

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

Church Conflict in the Atlanta-Rome District: Developing a Systematic  
Approach to Conflict and Membership Attrition

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of the requirements for the completion of the course,

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Thesis Project

by

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## ABSTRACT

The decline in church membership and attendance of the 22 churches and 18 ministries of the Atlanta-Rome District (ARD) of the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church has dramatically impacted the ministries and effectiveness of the Atlanta-Rome District churches in conducting what Jesus Christ commanded in the Great Commission. The congregations whose membership once boasted governmental officials and civil rights icons have all but dwindled to a faithful few that continue to support the Spiritual and fiduciary obligations of the local churches. The rise of non-denominational churches with a more contemporary style of worship as well as internal conflicts within the local CME church congregations presents an abounding effort to uphold 147 years of Christian Methodist history. The decline of membership within the local churches of the ARD not only affects missions and ministries, but it also presents a direct reflection of the disallowance of intergenerational and cultural changes, effective re-direction, and leadership's struggle to communicate the vision and establish a paradigm for the local church. Moreover, decisions within the local church are made by a select few, and any challenge to those decisions often results in congregational division. The conflicts within the local church prevent growth in discipleship, which results not only a loss in church membership and attendance but also a reduction in financial resources. However, this project will compare existing methods and models to determine an effective model to resolve conflict in the local church and reduce the number of members leaving the local church. Using church member surveys, the research for this project will be conducted on ten churches in the Atlanta area that are similar in size and the number in membership. The outcome of this project will present suggestive recommendations to resolve church conflict and increase membership.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARD- Atlanta-Rome District

BLUF- Bottom Line Up Front

CME- Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.

CPE- Clinical Pastoral Education

CTI- Christian Training Institute

LGBTQ- Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transvestite and Queer

NPU- Neighborhood Planning Unit

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

The Atlanta-Rome District (ARD) of the Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church encompasses over 95 churches and ministries covering the metro Atlanta and Rome area of Georgia. The ARD is one of three districts of the Georgia North Region of the Sixth Episcopal District and currently lists approximately 11,000 members that are affiliated with the churches of the ARD. Approximately 4,500 of those affiliated with the local churches are active members attending worship service regularly and financially supporting the local churches of the ARD. Many of the churches of the ARD reside within the city limits of Atlanta and Rome, GA.

The ARD has experienced a loss of membership and attendance in the local churches which has resulted in financial challenges, empty pews and churches structures that need repairs. Many of the ministries and missions both local and abroad have suffered due to lack of resources available to the local churches in the district. Many of the churches of the ARD conduct traditional styles of worship and are slow to introduce change in a more contemporary style of worship that will attract and retain millenials. Many of the churches have aging members that struggle to maintain the operations of the church and satisfy other financial obligations.

The CME church adopted the theme of 'Back to Basic' in ministry and evangelism during the church's quadrennial meeting (held in Birmingham, AL in July of 2018) to re-direct ministry efforts towards individuals by teaching and developing disciples to draw others to Christ. A new presiding prelate was appointed to the Sixth Episcopal District and he has addressed the requirement to grow the membership of the local churches and maintain them throughout the Sixth Episcopal District during his annual conference address.

The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church was founded on December 16, 1870 during a meeting of African-American ministers in Jackson, TN. These ministers had been granted permission from their slave owners to form their own denominational church with the support of white sponsors. The first church seated then in Augusta, GA, was named Trinity CME, or affectionately called ‘Mother Trinity,’ originating circa 1840—well before the CME church was organized. The CME church currently has 11 episcopal districts that span 32 states, including Haiti and Africa, and claims membership of over 800,000 congregants<sup>1</sup>. The sixth episcopal district of the CME church is comprised of 306 churches and ministries within the State of Georgia.

The CME operates on an itinerant system where pastors are appointed to congregations on an annual assignment. The appointment is either renewed at the yearly conference, or the pastor is re-assigned to another congregation. Many of the churches have experienced some form of conflict that extends to reduction or lack of available church funds, lack of communication, lack of direction and vision, lack of local policies, and leadership trivialities—all of which negatively affect the local church body. The largest edifice within the episcopal district maintains a membership of over 3,000 members, and the smallest congregation contains as few as six congregants. Many of the smaller churches are rooted in the rural areas of Georgia, which are comprised of families with long-standing presence in their surrounding communities.

The conflict within the local churches has resulted in a decline of the traditional church, as many of the millennials flock towards contemporary and non-denominational churches. Some churches are family-controlled—a circumstance that results in members relinquishing

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis, Roderick. *The Book of Discipline of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church*. Memphis: CME Publishing House, 2014

membership and millenials looking to churches where they are more received. In instances where the local church is family controlled, there are certain members of families that feel that they are entitled to make decisions and maintain leadership roles because of their family ties to the local church. The controlling family members usually conduct operations of the church according to personal agendas often refusing to compromise or listen to other's ideas. The refusal of change within the local churches has fostered a malignant worship environment of authoritarian power, which is often wielded to enforce individual agendas. Churches that have experienced attrition within their congregations must consider the way ministry and worship is conducted within the church, growth that is not taking place within the church, and look to changes that will not only retain members but also attract the unchurched.

Infighting over resources and personal interest of members has strained the local pastor's ability to lead, as he is appointed by the presiding prelate and given authority by the Christian Methodist Book of Discipline as the chief executive officer of the local church. He is also tasked with maintaining order and decency among congregants. Churches' refusal to change has caused financial issues for the local churches of the ARD, which have resulted in several churches within the ARD to either close or merge with larger congregations. Conflict within the local churches where members refuse to follow the pastor stymies the spiritual growth and progression of the church, as Romans 14:19 states, "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."

## **1. Statement of the Problem**

This research is being conducted to address the decline in membership due to conflict at local CME churches within the Atlanta area of the Atlanta-Rome District of the CME church. The district covers the metro Atlanta area and Northwest Georgia and includes 40 churches and ministries. The population within the metro Atlanta area currently is approximately 480,000 people and grows on the average of 1,100 people weekly, yet the success of the local CME churches in drawing new residents has become abeyant.

Butler Street CME is the largest CME Church within the Atlanta area and reports over 550 members during the annual conference of the Sixth Episcopal District held with all the churches reporting. Over the years, church membership of Butler Street CME and attendance have declined to an average of 160 congregants for Sunday morning worship and active membership of approximately 200 members. The local churches continue to report the membership at the church's peak membership in hopes of growing to attain the high numbers. The summary of reporting depicts a false reality of the state of each church with many of the churches of the ARD reporting two to three times the number of active members. Many of the roles have not been purged or attempts to reach former members for accurate reporting.

Each year, the itinerancy system of the CME church allows a presiding prelate to assign a new pastor to a charge based on his discretion and decision. During the changing of leadership, the membership naturally changes. Requirements to support the connectional office in Memphis, TN place obligations on all local churches within the CME Church, but they place financial burden on the local churches of the ARD.

## **2. Statement of Limitation**

This project is intended to present the CME churches of the Atlanta-Rome District with recommendations for resolving church conflict in a traditional church setting and to introduce problem solving and foundational techniques for local bylaws, worship styles, and short- and long-term planning to reinvigorate the church ministries of the ARD. In addition, this project will focus on ten CME churches within the Atlanta area that have experienced a decline in membership and continue to operate in a financially constrained environment. This project will also review models that have been tested and provide recommendations to assist in growing the local church to fulfill the Great Commission.

This project has not been proven or tested enough to validate the effectiveness of conflict resolution within this research. This project will be presented as recommendations or best practice to be shared among the congregations and pastors during one of two annual Christian Training Institute (CTI) events conducted for clergy, church leaders, and laypersons as a requirement of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) for pastors and leaders. Each pastor and leader within the denomination is required to attend annual training deemed necessary by the Board of Christian Education and approved by the presiding prelate as prescribed in The Book of Discipline of the CME Church.

This project is not limited to any race or ethnic group but is designed to present topics of congregational conflicts that have resulted in a decline in membership and growth.

The research survey to be conducted for this project will be conducted at ten local churches within the ARD which currently report an annual membership of over 200 members. Upon approval from the presiding prelate of the Sixth Episcopal District and the local pastors of

the ARD, each church participating will be requested to ensure at least seven members participate but no more than fifteen participate in the survey. All survey entries over fifteen participants will be disregarded. The survey will be conducted on a selected Sunday after church or per the participants' availability to complete the survey. This survey will be conducted anonymously to prevent any reprisal against a participating member. This survey will also address topics that have been identified not as the origin of the conflict within the churches, but as contributing factors in a decline in attendance and effective ministries.

The survey will address six topics presenting conflict within the local church using questions that will require a yes or no response:

- a. Church Finance
- b. Policies and Procedures
- c. Vision, Mission and Core Values
- d. Personality Differences
- e. Leadership Disputes
- f. Change with Addressing Intergenerational Challenges

### **3. Theoretical Basis**

In 60-70 AD, the Apostle Peter first introduced what would become the Acts 2 Model for a healthy church and church growth in establishing the first church in Antioch, The Apostle Peter presented a foundation of church planting and church growth through evangelism and the results were, [the church grew daily]. The Apostle Peter provided a holistic and Spiritual approach to ministry and evangelism as he continued with the

command of the Great Commission, the last instructions provided by Christ to the disciples prior to His ascension to heaven in Matthew 28:19-20.

<sup>41</sup> Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. <sup>42</sup> And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. Acts 2:41-42

The evangelistic model presented by the Apostle Paul characterized a relational perspective on the fellowship of the new converts; breaking bread and praying together demonstrating effective ministry in the soul saving and baptizing of the lost. In Acts 2, it also mentions how the unsaved and non-believers experienced confusion as Peter and the other apostles spoke in a discombobulated and foreign language leading the unsaved people to believe that the apostles may have been drunk. The Apostle Peter addressed the crowd so boldly that it touched and convicted the hearts of the masses, leaving eager to receive this mysterious and achromatic shift. The Apostle Peter accomplished the foundation of the first church by establishing a Christ-like example for the people to follow:

1. The Apostle Peter was bold in his teaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ: the teaching of the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and the teaching of Jesus through His experience as a disciple and follower of Christ. Apostle Peter spoke of the journey of Christ being born of a woman, sacrificed on the cross, crucified, buried and raised from the dead for the salvation of the world. Mark 1:27 states that “the people were amazed at what the Apostle Peter taught, so much so that they questioned among themselves,

saying, what thing is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him”<sup>2</sup>.

2. Acts 2 mentions that the people fellowshiped daily, and their fellowship contributed to the Spiritual growth of the people of the church in Antioch. The people formed bonds and partnerships to protect new converts and the weaker Christians against false prophets mentioned in Matthew 7:15-20, which states,

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor *can* a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits you will know them.” The type of fellowship expressed was a form of Koinonia which infers collectiveness, togetherness and being unified. Matthew 7:15-20

3. The Acts 2 evangelism model demonstrates a form of communing with one another through the Holy Sacraments and through food fellowship for the physical edification of the body, as the church communed from house to house (Acts 2:46).
4. The Apostle Peter taught them about prayers by ensuring that they knew the proper times as well as how to pray for one another. In Acts 3:1, Peter taught the people of Antioch the time that he and John would go to certain places to pray and how they would be postured for prayer: “Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour, and subsequently being delayed by a lame at the gate. The apostles used the delay as a way of healing the lame before venturing in to pray.” The Apostle

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<sup>2</sup> King James Version Holy Bible. n.d.

Peter reinforces the evangelism model by admonishing the people of Antioch to continually remain in prayer.

The Apostle Peter presented Christians with a model for evangelism but over time denominations and cultural changes have influenced evangelism. The input of personal beliefs and interests of congregants in evangelism has affected growth by deviating from Biblical instruction. The personal beliefs and feelings are often considered in evangelism and prevents the intent of the meaning of the inspired writing of Scripture in the Bible. Church conflict can be healthy conflict if there is a positive resolution, but unhealthy conflict can cause a church's demise. The Apostle Paul mentioned in 2 Corinthians 12:7, "And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure." God maintains a certainty to ensure that His believers remain faithful and steadfast in our affliction and pain as we are tempted.

Some of the issues that concern the body of Christ are conflicts with secularism, to include views on homosexuality, abortions, marriage, and whether the church should be changed to accommodate changing lifestyles and cultural changes. However, Scripture instructs us on how we should operate within the church, and it also addresses each sin and provides guidance for a Christian way of life. Christ warned the disciples of attacks from the outside; those of the enemy would come to try to destroy the foundational existence of a church. Because of this, the early church found itself in constant battle with sin and temptation and often tormented and tried for the sake of Christ. Christ told the disciples that they would know these people by their fruit.

In his book *Surviving Church Conflict*, Dave Peters addresses how the fruits of the Spirit should direct the work amongst Christians in working through and surviving struggles within the body of Christ and impresses on Galatians 5:22-23<sup>3</sup>: “but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” Christ warned the disciples to be on constant guard against false prophets that would come to try to discourage the work of the disciples on behalf of Christ Jesus. Christ instructed the disciples, as stated in 1 Corinthians 10:13, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” The Apostle Paul admonished the people of Corinth to remain vigilant against those that would bear false witness against Christ by introducing sin and temptation, but he also gives comfort to the Corinthians by prefacing that God would create ways to prevent the people from falling into sinful practices.

As Christianity is now met with cultural and generational changes, conflict within local churches yields division within the church. This conflict has attracted studies and research beyond Scripture to attempt to restore peace within the church. Amanda Marutzky, author of *Making A Deal with the Devil*, suggests mediation as a form of conflict resolution as an effective means to dealing with the deity and the church in resolving conflicts.<sup>4</sup> Marutzky identifies the source of conflict within the church are because of hot-button issues:

Secular hot-button issues have invaded modern church culture and sparked internal debate. While there are numerous sources of conflict, the most predominant include: the

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<sup>3</sup> Peters, Dave. *Surviving Church Conflict*. VA: Herald Press, 1997

<sup>4</sup> Marutzky, Amanda. "Making a Deal with the Devil: A Mediation Approach to Mitigating the Negative Effects of Church Conflict." *Pepperdine Dispute Resolution Law Journal*, 2010: 303-328

treatment and acceptance of homosexuality, the adherence to or absolution of traditional theological beliefs, the role and scope of church leadership, and the operation of church finances.

The writer suggests that the hot-button issues often affect the growth of the church and yield negative emotional and Spiritual effects as the church navigates conflict resolution. In reference to the hot-button issues, the writer maintains that if the issues are not resolved, they may hold an even greater negative effect if the congregation is dissolved. Conflict affects the finances of the church body and the church property, thus interfering with the basic life support of the Spiritual organism. She states that mediation is better than negotiations or litigations, as mediation facilitates a willful form of compromise. Marutzky describes the positive side of utilizing a mediator:

Marutzky states that mediation is more appropriate than negotiations and litigations as the church should utilize litigations as a last resort method for resolving conflict. He states that mediation uses a neutral third party which prevents any partiality on a solution. A third party will ensure that solutions are reached in a fair and impartial manner. Marutzky states additionally that mediation addresses underlying needs and interests of parties and brings all the concerns to the group to be addressed. Lastly, he states that mediation is more aligned with Christian conflict and how to resolve it in a peaceful manner as we are taught as Christian to work out our own differences in love.

This model identifies who should mediate in the event of critical church conflict regardless of whether conflict resolution is reached or if a resolution is not imminent. Her mediation model addresses both sides involved in conflict resolution, and it allows for a healthy solution for the church, granted that both sides are willing to compromise and be equitable.

In more contemporary and complex churches, addressing abortion rights and homosexuality carries a stronger potential for church division than it did decades earlier, since churches today contain both those of traditional values as well as those with a more free-spirited form of worship that welcomes and embraces all people in the body of Christ. These churches are faced with moral dilemmas on how the church should deal with a society that is culturally charged and willing to accept lifestyle changes of same sex marriages and legalized abortions over what is seen as morally right in the eyes of a conservative person refusing to change with the culture.

Geisler and Turek presented the argument on how lawmakers should legislate morality with the issues of homosexuality and abortion regarding the cultural change and considering the Spiritual commandments that the local churches are faced to contend with. Although the authors believe these issues should be left to be answered by legislation as a political problem, these issues hinge on Biblical interpretation that is not offered as an issue of politics and society.<sup>5</sup> The writers present the pros and con of the healthiness of homosexual relationships and marriages as well as a perspective on how homosexual relationships violate the laws of nature, morality, the anatomy, organ function, and biology of the human body. The writers state that those that live a life of homosexuality often use the defense of being born a homosexual to explain and defend their sexual orientation. However, the consequences of a culture of homosexuality was met with God's wrath in Genesis 19:24 when God rained down brimstone and fire from heaven on Sodom and Gomorrah, destroying the two cities.

