

Liberty University School of Divinity

**Church Leadership: Examining the Role of Non-Pastoral
Leadership in a New Church Plant**

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by

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Liberty University School of Divinity

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THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY THESIS PROJECT ABSTRACT

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In today's western Christianity, many small churches are closing their doors; hundreds of pastors are quitting the ministry. Churches are planted quickly, and just as quickly close and disappear. What can be done to bring a halt to this downhill slide? The great message of Jesus Christ is as important and powerful as it always has been. However, in many churches today, there are dissident elements working to take attention away from the gospel.

Dissident non-pastoral leadership (a person or persons who undermine the Pastor's authority and cause disruption for their own benefit) can destroy the entire vision of a church. In the relatively new church plant called Restoration Church, a church structure needs to be developed that will identify and dissuade the dissident non-pastoral leader from arising to take over leadership on his/her own behalf. The pastor will develop a plan for proper discipleship and training methods based on proven academic and practical research. It is believed that God will have His way to build and strengthen this body of believers for His glory and honor. Ephesians 4:1-16 will be the ever-present beat of the drum: "From whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love." (Eph. 4:16) (ESV).

It is the goal of this project to develop a church structure and, as it grows, to involve gifted believers to use their gifts and understand that each individual is valuable in the building of the body of Christ under the direction of the Holy Spirit and the Pastor.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This project was designed to help pastors discover when dissident non-pastoral leadership attempts to usurp the leadership of the pastor and take over the community of believers without authority from the pastor. This does not apply to the many wonderful volunteers who wholeheartedly serve in a church community, but to those who have in their mind that they can do it better than the pastor and are not willing, at the moment, to try working with the pastor in Christian love. Many churches are split or damaged by this type of activity; some simply shut down. There are many, many empty church buildings around the countryside that have had this very thing happen, and it is very difficult to resurrect them into vibrant productive churches.

It is this researcher's desire that the design of this project will allow pastors and community members to recognize this type of "takeover" activity. It will alert them to the potential problems caused by dissident non-pastoral leadership, examine methods by which to identify such leadership, and to suggest various courses of action to stop it. This study will examine ways for the church to work with the individual or individuals that are attempting this in a way to help them find their true calling. The goal is to help them find an outlet for their God-given gifts and loving them into submission under the pastor's care. It takes the entire community, well trained in the scriptures, to accomplish this task. In Restoration Church, which is a new church plant with a great variety of demographics and many new believers, this will be especially challenging. The pastor, the community, and the researcher will help to bring this challenge to a positive light so that it can be dealt with properly in the future.

Ministry Context

The method of church planting described herein has been used for many years as a pattern taken from the Book of Acts 2:42-47, “And day by day attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” (46-47) (English Standard Version, ESV). The researcher used this same pattern as the method of choice to plant churches around the country. Restoration Church also used this method to get its start

Restoration Church, pastored by Rev. Florencio H. Vigil, is a relatively new church plant. Pastor Flo, as he prefers to be called, began a Bible study in his home. As it grew to about 25 people, Pastor Flo acquired a small storefront to continue the expansion of Restoration Church as God gave increase. It was not long before that building became too small for our 60-person congregation. Another building was acquired that will seat up to 300 people, with room for kitchen and youth group activities. Most of Pastor Flo’s ministry (16 years) experience was with the youth ministry in town. Pastor Flo was led by God to plant Restoration Church, which has been in existence about four years.

The church community consists of a varied demographics. The pastor works with disadvantaged people, drug addicts, released prisoners, and “the not so perfect person,” as the pastor says. Pastor Flo has held a weekly men’s Bible study at the local IHOP every Tuesday for several years. Pastor Flo has recently obtained permission to start a Restoration Church inside the federal prison here in Las Cruces, New Mexico. There is a seminary-trained man (a lifer) who will be trained and called to pastor that church. Presently Pastor Flo is pastoring the inmates. The church community sends evangelistic teams bi-monthly into the less fortunate parts

of town evangelizing the lost. Because of this effort, the church community is made aware of families who have needs, which the church administers to the best they are able.

