long-Tenured Pastors

Dear Joshua,

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 from the date provided above with your protocol number. 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: ELIGIBILITY QUESTIONNAIRE

EXPLORING THE CONVERGENCE OF MINISTRY EFFICACY AND TENURE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF LONG-TENURED PASTORS

Joshua Caine Strunk
Liberty University

I would like to invite you to possibly be involved in a research study of the lived experiences of long-tenured pastors. You were recommended as a possible participant but in order to confirm your eligibility, your responses to the questionnaire below are needed. If you are interested in learning more about this study and possibly participating please answer and return as promptly as possible.

This study is being conducted by Joshua C. Strunk in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctorate program through Liberty University's School of Education.

Question One: Do you personally have any disagreements with the essential doctrines of the Christian faith as outlined in the Apostles' Creed?

I believe in God the Father, Almighty maker of heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ His only begotten Son; He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, Born of the Virgin Mary; He suffered under Pontius Pilate, Was crucified, dead and was buried; He descended into hell, On the third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven, Where He sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From whence He shall return to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, In one holy universal church, In the communion of saints, In the forgiveness of sins, In the resurrection of the dead, And in the life everlasting. Amen.

Question Two: In what denomination do you now pastor?

Question Three: Are you serving in a church where the initial contracting of the pastor and the length of their tenure is voluntarily determined by the congregation and the pastor?

Question Four: How many consecutive years have you served as the senior pastor in this church?

Question Five: What is your educational background?

- A. Diploma/ Certificate
- B. Undergraduate
- C. Graduate
- D. Postgraduate

Question Six: What is your marital status? How many years?

- A. Married ____
- B. Divorced ____
- C. Remarried ____

Question Seven: Do you have children? What are their ages?

- A. 0-4
- B. 5-11
- C. 12-18
- D. 19+

Question Eight: When were you born?

- A. ____-1954
- B. 1954-1964
- C. 1964-1974
- D. 1974-1984

Question Nine: Please provide an email and/ or phone number by which you may be contacted.

Question Ten: Do you know of anyone else who might be interested in participating in this study? (Please provide an email and/ or phone number.)

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT

The Liberty University Institutional
Review Board has approved this
document for use from
7-29-14 to 7-29-15
Protocol # 1912

INFORMED CONSENT

EXPLORING THE CONVERGENCE OF MINISTRY EFFICACY AND TENURE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF LONG-TENURED PASTORS

Joshua Caine Strunk
Liberty University

I would like to invite you to be involved in a research study of the lived experiences of long-tenured pastors. You were selected as a possible participant because a colleague recommended you as a senior pastor who has served in a single church for 6 or more years. I ask that you would read this form and ask any questions you may have before proceeding and agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Joshua Strunk in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctorate program through Liberty University's School of Education.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of long-tenured, senior pastors in order to better understand those factors which the pastors themselves identify as contributing to their individual experiences of longevity in pastoral ministry.

There are four research questions guiding this study:

1. How do long-tenured, senior pastors describe their experience of being long tenured?
2. In what ways do long-tenured, senior pastors perceive that their education prepared them for a long tenure?
3. In addition to pastoral education, what other dynamics do long-tenured senior pastors perceive as contributing to their experience of long tenure?
4. Where and how do long-tenured, senior pastors feel they acquired the skills and competencies which led to their experience of long tenure?

Procedures (What you will do in this study):

If you agree to be in this study, I would/could ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete an eligibility questionnaire online. Responses to this questionnaire will be used to determine further inclusion in the research study. If it is determined that you do not fit the criteria of the study, you will not be asked to participate further. If it is determined that you do fit the criteria of the study, you will be contacted to complete steps 2 through 5. The questionnaire should take no more than 15 minutes.
2. Give the researcher documents regarding your place of ministry such as your local church or community informational packets or direct the researcher to websites where this information might be obtained. This information will be used to help the researcher to better understand the cultural and organizational context within which the individual pastor is serving.

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3. Be interviewed either in person or through webcams and voice interaction through a phone line. This interview will be recorded and transcribed so I can analyze the data for my research. The interview will take anywhere from 30 to 60 minutes.
4. Participate in a focus-group discussion with other long-tenured, senior pastors either in person or through an internet based system. As with the individual interviews, the focus-group discussions will also be recorded. The focus-group discussion will take up to 60 minutes.
5. Check my written description of your lived experiences in pastoral ministry in order to validate whether my description is accurate. The time included in this portion of the study will vary depending on how much time you wish to commit to it.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

This research poses minimal risk as it is asking you to reflect on and relay your experiences as a long-tenured pastor, something which could occur in any conversation on any given day. However, a breach in confidentiality poses a minor risk to participants who share sensitive information about their history and/or day-to-day activities in the pastorate. I will take steps to minimize this risk by removing identifying markers in the data and replacing them with a numbered system to protect anonymity as well as keeping hard-copy data in a locked security box and all electronic data backed up in a secure, password-protected location. Only I will have access to the data.