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<sup>5</sup> Geisler, Norman, and Frank Turek. *Legislating Morality*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishing, 1998.

The authors defend the rights of a woman as it pertains to her body and abortion as a right and freedom of a woman to choose how she treats her body. The authors defend a woman's right to bodily privacy in making decisions about what happens to their body. The authors also considered how abortions could aid in societal problems such as overcrowding and a high rate of child abuse. A woman's right to decide would also give a woman that has been raped an option on keeping a possibly unwanted child. Ultimately, though, the decision to abort violates the laws of Moses in Deuteronomy 32:39, where God tells Moses, "See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded, and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand."

God explained to Moses that He is the One Who gives life, takes life, and controls the laws of nature as they pertain to the body. God was specific in revealing to Moses and revealing that He decides the fate of man and not man themselves. The CME Book of Discipline in section 131.4g on Moral and Ethical Behavior explicitly discloses that same abortions and same sex marriage are unacceptable. Same sex marriages will not be conducted or recognized in the church and any pastor that performs same sex marriages will have his or her license to preach revoked as a violation of the laws of the church.<sup>6</sup>

Many ministers freshly out of seminary have high moral expectations of the church, church leadership, and how church should be conducted but once church discord presents itself, these new ministers develop an attitude that the members of the church that they pastor operate within the church in a sinful nature<sup>7</sup>. Ann Garrido states that many ministers graduate from

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<sup>6</sup> (Ibid n.d.)

<sup>7</sup> Garrido, Ann. "Embracing Discord: Preparing Ministers for Healthy Conflict." *Human Development*, 2012: 11-15

seminary with Christ-like attributes and with an expectation that all leaders and church members will act in the same manner, but when this does not happen, many new seminary graduates will ignore the conflict that plagues the church and attempt to overshadow the conflict with ministry. She suggests four components that may be used to develop and implement a program for conflict management:

- a. **Articulate A Healthy, Positive Theology of Conflict from the Start.** We must remain cognizant of diverse cultures, backgrounds, and opinions. Disagreements usually come when others do not understand the background, culture, or thought process of those in their native cultures, which represents a lack of respect for diverse cultures and ignorance to cultural changes.
- b. **Cultivate Capacities Needed to Remain in the Midst of Conflict.** The church needs to have a conversation about healthy conflict resolution that considers not only how a person speaks, but also in the way that a person thinks. Capacity involves the set of language (how we speak to others in our cultures) or words a person has been taught during the growth process from birth to adulthood and how this learned language affects how the person approaches others and interacts during conflict. Garrido mentions three capacities that contribute to conflict:
  1. **Curiosity:** without curiosity there lacks a desire to learn or understand. When people are curious, an opportunity opens to turn disagreements into learning experiences. There must be a yearning from those involved in conflict to better understand the disagreement and how it affects the outcome of resolution.
  2. **Self-Worth:** a person's self-worth demonstrates not only a knowledge of personal strengths, but also weaknesses and shortcomings. Self-worth presents the

opportunity for a person to conduct self-evaluation of himself or herself to encourage self-awareness of his or her contributions to an argument.

3. Comfort with Emotion is the acknowledgment of personal feelings, and it addresses how a person's feelings contribute to a dispute. During conflict, the observation of how a person's emotions contribute to the conflict, how the person removes his/her personal emotions, and how the person re-directs reason over personal feelings in accomplishing healthy conflict resolution presents to the person how their emotions contribute to the conflict. When a person prioritizes the facts of what contributed to the conflict over their personal feelings it helps to facilitate healthy conflict resolution.
- c. Introduce Skills for Moving Beyond Conflict
1. Listening Skills, such as using good eye contact, effective body posture, and non-verbal language are very effective in demonstrating respect and gaining attention.
  2. Problem Solving Approaches are introduced by stimulating thought through discussion of the parties in conflict to gain a healthy resolution that is agreeable to each party.
  3. Conflict Discernment Skills utilize the aid of others to introduce different perspectives to opposing sides of an argument.
- d. Model a Community Made Stronger by Its Conflicts. The author states that once the conflict is resolved effectively, the church should emulate the model to effectively reach a peaceful resolution. The steps used for mediation should be applied to local policies and procedures as a recommended means for resolving conflict and facilitating Spiritual growth.

#### **4. Statement of Methodology**

Each chapter of this project will represent different facets of conflict resolution according to both secular and Biblical principles in a church setting. Listed below is the intended content and proposed delivery for each chapter in this project:

- a. Chapter 1 discusses the overall setting of the church that inspired this project. This will include churches that will be represented for the project. This chapter addresses some of the causes of strife that has plagued the local denominational churches. It presents the sub topics thereof in the following chapter. This chapter introduces the need for the study and why it is imperative that this model should be implemented into the training for church leadership and ministerial teams within the district. This chapter will also expound on some of the issues that are problematic for the pastors that have either been appointed to the different charges and are experiencing personality paradigms, which places the church in an idle position with minimal to no growth and inability to retain and obtain necessary resources.
  
- b. Chapter 2 will introduce the six subtopics that have been identified as causes for the decrease in church attendance and the issues that draw conflict within the local church. The survey will consist of 33 questions that address four areas of conflict within the churches of the ARD. The questions form six subtopics: church finance, the church's refusal to change, pastor and leadership disputes, lack of policies and procedures, lack of vision, and personality differences within the leadership of the local church. Research data drawn from this chapter will be used to identify how church conflict affects church growth and Spiritual birthing. For each subtopic, there

will be an introduction, explanation of the cause, and explanation as to why it is important that church conflict resolved as peacefully as possible with minimal collateral damage. This allows for healing to begin in order to restore the local church to a thriving refuge that fulfills the Great Commission, as Christ commanded in Matthew 28:19-20: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” This chapter formulates a basis for the research and development of recommendations on resolving conflict within the churches of the ARD and addressing the attrition of the local churches of the ARD. Recommendations will be presented: mediation, a model for pre-conflict resolution, conflict resolution recommendations for pastors, and the Biblical model of how we are to resolve conflicts with additional support from the Book of Discipline of the Christian Methodist Church on the laws of the CME church and the general rules of the CME church. A comparison of current literature will also be presented to support how church conflict affects the attrition of membership. This chapter ends with a transition into the applied research.

- c. Chapter 3 presents the results of the research apart from the results of the survey data obtained. To maintain anonymity, the names of participants are omitted to produce a more transparent and honest assessment of the Spiritual climate within the selected CME church environments. The results of the survey will be compiled and inserted in the appendix of the research document. Chapter 3 presents the survey research results and analysis on each survey question. The research survey will be conducted anonymously by active members of the selected local churches of the ARD. Active

- membership explicitly includes support of the local church through financial giving and regular attendance. This writer will conduct independent research using surveys conducted after proper non-disclosure forms are completed by the participants.
- d. Chapter 4 will provide recommendations for use within the Episcopal District to resolve church conflict and promote a more harmonious environment. The four-step model will be presented with an explanation of each step to assist with the struggle that local pastors and congregations experience weekly in trying to compete with a secular environment among other factors lead to decline in Christian stewardship. Approval will be obtained through the Office of the Presiding Prelate of the Sixth Episcopal District with guidance and boundaries for the completion of the survey. Permission request will be forwarded to the pastors of each participating church of the ARD with the endorsement of the prelate and approval to conduct the research. Informed Consent Forms will be disseminated to each participating congregation along with instructions on how to complete and submit the survey.
- e. Chapter 5 summarizes the entire scope of the research, the results of the research survey, and the model presented. This chapter provides the systematic Bottom Line Up Front (BLUF) approach to reducing the attrition rate for the churches of the ARD and will examine causes, effects, and resolutions of conflict within the district for the anticipated growth and continued missions of the CME churches within the Sixth Episcopal District.

## **5. Review of Literature**

In the following chapter, the review of literature will be used to expound on the plaguing issues that continue to present conflict within the congregations of the CME churches of the Atlanta-Rome District and will provide a systematic approach to restoring peace and harmony within the edifices. Conflict is invited if it brings productive and constructive resolutions.

## CHAPTER 2

### FOUNDATION

#### Causes of Conflict

Alzalur Rahim defines conflict in his book *Managing Conflict in Organizations* as a type of behavior which occurs when two or more parties are in opposition on in battle as a result of perceived relative deprivation from the activities of or interacting with another person or group.<sup>8</sup>

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.  
Hebrews 12:15

Thom and Joani Schultz<sup>9</sup> in *Why Nobody Wants to Go to Church Anymore* give four reasons why people have either stopped or limited their time in attending regular worship. They state that with a changing society, people have a more defined reasoning for attending church, and that is to participate in the worship experience and to experience Spiritual growth and guidance. The writers express that many of the church congregations have demonstrated a steady decline in regular Sunday worship attendance over the years. Schultz cites four reasons that people are leaving the congregations.

Some feel judged and have a view of the church as being unfair. Many feels as though they are judged based on their lifestyles, economic or educational status, dress, or even their social status. Most feel as though the church has taken a judgmental role in their lives by

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<sup>8</sup> Rahim, Afzalur. *Managing Conflict in Organizations*. New Brunswick: Transactions Publishers, 2011.

<sup>9</sup> Schultz, Thom and Joani. *Why Nobody Wants to Go to Church Anymore*. Carol Stream : Zondervan, 2013: 23-29

becoming critical and condemning. Schultz states that many of the younger people feel as though the church has become a place of lecturing, and they would rather engage in discussion and debate rather than being told something without the ability to respond in any way. The authors state that many of the younger people in church feel as though Christians are unwilling to engage in debate. There is an overwhelming majority of those surveyed during Schultz' research stated that church members were a bunch of hypocrites and that Sunday morning worship did not mimic Monday morning actions. Schultz writes that many people felt as though the church people had expectations of others that they were not willing to uphold themselves. He states that many of those surveyed felt that God was irrelevant in their lives but would like to know that there is a God and that He cares for them. They preferred not to be lectured during sermons or attend worship service but did expect to have a relationship with God through independent prayer and meditation.

Two authors agree that the change in our culture has contributed to the divide within our churches and often presents avoidance instead of resolution. David Sawyer states that the media (television, talk shows, and even social media) has offered the antitheses to peace when issues of our churches are involved.<sup>10</sup> Issues within our congregations go unresolved as discussions often result in interruptions, shouting, and name-calling. The authors suggest that reality television provides an alternate to resolving conflict, yet the average citizen is oblivious to the reality that many of the reality shows are scripted and rehearsed. Reality shows and social media do not always reflect facts, but they also do not have an obligation to report issues within their entirety (so then can boost television ratings). The author infers that many congregants use the models

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<sup>10</sup>Sawyer, David R. *Hope in Conflict: Discovering Wisdom in Church Turmoil*. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2007:12-15.

presented on reality shows as a mean to dealing with people and issues within the church.

Cultural changes have caused individuals to form personal agendas that are not always the best practice for resolving conflict.

Norma Everist examines conflict resolution in *Church Conflict: From Contention to Collaboration*, she suggests that conflict is caused by the way that we view ourselves, culture and a changing view of God.<sup>11</sup> She also adds that there are seven types of conflict within the church:

1. Intrapersonal Conflict, where there is a constant battle inside individuals that is fought daily.
2. Interpersonal Conflict is conflict that is shared between individuals, and each side typically attempts to solicit support from others in their quest for victory against the other.
3. Conflict Over Issues, which involves conflicting views of the governmental systems, economics, race, politics, and other cultural and societal factors that relate to the Bible. Examples of this conflict could be current United States policies on immigration and the enforcement of deportation, which have been increasingly protested throughout the United States
4. Conflict Over Facts, which means conflict between truth and perception.
5. Conflict Over Values: worth, differing views of individual or group perspectives on components of worship or aspects of the ministry. Conflict

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<sup>11</sup> Everist, Norma Cook. *Church Conflict: From Contention to Collaboration*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004:9-21.

Over Values provides the source for change within a congregation as some members of the congregation will value rituals as other congregants may express a lack of importance in continuing to conduct worship.

6. Conflict Over Goals: Mission involves conflict where there are disagreements on how funds should be disbursed for certain missions and there is also a difference of opinion on what missions are important and require funding and resources allocated and those that should receive minimal or no support.

There are also disagreements on how the missions will be conducted and who will participate in the missions. The disagreements formed causes conflict on the goal that could have negative implications on the accomplishment of the goal.

7. Conflict Over Means: Ministry, relating to leadership within the ministry, goals and objectives which sometimes causes some in leadership to be more focused on their personal priorities rather than what may be best for the organization or church. In many instances, conflict over means happens when leaders have personal agendas for which they expect to gain resources and support while disregarding the overall intent of the ministry.

The seven types of conflict listed by Everist are more common in local churches, and are similar in the introduction of this research, as those issues contribute to much of the conflict within the churches of the ARD.

## Church Finance

Luke 18:12 states, “I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.” Luke the Evangelist confirmed his discipleship in prayer and his giving of his tithes in support of the commands of God as all the earth and thereof belong to God. Jesus even instructed the rich young ruler in Mark 10:17-31 to sell his worldly estate and give to the poor. During Biblical times, people in the church gave to support the poor, but now, with buildings, ministries, salaries, and missions to support, congregants’ financial support through tithing, offering and other discipleship means has been directed to support the operations, maintenance, utilities, and salaries of the church.

The CME Church General Office, headquartered in Memphis, TN, is equipped with full-time staff, prelates, and general officers that support over 800,000 members of the denomination. Each local church within the CME Church is assessed a certain amount of financial support to the headquarters to support daily operations and salaries. The amount assessed by each church is determined by a Joint Board of Finance, a board consisting of one clergy and one layperson from the regional districts. One of the duties assigned to the Joint Board of Finance for the CME church as directed in the Book of Discipline<sup>12</sup> in section 223.4(d) “states to apportion to all of the charges assessment necessary to balance the budget adopted by the Annual Conference.” Each local church is assessed an apportioned amount based on the budget of the general church and support for each region and respective districts. This amount also supports missions abroad in Haiti, Jamaica, Kenya and parts of Africa. The financial requirement of the local church to

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<sup>12</sup> Lewis, Roderick. *The Book of Discipline of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church*. Memphis: CME Publishing House, 2014 (42).

provide support for the ministries and general often places a burden on churches with smaller congregations. The assessment is based on reported membership of each local church.

In many of the local churches within each district, the pastors and the boards of finance consider the local fiduciary responsibility that includes mortgages, utilities, salaries, local missions and ministries as well as support for the General Conference. In many instances, the expenditures are higher than the revenue. When this occurs, the decision to support the general church through assessments or to ensure that the local church can operate has to be decided by the local pastor and the local finance board. Presiding elders and prelates expect the pastors to prioritize the financial needs of the General Conference over the local church and pending projects thereof. Consequently, this situation causes conflict between the pastors and the members of the church over giving and how money will be distributed.

This conflict over means is explained in the book by Dr. Paul L. Brown, Sr.,<sup>13</sup> a pastor of 30 years in the CME church and now Dean of Phillips School of Theology at the International Theological Center in Atlanta, GA. Dr. Brown states that when the local church, regardless of size, fails to support the General Conference, it creates a pecuniary shortfall in support of the headquarters and limits the ability of the headquarters to function effectively. He states that there is an “unspoken rule” for pastors that do not meet the financial obligations in supporting the General Conference and the ministries of the general church. The “unspoken rule” states that if a pastor places the needs of his or her local church over the financial obligation to support the General Conference, then the pastor will be punished and transferred to a smaller charge or

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<sup>13</sup> Paul L. Brown, Sr. *Stress and the Pulpit*. Atlanta: Zondervan, 2015:31-32.

inconvenienced with travel for the following year. The pastor is deemed “unsuccessful” and is replaced with another pastor during the annual conference.

This financial obligation to support the General Conference places a strain on the local church and causes conflict between the pastor and the members. According to the laws of the Book of Discipline of the CME Church, the local congregations have a requirement for the salary of the pastor, his or her individual school requirements, health insurance, housing, and travel. Much of the conflict involving finance in the local church between the pastor and the congregation comes with priorities. Many of the members are asked to provide the church with additional financial support, and many of the resources for ministries in the local church are left with minimal to no support for those in need.