Pastor Flo incorporated this church as Restoration Ministries, which allows this ministry to expand anywhere the Lord leads them. At present, Pastor Flo has no written basic church plan, but plans “on the go.” He is helped by his devoted family, consisting of his teenage son (the drummer in the worship team), (his 21-year-old daughter (a singer), and his wife (who oversees the electronics and computer work). Pastor Flo is the lead singer and is followed by a 77-year-old female singer/guitarist, a 63-year-old female singer/guitarist, and a 58-year-old male singer/guitarist. The worship team is very good, and the community sings along well with the team. Currently, there are no others in church leadership as there are many new Christians in need of training. The church is at the point where the thesis project will help the Pastor to avoid conflict within. Structure will help the community to understand the leadership chain and the training will help the church and develop new leaders to help better serve the church community.

Problem and Purpose

Restoration Church is a Pentecostal church presently without structure. This thesis project is designed to help the community and pastor understand the need for proper structure and training for the community so that it will grow into a robust and healthy church. Because this is an action research project, it will require not only researching the situation, but the researcher will help the pastor and community to develop an action plan to alleviate the problem. During this research, it will be shown that faulty church structure is a source of conflict in Pentecostal churches and a major contributor to the “power struggles” they experience.

It is the goal of the researcher to identify and convince the Pastor that using the same pattern over and over will produce the same results -- failure. Restoration Ministries must

develop church structure early on *and* as the church grows to become successful as a church community.

In the beginning, the pastor felt that he had all five of Hirsch's "APEST"¹ gifts himself but has since learned he does not. Those gifts are mentioned in Ephesians 4:11-12 (ESV) "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ." As time went on, Pastor Flo realized that God did not expect one to be a "paragon of self-sufficiency,"² but to work with others to accomplish God's purposes. This is another reason that this church needs to look at Biblical structure for their community. This thesis project will help the community and the pastor to begin working together under God's direction to accomplish this. The project goal is to bring to the forefront the importance of structure and training concerning the role of a non-pastoral leader. This can be done without disrupting the community. An example of what can happen without training and structure in place *from the beginning* is given in 3 John 9-10 (ESV).

I have written something to the church, but Diotrephes, who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority. If I come, I will bring up what he is doing, talking wicked nonsense against us. And not content with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers and stops those who want to [sic] and puts them out of the church.

Often in a new church plant, there are those who try to take charge without authority given to them by God; they like to be preeminent in the community. In this thesis project, these people are called dissident non-pastoral leaders. The church is warned about this type of intrusion "I appeal to you, brothers, to watch for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught;

¹ Alan Hirsch, 2016, *The Forgotten Ways: Reactivating Apostolic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press), 3641 Kindle.

² Greg Ogden, 2003, *Unfinished Business: Returning the Ministry to the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 519, Kindle.

avoid them. For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naïve.” (Rom 16:17-18) (ESV). This can happen when the community has not had proper training concerning authority in the church. This thesis project is designed to help the pastor and the community recognize such an individual and work with him/her, in love, so that his/her gift(s) can have a positive (rather than an adverse) effect on the community. “When we do this, we are working as Christian organizations should work—from the inside out. That’s why God needs our hearts to get everything else.”³

The researcher will gather the evidence through interviews and questionnaires. Then he will compare that evidence with the literature available on the subject. He will then work on possible solutions designed for this group of people. It is the researcher’s responsibility to find possible solutions for the situation and share it with the pastor and the congregation. They can then work through the problem and solve it as a community. The main ingredient must be love. John tells us, “Whoever loves God must also love his brother” (I John 4:21) (ESV). It is imperative that the actions taken to confront dissident leadership be rooted in our love for the individual and the desire to bring them back into a healthy relationship with the church body. For the pastor to accomplish a peaceful solution, it is best if he can garner all possible support from the church community.

These are four pieces to the problem:

1. *Intellectual*. How did this happen? Man is a sinner, even if he is “born again.” The old man remains active unless the saved person is walking fully in the Spirit. “For all

³ Alan Hirsch & David Ferguson, 2011, *On the Verge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 1553, Kindle.

that is in this world -- the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life -
- is not from the Father but from the world” (I John 2:16) (ESV).