Furthermore, if I become privy to information regarding child abuse, child neglect, elder abuse or intent to harm self or others it will trigger mandatory reporting requirements nullifying any other confidentiality agreements.

While there are no direct benefits which will be derived from this study, possible benefits to pastors as a group, to pastoral education institutions, to the Christian church, and to society as a whole are worth considering. These include the potential expansion of the knowledge base with regard to effective pastoral ministry and the preparation for such a ministry.

Compensation:

There is no compensation for involvement in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any reports published, the author will attempt to include no information that makes it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. All physical information collected, recorded, or printed will be locked down and only be accessible by the researcher. All electronic information such as emailed questionnaires and audio and video files will be saved on a password-protected computer. Since a focus group is involved, it cannot be guaranteed that all information stated in the focus group will be kept confidential. All information collected for the purposes of this study will be deleted by the researcher three years after the research project has been completed. Keeping this information for three years is a federal requirement for a study such as this.

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Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or to withdraw at any time.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Joshua C. Strunk. You may contact him at jctrunk@liberty.edu. His faculty advisor is Dr. Fred Milacci, and you may contact him at Liberty University's School of Education at 434-582-2445 or fmilacci@liberty.edu. You may ask any questions you have now by contacting the researcher or the advisor via email or phone. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact the researcher or the advisor by email or phone.

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.

How to withdraw from the study:

In the event that you would like to withdraw from this study, please email the principle researcher, Joshua Strunk, at jctrunk@liberty.edu. Please cc Dr. Fred Milacci on this email using fmilacci@liberty.edu. In this event the information that you have submitted during the research stage will not be used in the written record of the research or study, all of your information collected in this research will be deleted from the digital and physical records.

You should print a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

If you have read and understood the above information, asked questions and received answers, and will consent to participate in the study and to being recorded for both the interview and the focus group, please indicate such in the boxes below.

I have read, understood, and printed a copy of the above consent form and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

Signature:

I give my consent to be recorded for both the interview and focus group discussion.

Signature:

APPENDIX D: EXAMPLES OF REFLECTIVE MEMOING

09/2014 (Recorded prior to 5th Interview)

First impressions of church and community: So here we are, another conservative denominational church snatched straight out of the 70s, which fits the area because the whole neighborhood looks dated and dumpy. It's like something out of an old sitcom. The church's property is right in the middle of the neighborhood, central but too small to be of any real value unless you're going to utilize the parking lot. That's not good planning though. You'd think that a pastor who'd been around as long as this guy has would have instilled more vision in his church than that. But what do you want in a place that no one wants to be. It's an old, sleepy, pass through town - and honestly the church looks the same. Why am I here? What am I possibly going to learn from a pastor who has chosen to stay in a community like this, who has allowed his church to look like this? Man it is going to suck if I just wasted all that time driving out here.

10/2014 (Recorded following the 9th Interview)

As I drive down here, south of the Mason-Dixon Line, I find myself conflicted. The memories of my time here, from my first pastorate - really from my first two pastorates, are still very raw. I spent so many years blaming the south and the religious culture of the south for my pastoral failures. But I'm here now and for the first time I finally see that perhaps my understanding of leadership was immature and that my vision of what could be done, what should be done - was myopic. Perhaps what it comes down to is that I really just wasn't ready to lead. I thought that I was ready because I knew a lot of Scripture and I had a great understanding of systems and people; all of the stuff that I had read and been told one needed to know to be a great leader; but perhaps what I lacked the whole time was maturity.

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did you choose to become a pastor?
2. What does a normal work week look like for you?
3. How would you describe the history and culture of the church in which you serve?
4. How would you describe the overall health of the church in which you serve?
5. What kind of struggles have you faced in your time as the senior pastor of this church?
6. So why have you decided to remained in pastoral ministry at this church?
7. What is your understanding of the concept of a long-tenured pastorate?
8. What are your thoughts on the fact that your tenure is considered a long-tenure?
9. What do you believe contributed most to your long-tenure?
10. What other factors, such as the church or community culture, do you believe contributed most to your long-tenure?
11. What are your thoughts on the following areas which have been identified as having strong influence on ministry, tenure and efficacy?
 - a. Personal spiritual formation?
 - b. Physical and psychological self-care?
 - c. Emotional and cultural intelligence?
 - d. Marriage and family health?
 - e. Leadership and management skills?
12. In what specific ways do you think your tenure has contributed to or influenced your effectiveness in the pastorate of this church?

APPENDIX F: TRANSCRIPTIONIST NON-DISCLOSURE FORM

I, _____, transcriptionist for this research study agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all recordings or documents received from Joshua C. Strunk related to his phenomenological research study on long-tenured pastors. Furthermore I agree to not make copies of any recording of documents I receive from Joshua C. Strunk. I agree to keep all study related materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession; to return them to Joshua C. Strunk in a timely manner when I am finished with my work, and to destroy any electronic files in my possession containing study related materials.

I am aware that I can and will be held legally responsible for any breach of this confidentiality agreement, and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information to which I am privy.

Transcriptionists Name (Printed)

Date

Transcriptionists Name (Signed)