In his book *I Will*, Thom Rainer mentions a shift within the local congregation with individuals within the church that request to be a part of the decision making of how funds are distributed in the local church. Rainer notes that when the church members are discontent, they begin to withhold in their giving<sup>14</sup>. He states that there is a battle over who controls the funds of the church and how the funds are to be used. In his book *Church Finance 101*, Thomas Reike<sup>15</sup> addresses the attitude towards the giving of church congregants, stating that there are some that give more than others and also have higher expectations of how funds should be distributed. Reike states that churches have meetings to discuss how to raise funds or where funds should be distributed, but that miss the opportunities to teach the membership on discipleship of giving of time and funds to the ministry and the poor and on expectations on a godly living. He states that

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<sup>14</sup> Rainer, Thom. *I Will*. Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Reike, Thomas. "Church Finance 101." *The Clergy Journal* 78, no. 9 (Sep 2002): 29

decisions are made only by Stewardship or Finance Committees, which causes conflict and strife within congregations as many feels as though they do not have a voice when it comes to the church finances.

Gary Bredfeldt describes four types of churches<sup>16</sup> where the leaders demonstrate a wiser style of leadership through being an example of the Christ-like attributes. Each of the churches maintains a categorical style of leadership that is tied to Biblical principles. The leadership style for each of the categorical churches starts with the pastor as the leader of the church and maintains a disciplined congregation of followers:

- a. The leadership style of the Proclamation Church is truth-oriented and faith-oriented with a focus on preaching the Word of God and requires an analytically-driven pastor.
- b. The leadership style of the Program Church is truth-oriented and works-oriented, exemplifying the truth within the Bible and that our lifestyles should reflect what we are taught.
- c. The leadership style of the Power Church is spirit-oriented and works-oriented with a visionary leader as the church experiences rapid growth.
- d. Finally, the leadership style of the Pluralistic Church is spirit-oriented and faith-oriented with pastoral care driven leadership.

Bredfeldt mentions that regardless of how effective the pastor is in growing the ministries of the church, the church will not grow, and the pastor will not be effective if there are unhealthy and unresolved disputes.

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<sup>16</sup> Bredfeldt, Gary. *Great Leader Great Teacher*. Chicago: Moody Publishing, 2006.

Ruth Powell mentions the uptick in giving according to research conducted on financial discipleship in the Anglican and Protestant Church in 2008: those that gave at least 10% of their income felt secure in belonging to the local church and claimed to have grown due to the local church's teaching along with involvement in leadership.<sup>17</sup> An aspect of financial conflict that arises within the CME Church is the distribution and use of funds for giving. Finance within a local church is very important as it is vital for the operation and ministries of the local church. As there is a decline in membership, there also is a decline in finance within a church and this poses a detriment to missions and ministries. A church that is driven by money will find itself so focused on budget that it will not have a free-flowing ministry that has the flexibility to tend to the poor and support all ministries.<sup>18</sup> When a church focuses more on accumulating money than conducting ministry, the church has lost the focus of the Great Commission of reaching, teaching, training and sending out to make more disciples.

There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, But the tongue of the wise brings healing. Proverbs 12:18

### The Church Refuses to Change

Change is not always bad when it comes to the church. As the culture changes, so do the people within the church. In *Announcing the Kingdom*, Arthur Glasser emphasized the importance of Genesis 1:28<sup>19</sup>: "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and

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<sup>17</sup> Powell, Ruth. "Financial Giving to Churches." *Christian Research Association Bulletin* 18, no. 3 (2008):

<sup>18</sup> Browning, Dave. *Deliberate Simplicity*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009:66-67.

<sup>19</sup> Glasser, Arthur F. *Announcing the Kingdom*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing Group, 2003.

over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.”” Glasser notes that God gave man dominion over the earth, and over time has continued to evolve into the free-will of man and less to the commands of God. Glasser states that dominion and much control of the earth has caused resistance from man towards the intent of God for man. Glasser mentions that even though the Bible expresses what sin is and that there would be suffering, injustices and exploitations, man has managed to satisfy the physical needs and enjoyment with cultural changes over time.

Tom Houston suggests that in a world of constant change and reliance on technology, millennials are needed now more than ever and should be placed in leadership roles within the church. He states that churches should make room for the youth in leadership, just as the Apostle Paul brought Timothy to the forefront of local ministry at the age of 15 years.<sup>20</sup> Many millennials feel neglected within the church as the church scrambled to find a resolution of inclusion for the “Joshua Generation:”<sup>21</sup>

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the  
believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith,  
in purity. 1 Timothy 4:12

Many churches struggle with addressing another cultural issue that is present within many congregations: developing a Spiritual strategy to minister to Christian homosexuals that carry the burden of their sexuality despite their Christian faith:

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<sup>20</sup> Houston, Tom. "Bible Model for Leadership." *Leadership Development for World Christianity*, 2004: 227-233.

<sup>21</sup> Squires, C. *Post-Racial News: Covering the "Joshua Generation". The Post-Racial Mystique: Media and Race in the Twentieth-First Century*. New York: NYU Press, 2014.

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind.

1 Corinthians 6:9

Those of the homosexual and transgender lifestyles are often shunned and condemned in the church, causing them to experience rejection as opposed to what Christians are taught in Psalms 97:10: to love the sinner and hate the sin. John McArthur says that congregations should empathize with Christians who struggle with sexuality and religion by emphasizing hope and holiness through God in delivering them of their struggle with their sexuality.<sup>22</sup> McArthur makes five recommendations in his strategy for ministering to struggling Christians.

McArthur states that the individual must be identified with Christ, from whence a relationship with Christ can grow. He or she must confess, and the confession includes the condition as well as the behavior of homosexuality as cited in 1 John 1:9, confessing our sins and receiving forgiveness from God and repent as repentance involves a complete renunciation of homosexual sin as repentance brings about change in the attitude and the feeling. He states that the individual must be taught God's original model for sexuality as we were created in Genesis 1:27, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them", and lastly, the individual must view a sexual relationship as a matter of worship to God and not to sexual perversions of the flesh; those that yield to homosexuality yield to sexual greed.

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<sup>22</sup> MacArthur, John. *Right Thinking in a World Gone Wrong*. Eugene: Harvest House Publishing, 2009.

Millennials are challenged by traditional styles of worship as now technology and expressions of other worshippers can be viewed through social media. Todd Johnson cites three movements of merging tradition and innovation into the church<sup>23</sup> as a cycle for the life of Spiritual formation that Christians experience. The movements detail forms of change as Christians progress in their Spiritual growth from one degree to another in developing a pattern of psychological development that enhances Spiritual growth. The first of the three movements are orientation, which introduces the new congregant to the church. It is during this phase that the congregant gains knowledge of the church to include family, community, religion, comfortability, predictability, and expectations as a member of the church. The orientation phase is also where the new congregant learns the history, mission, vision and direction of the church.

As society and culture change, the orientation becomes a phase of disorientation, which involves changing statuses of leadership, economic change, and millennials become uncomfortable with preaching and traditional worship styles, and the member is discouraged with the church. A new perspective is introduced or there is waiting for change to occur which represents many millennials continuing to worship in a traditional environment. This is the phase of orientation where millennials leave the church to search out churches that are more Spiritually-based than worship than traditionally valued congregations.

Traditional worship style hinders many traditional churches from growing as many millennials migrate to churches with more contemporary styles of worship. In *Flamingo Road Story*, Dan Southerland describes two major changes within his church that produced

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<sup>23</sup> Johnson, Todd E. *The Conviction of Things Not Seen: Worship and Ministry in the 21st Century*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books House Company, 2002.

congregational growth: the introduction of a significantly more contemporary worship style and switching from traditional Sunday school to relational small groups<sup>24</sup>. These two changes appealed to the millennials in the church, and the congregation grew. According to Southerland, the millennials brought other millennials to the church.

Millennials seek to be more involved in worship and desire a worship style that is not tied to traditional hymns; worship style that allows them more freedom in worship, and praise. In *The New Worship*,<sup>25</sup> Barry Liesch describes why singing chorus is so important to both Generation X and millennials; he says that choruses are the means of these generation's intimacy in worship expressions as well as a means of prayer; the repetition promotes understanding, regular attendance and Spiritual formation. He states that congregational songs that are sang in worship as opposed to songs read from a hymnal are paramount to their Spiritual journey and allows them to have fun while expressing themselves to God; in order to maintain a healthy congregation that caters to all generations, a church needs to seek Spiritual balance. A healthy Spiritual balance creates a worship atmosphere that fulfills the Spiritual needs of all congregants.

### Pastor-Leadership Disputes

Conflict between pastors and other church leaders tends to trickle into the congregation and destroys the unity of the church. According to Debra Hunsinger, one method of understanding the feelings of pastors and other church leaders is to show empathy towards other

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<sup>24</sup> Southerland, Dan. *Transitioning: Leading Your Church Through Change*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002. 11

<sup>25</sup> Liesch, Barry Wayne. *The New Worship: Straight Talk from Music and the Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001.

members.<sup>26</sup> Leaders must have self-empathy, however, before they are able to show compassion and care for the others, even as a form of mitigation during conflict. Self-judgment and self-pity in seeking out self but placing oneself in the position of the other assists with the resolution of leadership disputes.

Tara Barthel and David Edling address group dynamics and group agendas with a form of leadership conflict<sup>27</sup> that focuses on James 4:12, which states, “From whence come wars and fighting among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.” These authors examine how groups form within church congregations to push their own agendas and as opposed to supporting the leadership or the pastor, which brings about discord within any congregation. Charles Cosgrove also notes that leadership coalitions sometimes form alliances within a church, and groups of congregants take sides either against pastor or against other groups.<sup>28</sup>

According to one Lifeway study in 2008 on the tenure of pastors, over 50% of ministers leaving the ministry were either fired or resigned within the first five years of their ministry, but 55% of the 50% that left returned in some facet of vocational ministry. Among the reasons for leaving the ministry was lack of fractured unity of the church(es), conflict over leadership styles, relational incompetence and tenure, and lack of communication and personality conflicts to list a

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<sup>26</sup> Hunsinger, Deborah Van Deusen and Latini, Theresa. *Transforming Church Conflict: Compassionate Leadership in Action*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013.

<sup>27</sup> Edling, David V. and Barthel, Tara. *Redeeming Church Conflicts: Turning Crisis into Compassion and Care*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012.

<sup>28</sup> Cosgrove, Charles H. and Hatfield, Dennis D. *The Hidden Church Conflict*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.

few. Of the findings, one of the factors that ministers listed as a root cause for leaving was they were not able to manage conflict within the church. Much of the conflict that the ministers experienced stemmed from the leadership within the church.<sup>29</sup> Many pastors felt as though they were not trained to deal with personality conflicts with individuals, as each person was expected to work through his or her differences to come to a healthy compromise.

Mark Gerzon describes three faces of leadership.<sup>30</sup> The first is demagogue leadership, where the leader is ruthless, intensifies existing conflicts, acts superior to others, dehumanizes adversaries, does not respect the views of others, and manipulates others by distorting the truth. This leader leads through fear and intimidation. The next type of leader is the manager. This face of leadership operates on exclusivity and places their interests or the interest of those within a small group over the interest of others within the organization. This type of leader refuses to contend with issues or conflicts that cross boundaries and conflict that seems to be a factor in the final decision of their group. The last of the leadership faces is the mediator or the peacemaker. This type of leader approaches conflict within an organization searches out peaceful resolutions to benefits both sides to bring about a win-win resolve.

Kenneth Haugk described a behavioral style of being antagonist in his book *Antagonists in the Church* where the person or persons become hostile towards those that oppose their ideas.<sup>31</sup> This type of person within a church threatens peace within the church by spurring discord between members and groups. Haugk states that antagonists within a church

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<sup>29</sup> Stewart, Kristin. "Keeping Your Pastor: An Emerging Challenge." *Journal for Liberal Arts and Science*, 2009: 113-114.

<sup>30</sup> Gerzon, Mark. *Leading Through Conflict Transformation*. Boston: Harvard Business School, 2006.

<sup>31</sup> Haugk, Kenneth. *Antagonists in the Church*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988.

demonstrate a psychological defense mechanism called displacement, where the antagonist shifts to someone else in the church other than the person that first approached him or her. He states that church antagonists incite anger and hostility in fellow congregants that are easy targets and attracts followers to promote their agenda. He states that this often happens in smaller congregations and against the pastor or other leaders.

Ken Sande<sup>32</sup> mentions in *Preemptive Peace* that many forms of conflict exhibit attack responses. On what he called “the right side of a slippery slope,” three things could happen: assault, in which people may use force in the form of intimidation (verbal attacks), litigation (to bend the will of those by taking them to court) and lastly, people who would resort to the physical demise of a person that opposes their agenda.

Durward Bradshaw in his book *Church Conflict* believes that there is conflict within some churches due to the pastor attempting to remain neutral to mitigate conflict with elders, but states that there are pastors that remain one-sided in their belief that laypersons are not on the same educational level when it involves the Bible or Biblical principles. He states that the pastor attempts to stimulate harmony by quoting scripture and used Biblical propaganda on a level that the elders were not prepared to negotiate on.<sup>33</sup>

Randy Wolff in *Church Politics* discusses the power of the outspoken as this type of authority that lends to a power struggle between leadership and the followers trying to formulate a strategy. Because of the struggle with one side of the group feeling as though they have lost by

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<sup>32</sup> Sande, Ken. "Preemptive Peace: To Survive Conflict, Churches and Pastors Must Prepare Before One Arise." *Leadership*, 2011: 23-26.

<sup>33</sup> Bradshaw, Durward and Thompson, Linda. *Church Conflict: You Can Manage it or it Will Manage You*. Columbia, 2017.

comprising, the strategy is not formed, and the church and members suffer. He states that the struggle is strategic and related to the who and the what of the conflict. He states that the assumption of those desiring power was to engage in the struggle and the result would yield those as primary shapers of the emerging strategy. Their goal of gaining power would become easier by ensuring that the rest of those in the decision-making process remained clueless of the issue being discussed and help them to push their ideas on the discussion.<sup>34</sup> The agendas of those desiring power in the church makes it harder for the pastor's vision to be priority or the needs of the church. This group of people will also form an alliance against the pastor and recruit weaker members or those not fully knowledgeable of the conflict into their group against the pastor.

#### Lack of Policies and Procedures

I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels,  
that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing  
nothing by partiality. 1 Timothy 5:21

The CME Church is governed through a book of discipline.<sup>35</sup> The rules and guidelines are broad and provide direction through Scripture, but the guidelines do not address procedures for the local churches. In the above passage, the Apostle Paul gives a young Timothy direction to observe all the commandments of God without being partial. Many of the local churches of the ARD lack policies and procedures on the local level for governing the local church leadership and operations of the local church. Even though the general rules of the church are listed in the Book of Discipline, they are broad and do not address issues at the local church

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<sup>34</sup> Wolff, Randy. *Navigating Church Politics*. Langley: Ministry Lift Church Leadership Series, 2017.

<sup>35</sup> Lewis, Roderick. *The Book of Discipline of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church*. Memphis: CME Publishing House, 2014.

level. Having local policies and procedures reduces church contention as the leadership would be left to ponder on matters of interpretation of the laws of the church as it pertains to the local church.

Johnathan Feathers states that the lack of a clear outline of policies and procedures affects how ministry is accomplished: the lack of policies and procedures indicates a lack of infrastructure.<sup>36</sup> Without defined policies and procedures, miscommunication occurs. Clear policies and procedures yield greater support for the church in clear statements of ‘how we do business’ and maximize church resources. Feathers says that godly intent coupled with clear policies based on Christian missions provides for a healthy church strategy.

According to R. C. Sproul, “The church is called not only to be a ministry of reconciliation, but a ministry of nurture to those within her gates.<sup>37</sup>” Sproul states that congregational discipline is really an act of discipleship, which functions as the corollary of evangelism. In *Undermining the Gospel*, Ronnie Rogers<sup>38</sup> lists four reasons for church discipline: discipline brings redemption, discipline brings correction, discipline brings purification, and discipline allows for the judgement of sin. In *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, Mark Devers states that Biblical church discipline flows directly out of a Biblical understanding of church membership. He also states that discipline helps the church that lived inside the boundary line and remain true to the very things that were the cause for the drawing of the

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<sup>36</sup> Feathers, Johnathan. *New Wine into Old Wineskins*. Eugene: Resource Publications, 2015.