2. *Mechanical*. How does it work? Paul addresses this issue in 2 Corinthians 12:20, “ ... perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder.” The dissenter gossips and backbites to create division.

3. *Comparative*. How to compare this? Instead of gossip and division, “So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding” (Rom 14:19) (ESV).

4. *Predictive*. How does this affect the work? “From whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Eph 4:16) (ESV).

Working as a community to solve these issues allows members to take ownership of the problem. Solving the problem will give them confidence in working together to become a mission-led church that reaches the “lost” of the surrounding community with the love of Christ.

The Restoration Church’s Mission Statement reads:

Restoration Church’s mission is to bring people to an understanding of the redemptive work of Christ. We believe God has commissioned us to be a place of healing for the nations. We are here to proclaim that Jesus died to restore the spirit, soul, and physical body of man. Our mission is to be the living vessels of faith, hope, and love in the community. We are to serve God faithfully. We are commissioned to be A Place of New Beginnings, Hope for the Future, and Restoration.⁴

This is a very good statement; however, a great amount of training must go into educating the church community to what the word “mission” means. The researcher has found that “leading someone to Christ” is not the end. There is a little word called “disciple”. The church

⁴ Restoration Church, *Our Mission*. Fall, 2018.

community is to make disciples of those that have received Christ's salvation so that the work of Christ will be carried to all nations and all peoples, "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt 28:20).⁵ This is where the failure is occurring.

The task of the pastor and researcher is to educate and train the church community how they are to work together to build a solid foundation and accomplish this mission. "Just as this house needed a solid foundation, so we need a solid foundation for our lives—an unchanging system of beliefs, goals, and moral values that keep us stable and secure, even in the midst of life's storms. No matter our age, nothing prepares us for the future like a solid moral and spiritual foundation based on God's will for our lives."⁶ It will be done effectively only if there is unity of spirit. This is where the giftedness of the individuals in the church community must be stressed and applied.

Basic Assumptions

1. The first assumption is that the community will allow a Doctor of Ministry (DMIN) researcher into their privacy and with confidence to do the project.

2. The second is like unto the first -- that the pastor will allow the researcher freedom to interview his flock.

3. The third is the assumption that there is a problem with dissident non-pastoral leadership trying to disrupt the congregation or pastor.

4. The fourth is that pastor and congregation are willing to identify the problem and resolve it as a community of believers. This willingness will allow the pastor to identify when this type of problem creeps in and address it before it disrupts anything.

⁵ All Scripture, unless otherwise noted, will be taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

⁶ Billy Graham, 2011, *Nearing Home* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson), 132.

The church, after all, does belong to the people of God. “The ethical challenge to God’s people is, first, to recognize the mission of God that provides the heartbeat of their very existence and, then, to respond in ways that express and facilitate it rather than deny and hinder it.”⁷ With proper training and instruction, the community can be led to “the fundamental biblical vision of the church as a living organism.”⁸ At the same time, it is assumed that the researcher will gain insight that will make him a better pastor or minister.

Definitions, Delimitations, and Limitations

Definitions

“Dissident Non-Pastoral Leadership” refers to a person(s) who will undermine the pastor or church authority to establish his (their) own agenda for leadership. Introduced in 3 John 9, his name is Diotrephes (an opponent of Christianity) “who likes to put himself first, does not acknowledge our authority ... talking wicked nonsense against us” (ESV). Diotrephes was not called of God to lead.

Delimitations and limitations for the researcher must be understood as he enters his research project. Internal and external activities can interfere with the work and the results. The researcher must be aware of these things.

In a new church plant such as Restoration Church, many things can interfere with the researcher’s defined scope. The church community is growing rapidly. They are changing location. They are expanding their ministry, and it is all being done without a verifiable leadership structure. The researcher must keep these things in mind, so he does not “go off chasing rabbits.” The primary purpose of the research is to prevent dissident non-pastoral

⁷ Christopher J. H. Wright, 2006, *The Mission of God* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic), 357.

⁸ Greg Ogden, 2003, *Unfinished Business: Returning the Ministry to the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 496, Kindle.

leadership to develop and disturb the vision of the church's pastor. The researcher has already seen a dissident cause a disruption in church. It happened in view of the entire congregation, including the pastor, who immediately took steps to prevent it from happening again.