<sup>37</sup> Laney, J. Carl. *A Guide to Church Discipline*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publication, 2010.

<sup>38</sup> Rogers, Ronnie. *Undermining the Gospel*. Bloomington: Westbow, 2015.

boundaries.<sup>39</sup> The Bible is very definitive on the commandments; church discipline allows the church to remain obedient to God.

Bobby Jamieson supports Devers' idea that church discipline is fraught with problems of wisdom and pastoral application and the whole Christian life was difficult and open to abuse. He states that this was not an excuse to leave issue within the church unresolved.<sup>40</sup> The author of *Hope in Conflict* states that structures were the organizing patterns of interconnected systems which depicted how a church, a living organism was composed and identified the boundaries that constituted the parts.<sup>41</sup> The absence of policies and procedures within a church opens a door for disorder and discord.

#### Lack of Vision

Dan Southerland describes the vision of church as a picture of what God will do in His church if we get out of the way and turn loose to do it. In other words, when people relinquish the desire to think for God and instead allow Him to do His will, then the vision or what God has for the people will be revealed clearly. He stated that the process of vision is the process of joining God in what He is doing and wants to do in His church.<sup>42</sup> Southerland uses Proverb 19:21 as a focus for his vision: "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless, the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand." Vision is also a picture of the future that produces passion. A leader's passion is contagious; he takes responsibility for the vision and

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<sup>39</sup> Dever, Mark. *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2013.

<sup>40</sup> Jamieson, Bobby. *Guarding One Another: Church Discipline*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2012.

<sup>41</sup> Sawyer, David R. *Hope in Conflict*. Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2007.

<sup>42</sup> Southerland, Dan. *Transitioning: Leading Your Church Through Change*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

communicates the vision at each level to those that will be involved or that those that will share the vision and rewards.<sup>43</sup>

And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. Habakkuk 2:2

According to Wayne Cordeiro, “If there is one thing worse than a church without a vision, it is a church with many visions.” He states that congregations where everyone has their own agenda become political assemblies, and chaos sets in as individuals lobby for their own ideas.<sup>44</sup> Multiple visions yield to dissension and division within a church, causing the overall failure of that church.

Lovett Weems states in *Take the Next Step* that declining congregations often look back on what he calls a perceived “golden age” of years past as a standard of measure for the fate of the church. He states that those of the “golden age” refuse to examine the current disposition of the church and the decline in membership since the current vision of the church is the same as it was many years ago.<sup>45</sup> He also states that visions have many functions, and for pastors and leaders, the functions of visions are related to the Christians that identify with God’s purpose for the local church.<sup>46</sup> Weems states that a vision unites by presenting common interpretation of reality and the future. A vision energizes and gives people hope when it is powerful and deliberate. He states that a vision focuses priorities of a church by keeping the direction of the church stable and identifies with what has been agreed upon. Additionally, Weems states that a

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<sup>43</sup> Hybels, Bill. *Courageous Leadership*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002.

<sup>44</sup> Cordeiro, Wayne. *Doing Church as a Team*. Ventura: Regal Books, 2004.

<sup>45</sup> Weems, Lovett H., Jr. *Take the Next Step*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2011

<sup>46</sup> Weems, Lovett H., Jr. *Church Leadership*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2010.

vision serves as the church baseline representing commitment and loyalty and sets high standards for goals and raises expectations for Spiritual growth and development of Christians. Lastly, he states that a vision draws people in by painting a picture of challenge as each Christian should be challenged daily in their Spiritual walk with God and experience excitement about the goodness of God.

Nehemiah had a vision, which is recorded in Nehemiah 2:1, “then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.”

George Hunter<sup>47</sup> suggests that before a congregation even attempts to develop goals and a vision, it should select only a handful people to work with the pastor. He recommends that no more than seven people are involved, and they must have these specific traits:

1. Agreement on the nature and mission of the church
2. Perception of the church’s strengths and limitations
3. Agreement on politics and effects as well as willing to compromise
4. Support of the pastor
5. Respect from others within the church
6. Adequate preparation and equipment to lead and the willingness to accept risk
7. Strong spiritual outlook
8. Ambition and optimism about the future of the church
9. Comfortability in discussing and dealing with issues about the future

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<sup>47</sup> Hunter, George III. *Leading and Managing A Growing Church*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000:59-61.

## 10. Being active in church activities and ministries

Hunter states that vision and values should be separated and discussed in the shaping person's life. He also suggests that this group should deliberate on common Spiritual goals and a vision that encompasses on future achievements and aims of the congregation.

Dr. Olu Brown pastors the Impact Church on the south side of Atlanta, GA. He currently serves under the United Methodist denomination. In 2008 he requested to plant a church in a location where churches were present, but ministry was ineffective in the community. His worship and leadership style invite millennials and he has broken traditional Methodist rituals to incorporate an extremely contemporary style of worship. In his book *Zero to 80*,<sup>48</sup> Dr. Brown lists 10 “impact ideas” that he believes were impactful in establishing the drive towards God's vision and design for the Impact Church.

1. Name the roads that brought you here.
2. Understand that restlessness is a vision catalyst.
3. Eclipse fear with faith.
4. Dare to vision at every step.
5. Get comfortable with who you are.
6. Do church differently.
7. Throw limitations out the window.
8. Demonstrate vision to relevant ways.
9. Repel self-centered growth.

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<sup>48</sup> Brown, Olu. *Zero to 80*. Atlanta: Zondervan, 2010:18-41.

## 10. Become a high-functioning organization.

These impact ideas provide a foundation for a radical and free style of worship, which typically attracts the younger generation of Christians back to the church. His church is one of the fastest growing black denominational churches in the Atlanta area, and he is often called upon to speak for conferences on changing the old visions to fit contemporary times. Jim Collins describes in his book *Good to Great* “the who” and “the what.”<sup>49</sup> Collins describes “the who” as the person selected for the most effective position and understands the vision of the organization to develop a realistic road map for the direction of the organization.

“To be successful agents of change—of reform—leaders not only must be able to envision a new way forward but also must be political, with the skill to build broad support for and implement their vision.”<sup>50</sup>

### Personality Differences

Each year, the pastors are required to assimilate at a central location to answer a list of 53 questions about reports of fruitfulness within their local churches over the past year. The 53<sup>rd</sup> question asks where the preachers will be stationed for the ensuing conference year.<sup>51</sup> Many churches receive new pastors during this time – some with excitement and anxiety, yet some with disappointment. In *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, Thom Rainer<sup>52</sup> states that year one is usually the “honeymoon” since it is the year that the pastor and the congregation get to know one

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<sup>49</sup> Collins, Jim. *Good to Great*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2001:49.

<sup>50</sup> Gates, Robert M. *A Passion for Leadership*. New York: Penguin Random House Canada, 2016:24.

<sup>51</sup> Lewis, Roderick. *The Book of Discipline of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church*. Memphis: CME Publishing House, 2014:64.

<sup>52</sup> Rainer, Thom S. *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*. Nashville: B & H, 2014:58-60.

another. It is in this first year that neither can do wrong, but it is also a time in which the personality of the pastor and the personalities of the leaders and members are introduced. Then comes year two and three, which are typically the years of conflict and challenges between the pastor and the church members.

Interpersonal conflict can be described as any situation in which interdependent people exhibit incompatible interests, goals, principles of feelings towards one another when the other is from different backgrounds. In *Conflict Managing Coaching*, Cinnie Nobles defines interpersonal conflict as a situation in which at least one person perceives something amiss with another person and deems himself or herself to be incompatible with the other person's interests.<sup>53</sup>

The Big Five Personality Model<sup>54</sup> reveals that personality traits are one of the most important determinants of conflict resolution styles, which includes emotional, attitudinal, and behavioral response patterns of an individual. The Personality Model consists of five traits associated with how people with different personalities handle conflict: openness (intellectually curious, imagination, and sensitivity), conscientiousness (impulse control, task orientation, goal directedness), extraversion (sociability, gregariousness, energy, and assertiveness), agreeableness (good-naturedness, understanding, forgiveness, cooperation, and trust) and neuroticism (negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, sadness, irritability, insecurity, guilt, depression, and nervous tension). In the same regard, someone with a proactive personality is described as "one who is relatively unconstrained by situational forces, and who effects environmental change." The

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<sup>53</sup> Noble, Cinnie. *Conflict Managing Coaching: The Cinergy Model*. Canada: Cinergy, 2012.

<sup>54</sup> Ome, Blessings N. "Personality and Gender Differences in Preference for Conflict Resolution Styles." *Gender and Behaviour* 11, no. 2 (2013): 5512-5524.

author states that “proactive people scan for opportunities, show initiative, take action, and persevere until they reach closure by bringing about change.<sup>55</sup>”

The literature review from this chapter presents the foundation for the recommendations for healthy resolution of conflict and introduces ideas on behavior of leaders and congregants when it involves the church. The literature writing from the authors used in this chapter will assist in formulating survey research questions to be asked to members of selected churches in the ARD to gain more thoughtful insight in addressing attrition issues in the ARD. Chapter three identifies the questions and results of the research survey.

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<sup>55</sup> Harvey, Stever. "Personality and Individual Differences." *Elsevier*, April 2006: 1063-1074.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to gather critical information as it pertains to a small percentage of selected churches within the Atlanta-Rome District of the Sixth Episcopal Christian Methodist Church on contributing factors affecting the attrition and retention of members in the local churches. The research information was provided from voluntary members of seven participating churches of the 42 churches of the ARD. The anonymous survey conducted included 33 questions that were determined to be impactful on members continuing to maintain membership at the local churches and the effects of declining membership.

The survey was conducted over a three-week span at local churches in the ARD. There were two questions asked at the end of the survey on the demographics of the local church on the age and local church that each participant attended. The age group was separated into three categories; 18-35, 36-64 and 65 and above. The participating churches for the survey within the ARD are listed below:

1. Butler Street CME
2. Westside CME
3. Holsey CME
4. Linden Shorts CME
5. Shy Temple CME
6. Holsey Sinai CME
7. Holsey Chapel CME

The intent of the research was to gain information from active members of some of the churches within the ARD to determine possible causes of attrition and to make recommendations to the district leadership on possible solutions for reducing attrition and giving the pastors and

leaders of the ARD a picture of the Spiritual climate of the churches in the ARD. The final product is a recommendation to present to the pastors, leaders, and members of the ARD to assist with maintaining members and growing the churches of the ARD.

Seven of the ten churches asked to participate in survey participated in providing data. There was a total of 73 participants within the seven churches that completed the survey. This chapter lists the results of each question asked and the response of the respondent as well as statistical information for the standard deviation of each question.

Question 1: Does your local church have a set of local bi-laws or local polices tailored to your local church that have been approved as a governing document for your local church?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		46.58%	34	
No (2)		49.32%	36	
Unknown (3)		4.11%	3	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>73</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum 1.00	Maximum 3.00	Median 2.00	Mean 1.58	Standard Deviation 0.57

Table 3.1

Local policies for new members are usually discussed and disseminated during new member training to ensure that the new members are aware of not only CME laws and policies but also those of their local church. This researcher requested copies of local policies and procedures from six local churches of the ARD to use as a guide in developing the local policy of another local church. Each of the pastors that were queried advised that their local churches had policies and procedures, but the policies had not been updated or a copy could not be found. Robert Young states in his book, *How to Lead a Church to Reach People and Grow*, that churches fit into one of two categories in regards to policies and procedures: “they have not

taken the time to formulate the policies or do not know how to go about the process, or they have gathered the policies but the result is written in a restrictive, legalistic form.”<sup>56</sup> Policies and procedures or local by-laws are suggested to be written for each local church or for the local churches that have policies in place should review, update, and disseminate to members.

Question 2: Does your church follow these directives as a guideline for making decisions and ensuring that each member is treated with equality?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
▼ Yes (1)		53.42%	39	
▼ No (2)		42.47%	31	
▼ Unknown (3)		4.11%	3	
▼ Other (please specify) (4)	Responses	0.00%	0	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>73</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum 1.00	Maximum 3.00	Median 1.00	Mean 1.51	Standard Deviation 0.58

Table 3.2

This question refers to whether or not all members of the local congregation understand the directives the use of facilities, opportunity to participate on boards and auxiliaries, opportunity to lead and provide input on church concerns. It appears that the local churches of the ARD have respect for church members for the most part, but scriptures on love could be emphasized more, as well as functions to promote unity and fellowship. Romans 12:10 provides the following command from God as a guide for believers to respect for one another in the body of Christ: “*love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.*”

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<sup>56</sup> Young, R.A. *How to Lead A Church to Reach People and Grow*. . United States: xulonpress, 2004.

Question 3: In your local by-laws or policy, is there clear delineation of duties of local officers to include duty descriptions, length of time in leadership position, scope of responsibility, and actions that would cause removal of tenure as an officer?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		47.83%		33
No (2)		44.93%		31
Unknown (3)		7.25%		5
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>69</b>

  

BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	2.00	1.59	0.62

Table 3.3

This question asks churches that have local policies and by-laws whether they detail each office within the church and all responsibilities and expectations within each office or position to ensure that the leaders operate not only from the CME Book of Discipline but also according to local policies on election, selection, term of service, additional requirements, and actions that would cause for dismissal or removal from a church office as a leader. It is apparent that local policies or by-laws should be reviewed yearly or completed as a guide for each local church to minimize conflict and retain order.

Question 4: Does your church have a mission statement with core values?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		53.42%		39
No (2)		43.84%		32
Unknown (3)		2.74%		2
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>73</b>

  

BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	1.00	1.49	0.55

Table 3.4

A mission statement is a statement of the purpose or a written declaration of a church.

Core values are those values that form the foundation of how we work and conduct ourselves. The values outline our work, how we interact with each other, and strategies we can use to complete our mission. This researcher pastors one of the local churches within the ARD, and within one year of his appointment as pastor, the membership admitted that there was a mission statement and core values, but no one could produce either the mission statement or the written core values.

Mission statement is very important to a church as the mission statement connects to the identity of the church, and the core values define the inner workings of missions and goals and presents how the church is postured. Although many of the churches within the ARD have a mission statement that may or may not be visible, many lack core values. Core values should be established once the mission statement is reviewed and implemented throughout the membership of the church.

Question 5: Is your church mission statement printed in places that are visible throughout your church (bulletins, website, posted within the church)?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		38.36%	28	
No (2)		56.16%	41	
Unknown (3)		5.48%	4	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>73</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	2.00	1.67	0.57

Table 3.5

The mission statement of a church should be posted within the church where it can be viewed by all or on church literature to show why the church exists and what their purpose is. Gamze Orhan states in his article, “*Adopting Mission and Vision Statement by Employees: The Case of TAV Airports,*” that to have an efficient vision and mission, it is necessary to share them with the employees. Sharing vision and mission means not to just tell, but also to make the statements being learned to be adopted and exercised by each employee<sup>57</sup>. Sharing the mission and vision statement is important, as members can view the vision of the church each time they reference church literature or as they move throughout the local church. The mission and vision statements of the local churches of the ARD should be posted where members can view often.

Question 6: Is your mission statement reviewed annually to adjust or to re-direct the goals of the church?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		38.89%	28	
No (2)		52.78%	38	
Unknown (3)		8.33%	6	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>72</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	2.00	1.69	0.62

Table 3.6

The mission statement should be reviewed yearly to ensure that the local church is operating according to the vision and mission and viewed yearly to evaluate progress within the church. The core values should also be reviewed yearly to ensure that members remain on course

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<sup>57</sup> Orhan, Gamze. "Adopting Mission and Vision Statements by Employees: The Case of TAV Airports." *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2014: 251-262.

with the purpose and goals set by the local church. Annual reviews are important in determining the progress of a church and if the church meets the needs of its congregants and the community.

Question 7: In the past 10 years, have your local pastor(s) communicated his/her vision for the direction of your church and expressed short and long-term goals?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		59.72%		43
No (2)		31.94%		23
Unknown (3)		8.33%		6
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>72</b>
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	1.00	1.49	0.65

Table 3.7

Goals are the ends to where effort is directed. It is very important for a pastor to share his or her vision for his or her local church as well as to set goals to achieve. Discussing the vision and goals of their local church gives the congregants an idea where work efforts will be placed for a period. The vision and goals should be shared with the membership yearly when planning for the new conference year.

Question 8: Do the mission, vision, and direction of your church compare to your changing community (cultural changes) and afford your church the opportunity to serve in a capacity that produces growth within your local church?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		57.53%	42	
No (2)		38.36%	28	
Unknown (3)		4.11%	3	
Other (please specify) (4)	Responses	0.00%	0	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>73</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	1.00	1.47	0.58

Table 3.8

The ARD churches that participated in this survey sit within the city limits of two large cities. Six of the seven churches participating reside within the city limits of Atlanta, GA, a city where over 1,100 people from different cultures and backgrounds migrate weekly. The spiritual support of the church must accommodate the growth and meet the needs of those that attend the local churches of the ARD. Change is inevitable, and the local church must change to meet the needs of a changing society.

Question 9: Has your current local leadership been in a leadership position for more than five years?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		47.95%	35	
No (2)		41.10%	30	
Unknown (3)		10.96%	8	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>73</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	2.00	1.63	0.67

Table 3.9

With the CME itinerant system, a pastor is reviewed annually, and the presiding prelate decides, based on the performance of the local pastor and the need of the Episcopal District,

where the pastor will serve during the following year. The former presiding prelate, Kenneth W. Carter, stated that a successful ministry tenure occurs when a pastor serves between five and seven years. Bishop Carter’s thoughts on a successful ministry derive from Thom S. Rainer’s book, *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, where year five is the crossroads of whether a pastor will remain in the church or leave the church as the leader but views the following year six and seven as the years of fruit and harvest if the pastor remains within the church<sup>58</sup>. Most of the churches surveyed had pastors that had been in place for at least five years with church leadership that also had been in place for at least five years. The time spent in leadership positions adds to the stability of the church. Although pastoral positions are subject to change yearly, having church leadership that remains in place for a long period provides continuity within the church during pastoral changes.

Question 10: In the past 10 years, do you feel that the church leadership and the pastor have had a healthy relationship that has been conducive for the growth of the ministries within the church?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		58.33%	42	
No (2)		33.33%	24	
Unknown (3)		8.33%	6	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>72</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	1.00	1.50	0.65

Table 3.10

<sup>58</sup> Rainer, Thom. *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*. Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2014.

Healthy relationships within a church are very important for growth. In churches where the pastor and the leadership are not on one accord and the leadership does not support the pastor, conflict arises within the church and introduces discord within the local church. Deborah Hunsinger states in her book, *Transforming Church Conflict*, that the church should focus on encouraging empathy and transforming self-judgements, so it can support ministers and leaders in choosing healthy interaction<sup>59</sup>. A healthy relationship between the pastor and leadership must be maintained for any church to grow and for the leadership team to be successful. Norma Everist adds in *Church Conflict* that each person should also take a moment of personal reflection and review how he or she sees the conflict being resolved<sup>60</sup>.

Question 11: In the past, has your leadership demonstrated a defined method for resolving conflict when it arose in a manner that was in accordance with the Bible on conflict resolution?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		55.56%	40	
No (2)		40.28%	29	
Unknown (3)		4.17%	3	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>72</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	1.00	1.49	0.58

Table 3.11

<sup>59</sup> Hunsinger, D. v., & Latini, T. F. (2013). *Transforming Church Conflict*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.

<sup>60</sup> Everist, N. C. (2004). *Church Conflict: From Contention to Collaboration*. Nashville: Abingdon Press

Survey respondents identified conflict resolution within the local churches of ARD as being addressed in a healthy manner but yet there was still room for improvement on settling disputes to bring the congregants to a peaceful resolve. Cinnie Noble states in *Conflict Managing Coaching* that conflict arises when at least one person perceives a threat from another, negative emotions with another person or incompatibilities exist on perspectives, or communication on actions or ways of conducting business is misunderstood<sup>61</sup>.

Conflict within a church will yield negative effects on attrition as members will flee from a place of confusion. The Apostle Paul tells the people of Corinth in 1 Corinthians 14:33, “for God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” Former CME Bishop Marshall Gilmore states in his book, *The Pulpit and the Pew*, how members will cause distractions while the pastor is preaching to show their disapproval for the pastor’s decision or refusal to agree with their agenda.<sup>62</sup> He states that members would get up during the sermon or drop their heads in protest—actions that were also seen by other members that had no knowledge of leadership conflict.

Question 12: Has your current leadership attended training on church policies, operations of the church, and how to affect growth and maintain a healthy church climate?

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<sup>61</sup> Noble, Cinnie. *Conflict Management Coaching*. Canada: Cinergy, 2012.

<sup>62</sup> Gilmore, M. (1997). *The Pulpit and The Pew: Discussions on Conflict in the Lord's House*. Memphis: The CME Publishing House.

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		63.01%	46	
No (2)		31.51%	23	
Unknown (3)		5.48%	4	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>73</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	1.00	1.42	0.59

Table 3.12

According to the CME Book of Discipline, all leaders are required to attend yearly training to gain Christian Education Units (CEU) and the training is usually conducted at one of the CTI, pastors conference or one of the two conferences conducted by the presiding prelate annually. Many of the local leadership do not attend any training besides what is conducted by the pastor, if any, during meetings or local training. Many of the leaders do not attend outside training that introduces new ideas for church growth and therefore no new methods are introduced for growth. Leadership training on church growth, current missions and ministries is important to the church continuing to keep up with the changes in society. Mandatory training has to be enforced at the local level per the laws of the CME church for leaders.

Question 13: In the past, has your leadership made all the decisions concerning your church without consulting the church conference?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		34.25%	25	
No (2)		58.90%	43	
Unknown (3)		6.85%	5	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>73</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	2.00	1.73	0.58

Table 3.13

Oftentimes, decisions are made by selected members or those that are able to attend unscheduled meetings. There are times where decisions have to be made on facility issues, community issues, or even local ministries and missions. There are some within the churches of the ARD that believe that there are those that plan and make decisions that others are not informed of, and when the general body of the church gains knowledge of the decision, it is usually during the execution phase where members and resources must be allocated. Many people within the churches of the ARD feel as though there is a small group of people that make decisions. According to the CME Book of Discipline, no allocation of funds or resources can be made without the consent of the church conference, yet the actions of a few are not addressed in church conference or other local church forums.

Question 14: In the past, have there been major meetings where decisions had to be made and you were not notified, or information was withheld?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		45.83%	33	
No (2)		48.61%	35	
Unknown (3)		5.56%	4	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>72</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum 1.00	Maximum 3.00	Median 2.00	Mean 1.60	Standard Deviation 0.59

Table 3.14

There are times when meetings are conducted, and planning is conducted without notifying the general body of the local church. This usually happens when resistance is expected or there is conflict among members with certain members not wanting to work with other members. This contributes to trust amongst the membership and adds to existing church conflict.

Question 15: Does your church implement social media as a means to communicate with members and those that may be interested in attending your church (Facebook, Instagram, church webpage)?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		78.08%	57	
No (2)		20.55%	15	
Unknown (3)		1.37%	1	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>73</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	1.00	1.23	0.45

Table 3.15

Each of the churches of the ARD conducting the survey have a Facebook page and a church website. Many of the websites are not updated, and many of the Facebook pages do not depict all the activities of the church. Although an easy fix to the problem would be either attain a webmaster or assign social media as a ministry, there are still some older members of the church that are not current on social media and often will not support this method of publicizing the brand of the local church.

Question 16: In the past, has your leadership communicated to the membership major decisions that were made or needed to be made on behalf of the church?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		72.60%	53	
No (2)		23.29%	17	
Unknown (3)		4.11%	3	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>73</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	1.00	1.32	0.55

Table 3.16

Under the administration of the previous presiding prelate, there were often times where support was needed from the local churches to assist with other churches or with missions. These requests would come in between church conferences. There were other concerns or issues of the local churches that had to be addressed immediately there was no time for a called church conference. Many of the participants in the survey attended churches where they were informed of the decisions and actions of the governing body of the local church. Kenneth Gangel expresses the importance of communication along with decision making as a continuous function throughout the management process<sup>63</sup>. Communication is key to the success of any organization.

Question 17: In the past, have major decisions been made by a certain group within your local church and was the decision relayed to the membership after the decision has been made?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Yes (1)		66.67%	48
No (2)		27.78%	20
Unknown (3)		5.56%	4
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>72</b>
BASIC STATISTICS			
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean
1.00	3.00	1.00	1.39
			Standard Deviation
			0.59

Table 3.17

Often, members are not present for monthly church conferences, committee meetings, or for called church conference. Because of the absence, the members often received information later and were not a part of the vote. Presence at the local church district and quarter conferences would allow members to remain updated on church progress and major decisions. Speed Leas

<sup>63</sup> Gangel, K., & Canine, S. (1998). *Communication and Conflict Management in Churches and Christian Organizations*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers.

states in his book, *Moving Your Church Through Conflict*, that attending meetings gives members the opportunity to present their cases, but the absence of some can sometimes cause conflict for the pastor or leadership over decisions being made since the entire body is not present to vote on the decisions.<sup>64</sup> He acknowledges that when members are absent during a vote, the decision is based on the vote of a few and may or may not be supported by the absent members.

Question 18: Do you feel that your church values your thoughts and input when it comes to the decisions of the church?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		69.86%	51	
No (2)		24.66%	18	
Unknown (3)		5.48%	4	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>73</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	1.00	1.36	0.58

Table 3.18

Almost 70% of the respondents stated that their local church valued their decision making when it came to decisions of the church. When members feel as though their thoughts or ideas are not accepted or given consideration it can contribute to conflict within the church. This scenario can cause the member to either leave or withdraw from church activities.

Question 19: Do you feel your church possess a willingness to change or adjust to your growing community and cultural changes (i.e. adopting a contemporary style of worship, acceptance of those that are not of your race, or accepting those of alternate lifestyles)?

<sup>64</sup> Leas, S. B. (2009). *Moving Your Church Through Conflict*. New York: Alban Institute of Publication.

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Yes (1)		50.68%	37
No (2)		45.21%	33
Unknown (3)		4.11%	3
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>73</b>

  

BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	1.00	1.53	0.58

Table 3.19

Many of the churches have attempted to change worship styles to include relevant and trending sermons based on current issues, allowing praise dancers, incorporating “dress down” Sundays for congregants to wear their favorite team jersey, inviting neighboring churches of other denominations and races for fellowship, and even developing praise and worship teams to lead Sunday morning worship. “Thinking outside of the box” was a theme from the former presiding prelate on how to reach others and becoming missional churches as opposed to attractional churches, where we expect people to come to see what the local churches offer. There are changes occurring within the local churches, but the changes are slow as there remain those within the local churches that still hold to old rituals and order of worship.

Question 20: Are young adults (18-35) included in the leadership and decision-making process of your church?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Yes (1)		56.16%	41
No (2)		39.73%	29
Unknown (3)		4.11%	3
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>73</b>

  

BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	1.00	1.48	0.58

Table 3.20

The young adults within the local churches within the ARD constitute the lowest percentage of the three age groups within the church. Many of the young adults maintain membership but are not active. The few that are active within the local churches are encouraged to assume leadership positions throughout the local church and each level of the CME church to train for future leadership. 40% of the respondents still felt as though the young adults are not included in the decision-making process; those are the churches that are slow or refusing to change to maintain with the changes in society.

Question 21: Does your church welcome change (use of social media, dress styles, worship times, and worship styles)?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		57.53%	42	
No (2)		38.36%	28	
Unknown (3)		4.11%	3	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>73</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	1.00	1.47	0.58

Table 3.21

There is a larger number of older congregants in within the churches of the ARD. Many of the older congregants are slow to change and often will not accept the idea that branding the local church logo through social media can attract others by letting them see the activities that the local church offers. The same group of older folks believe in certain rituals and worship styles as well as the idea that all attending church should dress appropriately and avoid wearing street clothes allowed during worship. The churches of the ARD that reside within a culturally diverse city that does not welcome change will not survive. The churches that do not welcome

change are an indication that the leadership is neither concerned about growth nor attending conferences or training on church growth.

Question 22: Does your church and leadership conduct worship in a traditional manner “The way we have always done things”?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		63.89%	46	
No (2)		36.11%	26	
Unknown (3)		0.00%	0	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>72</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	2.00	1.00	1.36	0.48

Table 3.22

There are churches within the ARD that conduct worship with an order of worship and still sing songs from the Book of Hymnals on Sunday mornings. Those that have influence within the local churches develop groups within the local church to fight change, even when the change is presented by the pastor. I once heard an older member say, “We are Methodist because there is a method to the way that we worship.” The mentality of always adhering to “the way we have always done things” prevents the growth of the local church.

Question 23: Do you feel that if your church would change its worship style, ministry strategies, and possibly leadership, your church would grow?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		84.93%	62	
No (2)		15.07%	11	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>73</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	2.00	1.00	1.15	0.36

Table 3.23

The change in worship styles, missions and even leadership has often been a complaint by the young adults. There are many that feel as though the local church leadership is older and slow to change. Millennials seem to enjoy a more participative style of worship where they can sing praise songs and express themselves through other creative arts in worship such as creative praise dance, poetry, small groups, and fellowship beyond the walls of the church based on individual interests. The churches of the ARD will not survive unless worship styles are changed to adapt to the change in the local environment.

Question 24: Does your church complete a yearly budget and strategy plan prior to the beginning of your conference year?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		75.34%	55	
No (2)		21.92%	16	
Unknown (3)		2.74%	2	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>73</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	1.00	1.27	0.50

Table 3.24

CME churches are required to complete a calendar of events and ministries and develop a budget to support the local church. There are some churches that are not in compliance with the laws of the church and are not planning properly for the conference year, although a larger percentage of the local churches in the ARD are conducting yearly planning and budgeting.

Question 25: In the past, has money caused conflict within your church?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
▼ Yes (1)		69.86%		51
▼ No (2)		27.40%		20
▼ Unknown (3)		2.74%		2
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>73</b>

  

BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum 1.00	Maximum 3.00	Median 1.00	Mean 1.33	Standard Deviation 0.52

Table 3.25

Question 26: In the past, has the lack of church funds or how funds were spent caused conflict within your church?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
▼ Yes (1)		78.08%		57
▼ No (2)		20.55%		15
▼ Unknown (3)		1.37%		1
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>73</b>

  

BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum 1.00	Maximum 3.00	Median 1.00	Mean 1.23	Standard Deviation 0.45

Table 3.26

In years past, in the local ARD church finances were accessible and church treasuries did not have the deficits as seen in current times. In the past, there were more members, but now, with the decline in membership, the finances of the local church are also in decline. Ministries compete with other ministries within the church for funding priority and the local church has to prioritize ministries as the local church has to provide support for the general church.

Question 27: Do you feel that your church focuses more on raising funds than ministries and missions?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		68.49%	50	
No (2)		31.51%	23	
Unknown (3)		0.00%	0	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>73</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	2.00	1.00	1.32	0.46

Table 3.27

The annual requirements of the local church to the general conference and to the ARD causes tension between the pastor and the membership, as the pastor generally prioritizes the financial requirements for the general church. It is important that each church reports its appropriated funds to the general church no later than December 31 of each year. The churches are also required to send delegates to each of the conferences (annual, district, bishop’s counsel and other conferences within the church) annually. Churches conduct discipleship programs or fundraisers to ensure that these funds are available and submitted to the general church. Proper budgeting and planning would eliminate financial deficiencies and also give the congregants a view of what is required of the local church to support the ministries of the church and support to be provided for the general church and ARD.

Question 28: Do you feel that certain people within your church control how money is spent within the church without consulting with the body of your church?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		61.11%	44	
No (2)		36.11%	26	
Unknown (3)		2.78%	2	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>72</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	1.00	1.42	0.55

Table 3.28

According to the CME Book of Discipline, the local church is to be run as a business, and all financial matters are to come to the attention of the church conference and matters of property or major purchases must be approved by the quarter conference of the local church, which is conducted by the presiding elder of the district. However, each active member of a local church is a stakeholder and reserves the right to vote on how funds are disbursed within a congregation.

Question 29: Do your pastor and the officers of your church have a healthy working relationship?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		83.56%	61	
No (2)		15.07%	11	
Unknown (3)		1.37%	1	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>73</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	1.00	1.18	0.42

Table 3.29

Most of the respondents witnessed a healthy relationship between their pastor and the officers of the church, which is very important for the mission and vision of the local church.