Delimitations

Delimitations is defined as setting boundaries on a defined subject.⁹ Delimitations in this project are important because of all the activity that is taking place. With the church growing rapidly and moving to a larger building, there are many distractions that can assume priority over the main purpose -- which is to educate and train the church community to be aware of any dissident's attempt to gain power. With the church not having a formal structure or leadership other than the pastor, it is easy to disrupt the activities.

The pastor is administering the training being received from ISOM (International School of Ministry). Pastor Flo graduated from ISOM and encourages the community of believers to take courses there to become stronger disciples. Ongoing education and training are important to building church structure, as are using individual spiritual gifts for leadership positions and making them made aware that the body works in unity. "Where does this unity come from? It can only be produced by the Holy Spirit of God. But once produced, Christians are to maintain it through Christ-like love."¹⁰ The pastor "also asked that the identities of church members remained anonymous and unrecognizable in the final drafts. This meant not only anonymity of names, but avoidance of any detailed description of specific church members that could lead to their identification. Finally, the pastor requested that the study be, to some degree, a joint venture

⁹ Tim Sensing, 2011, *Qualitative Research* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock), 20.

¹⁰ Ray C. Stedman, 2011, *Body Life*: First e-book edition (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers), 555 & 560.

between the researcher and the leadership of the church.”¹¹ Delimitation has taken place. The boundaries have been set. it is time to proceed with the training.

Limitations

Limitations is defined as anything that hinders the researcher in his study of the defined subject. The limitations that have been placed on the researcher have been varied, as the pastor is the only person leading the community. Our pastor is very busy conducting all the church activities -- preaching, leading the online ISOM Bible school, worship leader, Tuesday men’s Bible study, Tuesday night prayer meeting, Wednesday night service and Bible study, Thursday night prison ministry, Friday jail visitation and date night with his wife, Saturday neighborhood evangelism and worship practice. The pastor’s time with the researcher to discuss and verify any dissenting activity was limited. These are just some examples of internal limitations due to lack of time.

The researcher himself is limited as to time. Is there enough time to accomplish the necessary interviews needed to validate the purpose of this thesis project? The project will require an estimate of at least 20-25 personal surveys (at two different times). The survey times should be at least 30 minutes each. Then there are the interviews with the pastor. This has been worked out between the researcher and pastor to occur once a week (hopefully) -- and for sure once every two weeks. The pastor has already acknowledged the advantages of working with the researcher for insight into the ministry. The relationship between the researcher and the pastor as we have worked together has taken an important positive turn.

Additionally, there may be budget restraints because of the limited amount of money available for the research project. This research project is funded by the researcher as funds

¹¹ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, 2016, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press), 131.

become available. Restoration Ministries has no financial connection to this project and no outside funds have been solicited at this time.

It is essential that the researcher explain definitions to the one being interviewed so that there is no misunderstanding of what is being asked. All conversations are considered confidential with notes and names kept locked up in the researcher's files. Each interviewed person must understand that they are a part of the body of Christ and the body must be kept healthy to function well.

“Similarly, another limitation in qualitative studies is connected to the relationship established between the researcher and the participants.”¹² Often, the relationship situation determines how the questions are answered. If a friend were to ask the same question, they might get a different answer; then the researcher would get to the same question. It appears to be best when the researcher keeps some distance between him and the participant. This should produce a more reliable response. However, if the researcher has a friend who is an expert in the field and is not involved in the project, it may be wise to ask his opinions. “Where there is no guidance, a people fall, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety” (Prov 11:14). Keeping the boundaries of the study narrow as the researcher goes into the interview process will help improve the quality of the study and the thought flow of the researcher's interview. Because of the diversity of the group, this thesis project will have to be carefully presented to each diverse group in such a way that they understand what is being done if it is to have validity.

What makes this study interesting is the type of research being used. It is called action research. The best explanation for this type of research comes from Bob Dick of Australia.

Action research is a flexible spiral process which allows action (change, improvement) and research (understanding, knowledge) to be achieved at the same time. The understanding allows more informed change and at the same time

¹² Sensing, 2001.

is informed by that change. People affected by the change are usually involved in the action research. This allows the understanding to be widely shared and the change to be pursued with commitment.¹³

Restoration Church is changing and changing rapidly. Pastor Flo has informed the researcher that permission has been granted for Restoration Ministries to form a Restoration Church in the Federal Prison in Las Cruces. A pastor from inside the prison who is seminary-trained is to be ordained and will pastor the church. At the same time, an evangelist from Restoration Church has been working in a small town near Tucson, AZ, and is about to start another Restoration Church with a tentative pastor from that area. Restoration Church also has an evangelist working in San Diego, CA with the intention of starting a Restoration Church. All this activity limits the pastor's time and ability to get everything done without any church structure. The researcher has discussed this busy schedule and its inherent problems with the pastor. The problem that needs attention in the Restoration Church is the problem of the dissent non-pastoral leader rising in all the confusion as shown in the survey questions.

There are 13 students enrolled in ISOM who have finished their first level of classes and 3 more have signed up. From that group, the pastor should be able to begin seeing some developing leadership and spirituality. Soon the pastor should be able to share some of burden of leadership and teaching that is presently being done by the pastor alone.

New believers, if not disciplined correctly, do not realize they have unique spiritual gifts that make the body complete. It would be very beneficial for the pastor to expound on the gifts of the Holy Spirit to help each student identify how God has gifted them. "Once (the student) become(s) fully aware that God Himself has uniquely equipped (them) with spiritual gifts, and that He has strategically placed (them) in order to use those gifts, then (they) enter a whole new

¹³ Nancy Jean Vyhmeister and Terry Dwain Robertson, 2014, *Your Guide to Writing Quality Research Paper*: Third Edition (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 63.

dimension of exciting possibilities.”¹⁴ Once the pastor completes this training with the students, he is ready to start building a church structure.

The limitations placed on pastor and researcher at this time concerning the dissident non-pastoral leadership problem are great. And they may continue until the structure is put in place and training is completed. There are already dissident voices being heard in the background. The pastor and the researcher are aware of this and are keeping watch on the situation.

Proposed Thesis Statement

The issue to be dealt with in this thesis project is how to identify and combat the dissident non-pastoral member who puts himself first and is not willing to acknowledge the authority of the church leadership, without turning him away from the church community. The next step is teaching him/her to use their God-given gifts to build up the community of believers, “from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.” (Eph 4:16).

Final Summary

To summarize the work of the researcher and the pastor and realize that the Restoration Church is maturing -- although there is still a great amount of work to do -- is exciting. Much of the community is Hispanic, and their culture embraces a family-like community where they worship, study the word, and break bread together. The people are bonding very well. The community is adjusting to working together for the common good. They have yard sales, food sales (lots of chilies and tortillas), and they enjoy and love one another. Every other week, they

¹⁴ Stedman, 1011.

go into less advantaged neighborhoods, knock on doors, share Jesus' word, and help those they find in need.

Thirteen people have finished the first Bible study course from ISOM, and three more have signed up for the class. It is the pastor's desire that leadership spiritual gifts will begin appearing, which will relieve the pastor from doing it all. There was an occasion where a dissident voice appeared from the audience when the church had a guest speaker. It was quickly handled by the guest speaker, and the pastor. The pastor made a visit to see the man when the service was over. The man returned the next Sunday and asked forgiveness from the whole church. He was loved back into the community under the watchful eye of the pastor.

The researcher mingles with all the people in the church but is "friends" with only a few. It is time to take another survey to determine how much growth has taken place since the thesis project began. That will take place in the next two weeks. There have been several conversions of late that need to be baptized. The community members believe their lives should reflect Jesus and witnessing along with discipleship is what a member should be involved with. They do this because they love Jesus.

The community's love for Jesus has grown in a tremendous way. There is a larger group of the community now involved in the ISOM program, and the topics are becoming more diversified. The subjects that are being studied now are Church Planting, Cell Groups, Power Evangelizing, and Leadership Integrity to name a few. The church attendance has grown to 125 plus on Sunday morning. Recently Pastor Flo has started two more home Bible studies and a small cell group with another being planned.