Question 30: Do your pastor or leaders address conflict within the church and attempt to bring it to a peaceful resolution?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		56.94%	41	
No (2)		40.28%	29	
Unknown (3)		2.78%	2	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>72</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	1.00	1.46	0.55

Table 3.30

In *Hope in Conflict*, David Sawyer advises church leadership to take time to identify first steps to establish a foundation for finding hope in a congregation and resolving conflict.<sup>65</sup> He also states that a pastor must ask himself if he is willing to play the victim or the savior role when it involves conflict that prevent the mission and vision of the church, but also to develop a list of those that would be helpful in assisting with issues of conflict within the local church. There is still a high number of members within the 73 respondents that stated that the leadership does not resolve conflict in a healthy manner. Peaceful resolution of any conflict within a church must be addressed to each congregation of the ARD in maintaining a peaceful environment.

Question 31: Do you feel that the leaders of your church support your pastor’s vision and follow his leadership as the leader of your church?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
Yes (1)		76.71%	56	
No (2)		21.92%	16	
Unknown (3)		1.37%	1	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>73</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	1.00	1.25	0.46

<sup>65</sup> Sawyer, D. R. (2007). *Hope in Conflict*. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press.

Table 3.31

Lovett H. Weems, Jr. says in his book *Church Leadership: Vision, Team, Culture and Integrity* that the vision must be one for which the leader and the people have a passion. The vision must be clearly related to and grow out of the mission of an organization.<sup>66</sup> It appears that most congregants feel as though their leaders are supportive of the vision of their local pastor. Proverbs 29:18 states, “Where there is no vision, the people perish.” Following the leadership of the pastor is paramount for growth of the congregation and the church, but the question is asked in Romans 10:14, “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” The vision of the pastor or of the church may need to be re-visited or shared with the members quarterly or annually to ensure that all are aware of the vision. Section 260.3 of the CME Book of Discipline states that “focus on the vision of the church by asking what the congregation is doing for growth in discipleship and for outreach ministries within our region or community?”<sup>67</sup>

Question 32: Does your church encourage and support younger members to become leaders within the church?

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<sup>66</sup> Weems, L. H. (2010 (Revised)). *Church Leadership: Vision, Team, Culture and Integrity*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.

<sup>67</sup> Committee on Compilation. (2014). *The Book of Discipline of the Christian Methodist Church*. Memphis: CME Publishing.

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Yes (1)		76.71%	56
No (2)		20.55%	15
Unknown (3)		2.74%	2
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>73</b>
BASIC STATISTICS			
Minimum 1.00	Maximum 3.00	Median 1.00	Mean 1.26
		Standard Deviation 0.50	

Table 3.32

Encouraging and engaging the younger members is important, as it provides those members with a feeling of acceptance, inclusion, and respect for their Spiritual growth and their input. Ideas shared by the younger members can assist the church in reaching other millennials their age. Engaging the next generation also introduces the younger generation to church operations, obligations, and responsibilities. Lastly, inclusion gains participation and ownership of programs and initiatives of the local church. The churches of the ARD are on a path to ensure that the future of the local churches is maintained and preserved.

Question 33: Do you feel that you have an open line of communication with your pastor and leaders within your church and your input is valued?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES	
Yes (1)		80.82%	59
No (2)		19.18%	14
Unknown (3)		0.00%	0
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>73</b>
BASIC STATISTICS			
Minimum 1.00	Maximum 2.00	Median 1.00	Mean 1.19
		Standard Deviation 0.39	

Table 3.33

A majority of the respondents felt as though they had an open line of communication with the pastor or the leaders of the local church and felt comfortable with approaching the leadership. Being able to communicate with the local church leadership is an important

component in maintain a level of respect and peace within the local church. The consideration of the feelings of members when issues of concern are expressed also aids in relationship building and building trust between the leadership of the local church and the members.

## Demographics

Question 34: Which church do you attend?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Butler Street CME (1)	12.33% 9
Westside CME (2)	10.96% 8
West Mitchell CME (3)	0.00% 0
Holsey Temple CME (4)	10.96% 8
Linden Shorts CME (5)	12.33% 9
Shy Temple CME (6)	26.03% 19
College Park CME (7)	0.00% 0
Holsey Sinai CME (8)	16.44% 12
Holsey Chapel CME (9)	10.96% 8
St. John CME (10)	0.00% 0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>73</b>

Table 3.34

There were seven of ten invited churches of the ARD that participated in the survey and the lowest of participants from any of the churches being eight members. The highest number of participants was from the writer’s congregation at Shy Temple. The number of respondents does not reflect a certain percentage of membership from the participating churches, but of those members that volunteered from each local church within the ARD. The pastor of St. John CME did respond, stating that she had an aged congregation that would probably not participate. There was no response from the pastors of West Mitchell and College Park CME.

Question 35: What is your age group?

ANSWER CHOICES		RESPONSES		
18-35 (1)		24.66%	18	
36-64 (2)		42.47%	31	
65 and above (3)		32.88%	24	
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>73</b>	
BASIC STATISTICS				
Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
1.00	3.00	2.00	2.08	0.75

Table 3.35

The age demographics were requested to ascertain the participation of millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers. The results of the age of participants in the survey yielded a higher number of the age 65 and above as expected, but it was also expected a higher number of millennials, since most are more technologically savvy and most have instant access to devices through their cellular devices.

The results that were attained through this voluntary survey of members of the local churches of the ARD will be utilized in chapter four to develop recommendations to the presiding elder of the ARD and the local pastors as an option to reducing attrition and addressing church conflict within the ARD.

## CHAPTER 4

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The previous chapter presented the results of the research survey of the churches of the ARD. This chapter presents recommendations for reducing the attrition of churches of the ARD by introducing new ideas for the local churches to implement. The recommendations of this research will be given to the presiding elder of the ARD for his review and distribution to the churches of the ARD. This chapter will address four topics that have been presented as potential hindrances for the churches' growth in membership. It will also address the effects of declining finance for missions and ministries. The analysis of the research study revealed four areas that contribute to conflict and prevents growth of churches in the ARD:

1. The Church's Refusal to Change
2. Church Planning and Budgets
3. Local Policies and Procedures
4. Mission Statements, Visions, and Core Values

The writer of this thesis is the pastor of Shy Temple CME, which is a church within the ARD. Therefore, most of the recommendations presented within this chapter are from research conducted from members of the other six churches on their lack of growth and church conflicts. The members expressed a desire to change to becoming a church where the lost and the unchurched can be transformed, taught, and returned to the world for ministry.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in the earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to

observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. Matthew 28:18-20

## **Church Accepting Change**

### Addressing Changing Cultural Issues

One of the questions in the survey conducted in the ARD addressed the local church's willingness to adjust to a growing community that represents different cultures, lifestyles, and races. A report written by Jill Wilson and Audrey Singer depicted in the Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings titled *Immigrants in 2010, Metropolitan America: A Decade of Change* demonstrated the growth in metropolitan cities throughout the United States from 1850 until 2010 and how the growth created cultural and racial boundaries within the cities.<sup>68</sup> The data received in this report assisted with the formation of 25 Neighborhood Planning Units (NPU) within the city of Atlanta.

In 2010, the city of Atlanta's racial demographic was 54% African American, Whites accounted for 38% of the population, and other non-whites accounted for 8% or just under 300,000 citizens residing in the metropolitan Atlanta area. No current studies were found to depict a more accurate assessment of the racial breakdown. Some of the ethnic backgrounds of the 8% non-whites represented were Asian and Pacific Islanders, Asian Indians, Korean, Chinese, Vietnamese, Hispanic or Latino, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Columbian.

The CME churches of Atlanta currently have no programs in place to welcome or minister to those across cultural and ethnic lines. Many of the neighborhoods in which the

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<sup>68</sup> World Population Review, 2018.

churches of the ARD are positioned have business owners and residents of other cultures that are unchurched or travel to locations outside the city to worship with churches of their nationality. There is also a deaf population, but many of the churches have no one who is trained in American Sign Language (ASL) to interpret during worship or Bible study. Thus, this communication hindrance often deters this population from coming. There is one pastor of the ARD, however, who is trained in ASL and could be used to teach others ASL.

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (LGBTQ) group constitutes 4.2% of the population of the city of Atlanta and ranks 19<sup>th</sup> among metropolitan cities with an LGBTQ population<sup>69</sup>. Finis Dake states in *God's Plan for Man* that the Bible declares that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). He further states that anything the Bible forbids is sinful<sup>70</sup>. Therefore, if those of the LGBTQ are not welcomed into the CME churches of the ARD, then the laws of God may not be explained to those that are unchurched.

The churches of the ARD have not embraced a growing LGBTQ community that needs to be taught in a nurturing way the Word of God and of sinful nature. The CME Book of Discipline states in the Social Creed, 131.4(f), Sex and Christian Life, “Marriage shall be defined as a union between a man and a woman and under no circumstances shall the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church either perform same sex-marriages or bless same-sex unions.<sup>71</sup>”. This statement is reiterated by the Senior Bishop of the College of Bishops of the CME Church

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<sup>69</sup> World Population Review, 2018.

<sup>70</sup> Dakes, Finis. *God's Plan for Man*. Lawrenceville: Dake Publishing, 2013

<sup>71</sup> Lewis, Roderick. *The Book of Discipline of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church*. Memphis: CME Publishing House, 2014.

in a letter pinned July 4, 2015 (See Appendix A). This letter to the CME congregations stated that even though the Supreme Court of the United States did not forbid same-sex marriages the CME Church would honor the Word of God as it is in Genesis 2:24: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.”

The writer of this thesis recommends that the churches of the ARD reach out to the LGBTQ communities through meetings and sensitivity training to gain a general understanding of both sides and welcome those of the LGBTQ into the ARD. The churches of the ARD must prepare to adjust to a changing society but still hold fast to the Word of God, as Romans 12:2 states, “and be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” It is also recommendation to the churches of the ARD to search out members of the congregation that are fluent in other languages and develop a ministry team to reach the unchurched people of other cultures and draw them to Christ.

### Breaking Tradition

Thom Rainer points out a common thread in many declining churches. In *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*, he states that many of the declining churches in the United States are not holding to biblical truths, clinging to clear Christian morality, or fighting for doctrines, but they are instead fighting for past practices while expecting growth in a changing society<sup>72</sup>. One of the survey questions addressed whether the church and the leaders conduct worship and handle church affairs “the way [they] have always done things.” The results yielded 64% of the

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<sup>72</sup> Rainer, Thom. *Autopsy of a Deceased Church*. Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2014.

respondents stated that their church was stuck on tradition and was thus causing a stifling in growth, which contributes to the attrition of the local churches.

The respondents of the survey also reported that 63% of the leadership within the local church attended training on how to effect change. Elmer Towns and Peter Wagner state in *The Everychurch Guide to Growth* that in churches that have created a “200 Barrier” (churches that have less than 200 active members and cannot grow), and five institutional factors have prevented growth in churches with fewer than 200 members<sup>73</sup>. The first factor is the desire to preserve social intimacy; many see a small church and its few members in an intimate way and enjoy the relationships that they have formed therein. Those with a social intimacy nature, however, tend to reject new members because they feel that the new members will change things. The second factor addresses the desire to maintain control. Some members have attained power and positions within the church and wanted to keep it this way. The third factor is the desire to conserve memories and thinking of the past. The fourth factor is the desire to protect turf by excluding visitors or new members and not welcoming them to serve; excluding newcomers allows them to protect the preexisting positions and culture within their church. The last factor is the desire to remain comfortable as the members see change as threat or competition arises with new ideas and people that may bring new ideas and present ways to grow the church.

Many of the current members are over the age of 65 and constitute 33% of the survey’s respondents. Many holds to the recommended order of worship that is listed in the front of *The*

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<sup>73</sup> Towns, Elmer, C Peter Wagner, and Thom Rainer. *The Everychurch Guide to Growth*. Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 1998.

*Hymnal of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church*<sup>74</sup>. There is an expectation of many older people that the younger members remain quiet and not express themselves; there is an understanding from the young adult's perspective that the older people remain in charge and they must follow their rules.

In his book, *Navigating Church Politics*, Randy Wolff observes that “power is the struggle that takes place between people as they construct and reconstruct knowledge,”<sup>75</sup> and the struggles often become strategic. Many millennials are leaving the churches of the ARD to attend non-denominational churches, or they stop attending church altogether. Many of the churches of the ARD are run by families of founding members, and many millennials attend the church that the family has attended for generations.

The writer of this thesis recommends that churches of the ARD work harder to integrate millennials into leadership positions and conduct an open dialogue on societal changes and entertain dialogues of the challenges that millennials must contend with daily. Secondly, the writer recommends that the leadership rotates every five years to offer others the opportunity to lead. Thirdly, the writer recommends that the leadership visits growing churches within the city and solicit ideas on how these churches are growing and maintaining members. Lastly, the writer recommends that each church consider how it can change the way that it operates without violating the commandments of God to preserve the membership and turn the decline of members into an uptick of membership.

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<sup>74</sup> George, William. *The Hymnal of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church*. Memphis: CME Publishing House, 2000.

<sup>75</sup> Wolff, Randy. *Navigating Church Politics*. Langley: Randy Wolff, 2017.

## Embracing Millennials

David Seel describes the importance of listening to millennials for the survival of the local churches. He states that older members tend to view millennials through an “older” lens and compare the millennials through the old way of doing things or when the older members were younger. Seel writes that the older members often view millennials through a frame of delayed maturity, low social capital, and decreased religious affiliation:<sup>76</sup> “The measure of leadership is best seen in times of crucial decision. Millennials carry a new frame on reality that poses a major challenge to the church in the coming years; this new frame is not only different, it is better, and it should not be ignored.”<sup>77</sup>

Steven Reep, a millennial himself, states that millennials have a negative view of the church because the culture has been defined by the older generations as living by blind faith as opposed to being able to see how the Christian faith works in viewing directly the blessings of God<sup>78</sup>. Alex McFarland and Jason Jimenez place part of the blame of why millennials are leaving on the millennials’ parents, as they state that parents should be faith influencers as opposed to allowing their children to not have a relationship with God. The writers give seven reasons why millennials are leaving the church in their book *Why Millennials are Walking Away and How You Can Lead Them Home*<sup>79</sup>: Reep states that many millennials (ages 18-35) have

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<sup>76</sup> Seel, David J. *The New Copernicans: Understanding the Millennial Contribution to the Church*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2018.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, 14

<sup>78</sup> Reep, Steven. "The State of the Church According to Millennials." *Christian Research Journal* 39, no. 3 (2016): 4.

<sup>79</sup> McFarland, Alex, and Jason Jimenez. *Abandoned Faith: Why Millennials are Walking Away and How You Can Lead Them Home*. Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2017.

never had a true Christian conversion and have never believed in Christ, which ultimately leads to repentance and total surrender to God.

He adds that many Christians' lives have been poor examples of Christianity to their children, and the result of this is often a rebellion of the children as they grow into millennials. He states thirdly that parents do not usually offer the youth an opportunity to express themselves or their beliefs when growing up, which causes a level of intellectual skepticism to sprout up and choke any roots of faith. Reep further states that millennials fail to see a connection between faith and culture, and their lack of participation in church and church activities prevents them from living by faith in Christ in their careers, personal lives, and their future.

He writes that millennials tend to see the church's hypocrisy of being more concerned about money than teaching the Bible. The writer of this thesis has witnessed the discussion of the hypocrisy among the millennials within the churches represented in this research, and how hypocrisy is a major factor in millennial attrition and dissatisfaction within the local church on the ARD. Next Reep states that millennials are seen as illiterate to Biblical principles because they do not read their Bible, and when challenged, they cannot defend their faith. It is said that Satan uses this illiteracy as an opportunity to infiltrate their minds with naturalism (idea or belief that only natural (as opposed to supernatural or spiritual) laws and forces operate in the world) and the ideology that there is no God. Scientology, for example, is easier to believe because it makes more sense than a being that created the entire world. Lastly, he writes that millennials have never been taught about the life, work, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, but to concentrate more on what the pastor says, and the requests made of the church.

The writer recommends that the churches of the ARD consider the eleven principles on how to embrace the millennials:

- 1 Be patient and listen to the millennials on their thoughts and perspectives of religion and life.
- 2 Show millennials love regardless of their feelings and ideas and include them in planning and leadership roles to bring a different perspective to the church.
- 3 Laugh with the millennials and embrace their humor.
- 4 Show the millennials that they are valued in church.
- 5 Encourage the millennials to participate in worship, meetings, leadership positions, and missions and ministries.
- 6 Express understanding and be transparent, allowing the millennials to see that the pastor has also experienced some of the same issues and desires.
- 7 Show compassion and empathy.
- 8 Always pray for wisdom with and for the millennials.
- 9 Take the yoke of Christ with the understanding everything that takes time, and we must be willing to invest in others as Christ has invested in us.
- 10 Embrace and encourage creativity with worship service and ministries.
- 11 Remove the feeling of entitlements as millennials are creative in finding free resources. Teach them the value of prayer and hard work. Millennials often look for ways out of attending church and will opt for online church service as opposed to worshipping with the saints. Encourage attendance at worship service.

## Introduce Different Styles of Worship

The CME Book of Discipline does not mandate that there is a specific style of worship, but it does allow the latitude of pastors to let the Holy Spirit move and usher in true worship and praise during worship service. Paul Zahl co-authors a book titled *Exploring the Worship Spectrum*, where contributors describe six views on worship experience; Formal-Liturgical Worship, Traditional Hymn-Based Worship, Contemporary Music-Driven Worship, Charismatic Worship, Blended Worship, and Emerging Worship<sup>80</sup>.

Many of the churches of the ARD conduct Traditional Hymn-Based Worship, where service follows an order of worship that is very predictable. As a result, millennials will often arrive during specific parts of worship instead of staying for the entire worship service. The churches of the ARD have choirs, but many limits the style of songs that the millennial participants sing. Many of the worship styles also have a blend of Formal-Liturgical Worship, where there is a dignified worship service that allows no room for spontaneity or change in the order of service. The Contemporary Music-Driven worship style allows the Holy Spirit to flow freely through members, so they can participate in full body worship. This style of worship includes raising of hands, jumping, and singing and leaves the members feeling equipped with Jesus to face a lost world. This style of worship invites all ages to participate freely in their worship experience.

Blended Worship merges contemporary and traditional worship in the same setting. It can leave members feeling as though they are on a roller coaster in worship with the tempo of worship rising with modern contemporary songs and then the tempo is slowed with slower songs

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<sup>80</sup> Zahl, Paul. *Exploring te Worship Spectrum*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 200

from a hymnal. The Emerging Worship style offers the non-traditional church atmosphere but does not offer a spontaneous style of worship where congregants are free to worship in any way they chose; song, dance, praise, and a relaxed atmosphere, allows a free form of expression.

The writer of this thesis recommends that the churches of the ARD implement a Contemporary Music-Driven worship style. The millennials at the ARD conference in May 2018 of this year expressed that they are not drawn to the traditional style of worship, as they feel that their attention is not kept by the worship or even the pastor. They prefer a worship style contemporary song as opposed to hymns. They stated that they relate to a preacher who preaches on relevant topics and can relate those topics to the Bible. Of the seven congregations participating in the survey, there is only one with a young pastor who employs a contemporary style of preaching and worship. His age allows him to relate to the millennials but also appeal to the older crowd, and as his ministry has grown over the past four years, his church attendance has grown by over 37% in membership.

### Leadership Changes

Leadership changes are inevitable and critical in the churches of the ARD. Many of the leaders or officers have held positions for many years. These positions are crucial to the life of the church. Many of the leaders are older and believe that church operations should be conducted as they were many years ago. However, they refuse to acknowledge that they lack the technological skills to maintain an effective leadership position and relate to an evolving environment.

Many leaders in the churches of the ARD have developed groups who, with their own agendas, have formed alliances amongst themselves and often work against the vision of the

pastor or ministries of the church. When there is a failure, many of these leaders refuse to accept responsibility for contributing to the failure.<sup>81</sup> These are some of the dynamics that Tara Barthel addresses in her book *Redeeming Church Conflict*. Church conflicts are often with the pastor or against other organizations. Many of the pastors struggle in the ARD with the leaders and feel that if they remove certain officers from their positions, then the officers either leave or stop supporting the church financially. Many of these leaders were put in place many years ago and have a feeling of ownership since they have been in place for so long.

Many of the leaders who have been in place for many years have formed relationships and alliances with the leadership of the CME church in various capacities. Some of these leaders have assumed ownership of the church. This writer asked each leader of each board of the previous church that he pastored that had held the leadership position for over five years to relinquish their position to allow new leadership to take over. Old leadership maintain old ideas, and everything stays the same. New leaders bring new ideas and new visions to the church.

This writer's recommendation to the pastors of the ARD is to limit a chairperson's tenure to five years and to rotate board members every five years. This writer recommends a mixture of younger members that have skills that could be resourceful to the church be offered the opportunity to serve on various boards and auxiliaries within the local church. This recommendation provides continuity and bridges the gap between the age groups. It also brings fresh ideas to the boards and auxiliaries of the local churches. For a church within the district that only has a few members, the church should consider reducing the number of board members

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<sup>81</sup> Barthel, Tara K and David Edling. *Redeeming Church Conflicts: Turning Crisis into Compassion and Care*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2012.

and allow members to serve on no more than two boards during the conference year. This minimizes control by certain leaders within the church.

## **Church Planning and Budgets**

### Finance

The churches of the ARD struggle after each annual conference, which is usually conducted in June, to raise apportionment funds to support the general church. With many of the churches experiencing a yearly decline in membership, church finances are negatively affected. According to the CME Book of Discipline, each church is to conduct a yearly budget review, and each pastor must ensure that as the conference year ends, there is a reasonable amount of funds in the church account prior to participation in the annual conference if the pastor is re-assigned to another charge.

During some visits and conversations with various members of the churches of the ARD, the writer of this thesis was told by the members that their churches had budgets, but they had not seen the budget and they had no knowledge of what the financial requirements were for their local church. A budget is a plan for allocating available resources. The budget decides how much money will be available to be used for ministries and other activities to support the church<sup>82</sup>. Budgets are roadmaps for the financial direction of the church, and a realistic budget managed well will yield funds to cover all necessary ministries and missions.

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<sup>82</sup> Henry, Jack A. *Basic Budgeting for Churches*. Nashville: B&H Publishing, 1996.

During the research survey, 70% of respondents that said their church experienced conflicts with funds and members supporting the church financially, and 78% said that their church experienced conflict over the lack of funds and how funds were spent. The survey reported 69% of respondents said their church was more concerned with raising funds than conducting ministry and missions, and 61% said that only certain members of their local church determined how funds were to be spent would not consult the rest of the church to discuss those funds. When there is a board in place to make financial decisions, non-budgeted funds must be approved by the board for use rather than certain members. Spending unallocated funds is a crime unless the funds are directly under the control of a delegated financial decision maker.

Funds spent in the church without the church body having knowledge damages trust between the membership and the leadership and the pastor. This, in turn, causes members to withhold financial support for the local church, so the church ends up struggling to maintain operations and ministries. Although 75% of the respondents said that a budget had been completed for their church, it is apparent that the budget was unrealistic or ineffective.

The recommendations to the churches of the ARD on finance to assist with mitigating conflict are:

1. Teach tithing instead of asking for funds or in some cases begging for funds. Christians are required by Old Testament law to give a tenth of our earnings. Many pastors stand in pulpits and talk about money as opposed to teaching, and members thus gain a disgust and feel as though the church is only concerned about funds. Pastors of the ARD should teach or preach quarterly on tithing. Members should be taught to allocate tithing as a priority when receiving wages, place a tenth into savings, and live off of the remaining wages.

2. Once the budget is completed and approved during a church conference, each member should receive a copy of the budget so he or she can understand the financial demands and responsibilities of the church for the conference year. The budget should be revisited monthly during the meetings to show the members how funds were spent during the month. As a pastor, it is a common practice for me to pass out finance sheets and display the financial activity of the church.
3. Prioritize spending, ensure that members are aware of the church's obligations, and communicate when there is a deficit. When members are included in the financial planning of the church, they are afforded the knowledge of the financial obligations of the church.
4. Pastors and leaders should ensure that budgeted funds are not used for anything except that which is approved through the church conference.
5. The budget should include means for savings each month to be used as a contingency or emergency fund. Creating a budget that balances revenue and expenses does not create a financial buffer for the church. This type of budgeting risks deficits if there is an unforeseen emergency within the church.
6. Leaders should be first to the offering basket, with the pastor leading. Pastors and leaders should tithe and allow the members to witness each of them tithing. Leadership should set an example for others to witness. Congregants will follow a leader that they trust.

One very key factor to church finance is being transparent with how funds are received and spent. Funds given by members should be kept a secret, as their giving is done in secret, but the overall finance of the church should be made public to any member through the Recording

Secretary of the church. If non-allocated funds are spent for a sudden emergency, then these expenses should be reported at the next scheduled church conference.

### Church Planning

Yearly planning meetings should be conducted prior to the close of the current conference year. According to Tony Morgan, “A yearly calendar is used for church and Spiritual growth, plan your work and work your plan.”<sup>83</sup> He recommends that the church slow down and look backward before looking forward in his book, *The Unstuck Church*. You cannot effectively plan a short- or long-range yearly activities calendar without first analyzing your budget for shortfalls or overages. The calendar of the church should be planned only for church programs, along with missions and ministries to serve the poor and needy. This calendar should also include community discipleship events and outreaches. It is advisable to divide members into teams for planning ministry effectiveness; this also gives the members ownership of the mission.

Church planning should be conducted around the planned events of the ARD and Sixth Episcopal District. Attainable goals should be set so that members are not overburdened or over-tasked with ministry duties. All members should have the opportunity to provide input on calendar year events and goals. The calendar planning meetings, as well as all called meetings, of the church should be planned at least three weeks in advance. The pastor should present his vision for the upcoming year as well as the vision and directives of the presiding elder and the presiding prelate.

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<sup>83</sup> Morgan, Tony. *The Unstuck Church*. Nashville: Harper Collins Publishers, 2017.

The calendar is used to complete the budget. If a planning calendar has not been completed, the finance team has a difficult time projecting a budget for the upcoming year. The budget and the planning calendar should be completed and treated as if it were the personal calendar and budget of the individual. This writer recommends that before the calendar or budget planning meeting is the church fasts and prays for the guidance of God to ensure that God will ordain and bless the missions and ministries of the church and that growth will happen. We should endeavor to be good stewards of God's resources, as 1 Peter 4:10 instructs, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace."

### **Local Policies and Procedures**

Policies are guidelines that regulate an organization's action. Policies demonstrate the desired conduct and expectations of the organization's activities. They also provide boundaries and assist with maintaining order according to Nancy J. Campbell in her book, *Writing Effective Policies and Procedures*<sup>84</sup>. Without policies and procedures, organizations would operate in chaos, and order would be hard to maintain. Lack of policies and procedures opens the doors for conflict within an organization where individual personalities and personal agendas are ever present. Decisions have to be made on how the organization or in the case of the ARD will operate. Decisions have to be clear and concise.

When local policies and procedures are implemented, the policies must be enforced, and any violations must be penalized. Procedures define the action part of the policy and demonstrate the "how" things will operate within the organization. Policies and procedures

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<sup>84</sup> Campbell, Nancy J. *Writing Effective Policies and Procedures*. Broadway: American Management Association, 1998.

should always be written, explained, and disseminated to all within the organization. Campbell discusses the four aspects for planning an effective policy manual. She states that planning is the first step, and in this step, teams are developed to decide the scope and nature of the policies and procedures, goals and results, who is to address, and when to schedule meetings. Planning lays the foundation for the skeleton of the policy. The foundation is based on the needs of the organizational structure. The next step analyzes the effects and impacts of the policies and formulates the policies based on the mission, vision, and goals. Step three involves the research phase as the concept of the policy is reviewed and compared to the needs of the organization, the people, and other comparable organizations. Lastly, the prewriting step puts the policies and procedures on paper as the initial draft is completed and prepared to be discussed.

Upon reviewing the results of the survey research, almost 49% of the respondents states that their local church within the ARD did not have local policies and procedures in place. The writer of this thesis called and spoke with four pastors to ask about their church's local policies and procedures to use as a guide for the development of Shy Temple CME's policies. Neither of the pastors stated that their congregations had effective polices, and if their church had policies, they would be outdated. Many of the churches operate under the CME Book of Discipline but the laws of the Book of Discipline are broad and affect the entire church. While each church in the ARD is different with different missions, congregational demographics, locations, and sizes, each set of policies will be different. It is very imperative that each church develops their own set of policies and procedures.

Appendix B contains an attachment with a more detailed list of issues involving a church and assist leaders in developing a table of contents and setting the format for the local policies and procedures. As a pastor, I have experienced several instances in dealing with former

members that returned to the church with the expectation of utilizing the church funeral and expected to not be assessed a fee to utilize the church and the fellowship hall. With no policy in place, it was hard to make an informed decision since policies were never written at the church. Policies done verbally will change depending on who is asked about them, and there is no ownership of policies.

The writer of this thesis recommends that all churches of the ARD should develop policies for the operations of their local churches to accompany the Book of Discipline. The policies should be developed as a local aid and add to the laws of the church but should not deviate from the laws of the church as stated in Article 22 in the Book of Discipline: any pastor that violates the commands of God or of the CME Church should be openly rebuked and corrected.

Implementing local policies will reduce conflict with leadership and identify boundaries, expectations, and responsibilities of each leader and member. All members should have access to the review of the policies and vote on the policies before they are implemented. The local policies should be reviewed at least annually but updated often. Establishing policies will reduce decisions made by certain people or funds being disbursed without the knowledge of the membership.

## **Mission Statement, Vision, Core Values**

### Mission Statement

According to Dr. Jeanne Porter King in her book *Building A Church Full of Leaders*, a mission statement helps leaders and members understand the church's character (who we are and

who we are not), the church's cause (what you stand for and do not stand for), the church commitments (what you do and what you do not do), the church's capabilities (the needs that your church meets through its ministries).<sup>85</sup> She gives six elements of a good mission statement. She states that a mission statement must be need-directed, and the mission statement reflects fulfillment of a need for a group. King states the second element of a good mission statement is value-based and the core values are reflected in the organization. She describes the third element as active; every mission requires action and the mission statement should reflect the actions and activities. She states that the mission statement must be succinct in that identifies the primary purpose in one line. King writes that a mission statement must be understandable to people of the lowest level, even children. Lastly, she states that it must be memorable and can be committed to memory by all members.

Will Mancini provides a framework for missional clarity, stating that mission is a missional mandate (the guiding compass of our church that gives us direction in the glorification of God) that describes "what we are doing." Mission motives states, "why we are doing it", mission strategy describes "how we are doing it" measures of missional life marks give an indication of "when we are successful;" and mission vision proper "where God is taking us".<sup>86</sup>

In reviewing survey questions Four through Six, which ask the respondents if their local church had a mission statement and core values, the results yielded that 53% of churches with mission statements and only 38% with visible mission statements. If members cannot often see the vision statement it cannot be committed to memory. The survey results revealed 52% of the

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<sup>85</sup>King, Jeanne Porter. *Building A Church Full of Leaders*. South Holland: TransPorter Communications LLC, 2014.

<sup>86</sup> Mancini, Will. *Church Unique: How Missional Leaders Cast Vision, Capture Culture and Create Movement*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bars, 2008.

respondents stated that their church did not visit their mission statement yearly to determine if any cultural changes would cause their mission to change.

The writer recommends that each church in the ARD review its mission statement. If a church does not have a mission statement, it should use the examples from above to develop a mission statement and print it on weekly bulletins, on their social media and web platforms, in the vestibule, in the fellowship hall, and anywhere else the members have access. The writer also recommends that the mission statement is visited every four years to remain current with the CME Church's mission.

### Vision

A vision statement provides focus and direction for a church. The vision statement usually starts with a visualized end result. The vision has to be clarified and presented to the church in a way that the church can receive and have a clear understanding of the leader's direction. Habakkuk 2:2 says to "Write the vision and make it plain," and Proverbs 29:18 states, "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

Question 7 of the survey asks whether the pastor has communicated his vision for the direction of the church in the last 10 years, 57% of the respondents stated that their pastor had communicated a vision. The writer recalls his first church conference at the current church and asking the members to fast so that God would give His vision for Shy Temple CME. After God had given the writer the vision, it was written down and the steps to achieving the goal was passed along to each member.

The writer recommends that each pastor seeks God for His vision and direction for the local church. If a fast is requested of the pastor, then it should include the entire church to ensure

that the entire church body is on one accord. The pastor should write the vision and evaluate the vision yearly to determine the progress or accomplishment of the church. When people see accomplishments, they become willing to work more. The vision should be shared often to ensure that all members are in agreement with the vision and support the vision.