Plans are in the making for Pastor Flo to travel to Tucson to meet up with the home Bible study that is meeting in Tucson under the direction of the recently ordained pastor for that group.

This group is also growing under the leadership of the resident evangelist sent from Restoration Church. There is also a home Bible study being formed in San Diego, CA under the direction of an ordained pastor sent from Restoration Church.

Pastor Flo has given some of the Sunday morning preaching responsibilities to two other ordained men at Restoration Church. This gives him more time to expand the ministry as God leads him. The researcher has reminded the pastor to be ever alert for the dissenter in any of the groups he is working with or is starting.

Chapter 2

Conceptual Framework

Review of Literature: Scholarly Books and Articles

In Alan Hirsch's book, *The Forgotten Ways* the author talked about having "a particular sense of calling to those people groups that made up the *subcultural* context in which we lived, the poor and marginalized."¹⁵ This was of great interest to the researcher, because his quotation describes the subject group of this thesis project. The thesis project is dealing with the dissident non-pastoral leadership that could cause problems for the pastor. At the same time, I am seeing a church around four years old. "So, teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom" (Ps 90:12) (ESV), beginning to show signs of "Apostolic Genius".¹⁶ In other words, the Holy Spirit must be free to move if an apostolic movement is to begin. "It is the Holy Spirit that connects us to God and to one another, who brings us to Jesus, works in and through the process of discipleship to make us more like Christ, sanctifies us, generates the mission, empowers us, goes before us, and leads the church into its own future"¹⁷ There was talk of starting three more churches -- one in the Federal Prison in Las Cruces, one in a small-town north of Tucson, AZ, and one in San Diego, CA. Is the researcher watching the beginning of a new missional movement?

The desire of the pastor and the community of believers at Restoration Church is that they become a missional church. In their book, *On the Verge: A Journey into Apostolic Future of the Church* (2011), Alan Hirsch and David Ferguson say that it is important that the church

¹⁵ Hirsch, 877.

¹⁶ Ibid., 1797.

¹⁷ Ibid., 1847.

have a “missional imagination.”¹⁸ As a researcher with his scope narrowed to dissident non-pastoral leadership and an ex-church planter, it was not possible to ignore what was taking place. For a church with a “missional imagination, the goal in this step is for each individual and the community to “do it.”¹⁹ Restoration Ministries may become the next missional movement in the Southwest, USA.

Restoration Church is a non-denominational church without any church structure. The pastor is doing it all at the present, but the researcher believes that through the Bible training that some of the people are receiving from ISOM, gifted leaders will emerge. In Greg Ogden’s book *Unfinished Business: Returning the Ministry to the People of God* (2003), he explains that returning the church to God’s people “can only become a reality if we understand and experience the fundamental biblical vision of the church as a living organism.”²⁰ Then and only then will the church have all it needs to be successful for Christ. Together we have it all.”²¹ “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:18) (ESV).

An article written by Mangaliso Matshobane; Masango, Maake concerned power struggles within the Pentecostal movement as what Restoration Church is, “Where power struggles are more a result of structural factors than personal ones emanating from a hybrid nature of polity in the Pentecostal church and other structural factors of conflict like finances, education and leadership.”²² This is an area where the researcher and pastor must work closely together to determine the dissident non-pastoral leadership attempting to arise. “ However, the

¹⁸ Hirsch and Ferguson, 549.

¹⁹ Ibid., 557.

²⁰ Ogden, 509.

²¹ Ibid., 508.

²² Mangaliso Matshobane; Masango, Maake, abstract.

structural conflict is when a person is not conscious or fully cognitive of their internal contradictions and develops a false image of what the problem is; as a result, a false attitude develops, which informs a false or inaccurate behavior.”²³ This person, when identified, will be worked with Christian love to bring him/her into the body, using his/her gift(s) for the betterment of the whole body.

“*Research*, simply defined, is a family of methods that share common characteristics of disciplined inquiry.”²⁴ Tim Sensing’s book *Qualitative Research* (2011) is a must for the serious researcher. Without this book to help me through this project, I would have been lost. Just follow the steps of this easy, well-written book to bring your project to a conclusion.