### Core Values

According to Aubrey Malphurs, core values reveal why we are doing what we do as a church, and they support the vision of what a church is doing<sup>87</sup>. Malphurs additionally lists in *A New Kind of Church*, four types of core values. The first is conscious versus unconscious values where he states that people's core beliefs are often at the unconscious level since most people are not aware of their core beliefs. It becomes the leader's job to transform the people from unconscious to a conscious level. Malphurs describes the second value as shared versus unshared values where he mentions that shared values are values that people agree upon as opposed to those opposing values that will destroy a ministry. The third value that he writes about is personal versus organizational values. Malphurs writes that individuals have their own values just as an organization has its own values. He suggests that leaders teach new members the church values, so they can agree upon core values and build common ground. Lastly, he mentions that core values are actual versus aspirational values. He states that actual values are those that a church practices daily, such as prayer and meditation, but aspirational values are those that a church neither owns nor does well. They are values that are defined but no effort is placed on achieving them.

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<sup>87</sup> Malphurs, Aubrey. *Values-Driven Leadership*. Grand Rapids: Baker Publishing, 2004.

Many of the churches within the ARD lack core values supporting their vision. The writer recommends that the presiding elder develops classes during one of the bi-annual CTIs or during one of planning meetings. The writer also recommends that one of the instructors from the Phillips School of Theology instructs pastors on developing a mission statement, vision, and core values. Once the pastor has developed each of the three, I recommend that he delivers it to his congregation to ensure that all understand the mission of the local church, the vision of the pastor, and the supporting core values of his vision.

Chapter four discussed the recommendations to the pastors of the ARD. It is imperative that pastors and leaders listen to the people of the congregations that they serve in order to reduce the attrition, minimize church conflict, and focus more on the Great Commission, seeking the lost, teaching, training, and making more disciples. When leaders listen to their members, it shows the members that the leaders have consideration for their concerns.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION

The churches of the Atlanta-Rome District have demonstrated a decline in membership over the past few years. In this thesis, a survey was conducted to address some common complaints of conflict and low membership of local ARD church. The survey results yielded the members' feelings and thoughts on conflict within the participating ARD churches that has contributed to the attrition rates thereof.

The CME Church operates from an itinerant system that conducts appointments on an annual basis for all pastors within the CME denomination. A pastor can be appointed to a pastoral charge for one year, but, in some cases, there have been pastors that have been re-assigned in one charge their entire pastoral tenure. Conflicts arise during constant change or when change that may cause the physical and Spiritual demise of a local church is enacted within the charge. This thesis has identified six causes of conflict within the local churches of the ARD.

According to the membership of the local churches of the ARD, one of the causes of conflict was church finance. Because of the member attrition rates within the local churches, these churches struggle to maintain financial obligations such as salaries, utilities, local missions and ministries, and support for the general church each month. The member survey revealed that finance was a cause of conflict: lack of finances, how the funds of the church were spent, and who controls the funds. The mismanagement of church funds can lead to church corruption, as mentioned in an article by Iddrissu Shaibu on how churches in Ghana mismanage and misuse

church funds.<sup>88</sup> Shaibu adds that church corruption in Ghana is so common that even the locals do not trust the churches—a time where the church cannot afford to be reactive, but to remain proactive in managing God’s resources.

Another cause of church conflict identified in the survey was the relationship between the pastor and the church leadership. According to the members surveyed, the conflict between the pastor and the church leadership often involved finances and the pastor’s ability to give his vision for the church. The conflict also involved individual or group agendas that did not support the vision of the pastor. Strained relationships within the leadership of a church will prevent growth and often cause people to leave the church. In his book *Breakout Churches*, Thom Rainer mentions a pastor with a vision of drawing all races, ethnic groups, and nationalities.<sup>89</sup> The vision of this pastor would be beneficial for a city that attracts people from all nations and cultures. Atlanta has become an attractational city for the film industry as well as the LGBTQ community. Many of the older members are content with maintaining the local congregations with the known members and have no desire to reach out to others that may be different from that to which they are accustomed.

Lack of local policies and procedures presented another cause of conflict, as there is constant confusion on how the church operates locally as well as how the local governing body within the church is to govern. The lack of policies has resulted in disagreements over the disbursement of benevolence, use of the church, and how much, membership status, roles and

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<sup>88</sup> Shaibu, Idrissu Adam. "Towards an Effective Financial Management of Funds Generated from Offering in the Church: A Study of Some Selected Classical Pentecostal Churches in the Ashanti Region of Ghana." *Research on Humanities and Services* 3, no. 2 (2013): 215-220.

<sup>89</sup> Rainer, Thom S. *Breakout Churches*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.

responsibilities, and even planning for each conference year. Edward Schweizer states in *Church Order in the New Testament* that “church order is to be regarded as a part of the proclamation in which the church’s witness or expresses, as it is in its preaching.”<sup>90</sup> There must be order within the church.

The fourth cause of conflict listed was lack of vision; if a church does not communicate its vision, the people have no clear idea of the church’s goals or direction. The local churches that did have mission statements were operating from outdated mission statements that were not supported by core values or new direction. The presiding prelates of the CME church gather yearly during a planned retreat to discuss the mission, vision, and direction of the CME church. The new mission and vision statement were released from the CME College of Bishops on October 1, 2018 for local churches to plan their visions and missions to support the new theme of the quadrennial. In his book *Courageous Leadership* Bill Hybels states that a leader’s most potent weapon is the power of vision.<sup>91</sup> The pastor must receive the vision from God and share it with his congregation.

The churches of the ARD refuse to change to address our changing culture and society. They also have an older membership that many have specific expectations of how worship should be conducted as well as certain expectations of the behavior and dress of the younger members. Conflict is prevalent over accepting those of the LGBTQ community and those of other races and cultures. As Christians, we are called to accept everyone, not just those that are like us, agree with us, or are easy to spend time with,<sup>92</sup> as stated in Beth Miller’s book, *Ready to*

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<sup>90</sup> Schweizer, Edward. *Church Order in the New Testament*. Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006.

<sup>91</sup> Hybels, Bill. *Courageous Leadership*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.

<sup>92</sup> Miller, Beth. *Ready to Go, Retreats and Lock-Ins*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006.

*Go, Retreats and Lock-Ins*. As Christians, we must prepare ourselves to open our doors to those that are not like us. Not willing to serve those that are not like us also presents an issue for local ministries that are to be conducted in the surrounding communities, where the ministry field involves other races, cultures, and sexuality. Matthew 7:1 teaches, “Judge not that ye be not judged;” therefore, we are to love and embrace others instead of condemning them in their sins.

Lastly, personality differences that involved the pastor, leaders, and members of the local church often contribute to conflict within the local churches. These personality differences often lead to groups of similar interests forming a coalition against the pastor or to dominate the local church, at times using intimidation as a means of coercion to ensure that their agendas are fulfilled. Moreover, clashing personalities often results in conflict with the vision of the pastor, which can in turn affect the tenure of local pastors. Some groups work to fail the local pastor’s ministry, and G. Lloyd Rediger calls these people “clergy killers” in his book *Clergy Killer*—they intentionally target pastors for injury and destruction<sup>93</sup>.

The six causes of conflict (church finance, policies and procedures, vision, mission, core values, personality difference, leadership disputes and changes with addressing intergenerational challenges) within the ARD presented four topics (church accepting change, church planning and budgets, local policies and procedures and mission statement, vision, and core values) to be addressed to the leadership of the ARD, along with recommendations to assist with maintaining and growing the membership of the ARD churches. When a church refuses to change with society and the current cultural trends, the church tends to get left in the past. The churches of

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<sup>93</sup> Rediger, G. Lloyd. *Clergy Killer*. Inver Grove Heights: Westminster John Knox, 1997.

the ARD have to embrace the cultural changes and equip themselves to learn about the cultures of those that reside within their area. They should also consider sensitivity training on interacting with those of the LGBTQ community. Connections to these communities as well as the training can be gained through the City of Atlanta Mayor's Officer of Personal Affairs. There are hospital agencies within the city that offer training in dealing with those suffering with mental health and terminal illnesses—conditions that prevent many from attending church.

The Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Development and the Georgia Coalition on Older Adults and Behavior Health lie right in the center of downtown and offer services through volunteers to train on dealing with those with mental illnesses as well as the aged community. The Regional Council of Churches of Atlanta, Inc. distributes a weekly listing of programs offered throughout the city of churches that announces training and resources to assist local churches with issues to assist with equipping the churches in Atlanta with those in need.

A World Development Report conducted in 2004, *Making Services Work for the Poor*,<sup>94</sup> addressed churches requesting available grants for funding and training in dealing not only with the poor but also others that may be in dire need or distressed. These grants through governmental and non-governmental agencies provide necessary resources to provide services to those within the communities of our churches. Many agencies within the city address the needs of those with alcohol and drug addictions, teen pregnancies and runaway teens, and educational programs for diplomas. Programs run through the Atlanta Veterans Hospital provide aid for veterans struggling with health issues and homelessness. When the local churches start to address

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<sup>94</sup> *Making Services Work for Poor People*. World Development Report, Danvers: World Bank and Oxford University Publisher, 2004.

the needs of those within their local communities, the local churches will start to witness growth as those that are assisted through the local church will restore their faith in the local churches.

Breaking traditions was the second recommendation for reducing conflict. The local church should welcome those that wish to worship God and allow them to express themselves in whatever manner they choose during worship. Many of the millennials in the ARD churches have either left the local church or attended worship at one of the many non-denominational churches in the Atlanta area. The older members must understand that the church of “the old days” or “the way we used to do church” are no longer viable with millennials. To retain millennials, more contemporary styles of worship must be implemented in the worship service. Bible study and other biblical classes taught in the church must also address issues that millennials deal with on a daily basis.

A valuable asset for training pastors and leaders lies also in the heart of the ARD at the ITC. The ITC offers classes on modern as well as contemporary worship styles. Some of these classes are taught by CME pastors of the ARD and would provide valuable insight into breaking traditions and moving to worship styles to draw the millennials back to the local congregations. Appointing or voting millennials to governing boards of the church so they can train on church operations and listening to their ideas will bridge a gap between two generations and foster unity within the local churches.

Budgets and yearly church planning calendars should be conducted at least 90 days from the beginning of the new conference year. This allows time for programs to be added and for planners to seek out resources and funding. During his fourth quarterly conference the presiding elder must request a copy of the church’s ensuing year’s calendar for review along with a copy

of the budget. Currently, a church's budget is not a required document during the church's quarterly conference with the presiding elder, but if the local leadership and pastor were forced to develop attainable and effective budgets and planning calendars, the local churches would have an azimuth on their direction for the following year.

There should be directed classes on church budgets and finance as well as instruction on developing finance plans to support the local church. Aubrey Malphurs provides great examples on church finance strategies in his book *Money Matters in the Church*<sup>95</sup> through four steps: review values, mission, vision, and strategy for the local church. The church must determine next year's spending based on previous years' revenue and expenditures, determine the allocation of funds, and lastly, communicate the allocations to the church. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) provides a link on Tax Information for Churches and Religious Organizations<sup>96</sup> as well as training for local churches on requirements of the IRS as they pertain to the local church. Some churches have paid employees that are not submitting wages to the IRS, and violations of tax laws affect the non-profit status for the local church.

Each church of the ARD should be directed to write local policies and procedures that govern each local church. Robert Welch presents an effective manual that addresses many issues that the local church must contend with (contracts, emergency, procedures and operation of the church) within and outside of the church<sup>97</sup> and provides examples of each of the issues involved

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<sup>95</sup> Malphurs, Aubrey and Stroope, Steve. *Money Matters in Church: A Practical Guide For Leaders*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007.

<sup>96</sup> *Tax Information for Churches and Religious Organizations*. n.d.

<sup>97</sup> Welch, Robert H. *The Church Organization Manual*. National Association of Church Business Administration Press, 2002.

within the church. In the absence of written policy, people tend to make decisions based on their individuals thought of how things should operate as opposed to what has been approved through a consensus of the church body. Certain issues have been raised by members about membership status, rental fees for members and non-members, use of church vehicles, employee expectations, insurance, and procedures on emergency, mechanical, and physical operations of the church. The absence of policies also opens the door to allow abuse and misuse of church property and creates a sense of entitlement for some.

Lastly, when churches do not have a mission statement, vision statement, and developed core values, linger without an identity or purpose other than worship. The mission statement of a church is as important as a clear, challenging vision, especially for those leaders who struggle with the envisioning process<sup>98</sup> according to Aubrey Malphurs in his book *Developing A Dynamic Mission for Your Ministry*. He states that once a church develops a mission statement, the church must pursue it. The formation and pursuance not only of the mission statement, but also of the vision statement and the core values are very important, as all create direction the mission and growth of a church. It is within these three critical pieces that goals are established, and local churches are re-invigorated. The presiding elder should direct each local church to post the mission and vision statements throughout each local church and on the local bulletins.

The recommendations offered during the research study should be visited yearly during the district planning meeting to determine updates in trends or to implement this document as a working document to mitigate church conflict and increase the membership of the local

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<sup>98</sup> Malphurs, Aubrey. *Developing A Dynamic Mission for Your Ministry*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1998.

churches. The effectiveness of these recommendations should be shared with the eight other presiding elders within the Sixth Episcopal District for consideration of church growth in their perspective districts throughout the State of Georgia. Each district should develop its own team consisting of at least three members from each of the four age groups (youth 12-17, young adults 18-35, adults 36-64, and the older members 65 and older).

Yearly updates on the Spiritual climate of the churches of each district should be given to the presiding elders and the presiding prelate. This research has provided valuable insight on the financial and member shortfall and how many of our churches are failing to meet the needs of people within our communities. The continuation of failing to address important issues that introduce conflict will contribute to the demise of a church.

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## APPENDIX A

Saturday, July 4, 2015

### **A Statement of The College of Bishops of The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church**

July 2, 2015

The Supreme Court of the United States has ruled that nothing in the Constitution of the United States forbids same sex marriages. It has opened the door officially to same sex marriages all across the United States.

The Supreme Court has issued a judicial decision. However, as the College of Bishops, we remind you that the Constitution provides for a separation of Church and State.

The official stance of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church on same sex marriage is stated in the *Social Creed*, adopted by the General Conference:

Marriage shall be defined as a union between a man and a woman and under no circumstances shall the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church either perform same sex marriages or bless same sex unions [THE BOOK OF DISCIPLINE, REVISED 2010, page 38].

Specifically, we believe that same sex marriages are contrary to biblical teaching and the CME Church's DISCIPLINE. Therefore, our clergy are not only admonished against performing or blessing same sex unions, but a CME minister who performs a same sex marriage or blesses a same sex union is in violation of the DISCIPLINE of the Church and subject to disciplinary action. Furthermore, no property of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church can be used for any same sex marriage or celebration.

We recognize that the above conclusions are heavily weighted on the legal side, but these statements must be made for clarity. However, as pastors ordained and sent by God, we also recognize that we must continue to prayerfully consider the issues of human sexuality, human marriages and unions, the theology of grace, the theology of love, and what it means for the Church to embody and express God's grace and to be the active symbol of God's continuing love in the world.

We must continue to explore what it means to be proactive Christians, demonstrating love for all people and extending the same grace that God has extended to us.

Respectfully and Prayerfully,

THE COLLEGE OF BISHOPS

+ Lawrence L. Reddick III, Senior Bishop	+Marvin Frank Thomas, Sr.
+ Henry M. Williamson, Sr.	+C. James King, Jr.
+ Thomas L. Brown, Sr.	+Paul A. G. Stewart, Sr., Retired
+ Kenneth W. Carter	+E. Lynn Brown Retired
+ James B. Walker	+Ronald M. Cunningham Retired
+ Sylvester Williams, Sr.	+Othal H. Lakey, Retired
+ Teresa E. Snorton, Secretary	+William H. Graves, Sr., Retired
+ Godwin T. Umoette, Chair	+Marshall Gilmore Retired
+ Bobby R. Best	

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September 12, 2018

James C. Clements IRB Exemption 3248.091218: Church Conflict in the Atlanta-Rome District: Developing a Systematic Approach to Resolving Conflict and Reduce Membership Attrition

Dear James C. Clements,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at [irb@liberty.edu](mailto:irb@liberty.edu).

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP Administrative Chair of Institutional Research The Graduate School Liberty University Training Champions for Christ since 1971