In this thesis project, the researcher and pastor are training the community to be on the lookout for the dissident non-pastoral leadership person who would like to usurp the authority of the pastor. “There’s no question that one of the most destructive forces in the church today is conflict between Christians.”²⁵ The training that the pastor is putting the community through can help them understand that the church is a body with many parts working together to do the work of the ministry. Ray C. Stedman’s book *Body Life* (2011) has been a tremendous help in teaching what the body of Christ should work like for the glory of God. When the dissident person makes his appearance, “it became the task of the apostles (pastor, elder) to instruct Christians about how to recognize the counterfeit Christianity that was in them along with the true,”²⁶ See Matthew 24:24-30 (a scripture about wheat and weeds).

²³ Ibid, 74-76.

²⁴ Sensing, 51.

²⁵ Stedman, 500.

²⁶ Ibid., 214, 218.

Another book that helps the researcher understand what to do is Vyhmeister and Robinsons' book, *Quality Research Papers* (2014). Through the study of this book, the researcher received understanding in action research. "Action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes, grounded in a participatory worldview."²⁷ This is the type of research being done in this thesis project.

According to Restoration Church's mission statement, it wants to become a missional church. The first book to come to mind which would help the researcher discovered exactly what that meant was *The Mission of God*, 2006, written by Christopher J. H. Wright. "God is on mission, and we are -- in that wonderful phrase of Paul -- "co-workers with God"" (1 Cor 3-9).²⁸ *mission Dei*. That mission could be disrupted by a dissident non-pastoral leader trying to take over. Hebrews 10:24-25 reminds the believer that "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works ... but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (ESV)

Being a missional church "means adopting the posture of a missionary, joining Jesus on mission, learning and adapting to the culture around you while remaining biblically sound."²⁹ It also means that before a planter plants a church, it is advisable to decide what type church structure is needed. Restoration Church is led by the pastor alone. The pastor makes all the decisions and plans all the events. The church just turned four years old, still with just one leader and preacher. This type of leadership seems the norm for charismatic churches. However, "The church planter must have not only a God-given mission and vision, but also a biblical structure

²⁷ Vyhmeister, 63.

²⁸ Wright, 532.

²⁹ Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im, 2016, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville: B&H Academic), 261, Kindle.

that will accommodate them,”³⁰ always being on the lookout for the dissident non-pastoral leader who tries to disrupt the church or pastor.

Gene A. Getz in his book, *The Measure of a Healthy Church* (2007), described how, “As Paul and Barnabas moved from city to city, they appointed qualified elders in each church.”³¹ The researcher believes that the pastor needs to move in this area to begin forming a leadership structure which would help prevent the rise of a dissident non-pastoral leader.

In the book, *Living into the Life of Jesus: The Formation of Christian Character* (2012), written by Klaus Issler, the author explained something that would prevent dissident activity in a church. He stated that the church community should be “loyal to God’s group, the family of surrogate siblings who called Him ‘Father.’” As love permeates the community, the dissident will become apparent and can be dealt with in a loving way to bring him/her back into the community.

The pastor of Restoration Church understands the need for training, especially in a new church plant. That is why he encouraged several of the members to take training from ISOM. The training is more intense than he can do while still developing the new church. The training includes discipleship training as well as Bible study and Old Testament survey. Authors Colin Marshall and Tony Payne encouraged training to bring the community together in their book, *The Trellis and the Vine* (2009). “Training may start small. It may focus on individual people, and on what each person needs in order to grow, but the result is an outbreak of love.”³² “When each part is working properly, it makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love”(Eph 4:16b) (ESV).

³⁰ Ibid., 2721.

³¹ Gene A Getz, 2007, *The Measure of a Health Church* (Chicago: Moody Press), 490, Kindle.

³² Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, 2009, *The Trellis and the Vine* (Kingsford, Australia: St Matthias Press Ltd), 2276, Kindle.

Restoration Church was planted with the vision of becoming a missional church. This requires an excellent discipleship program, one that teaches discipleship multiplication, and a heart for the lost to receive salvation through believing in Jesus Christ. The idea of one large church has changed in recent years, and it has been proven that “new churches win more people to Christ than established churches. The newer a congregation, the more effective that church is in reaching those who don’t know Christ ... And it’s gaining new attention because it’s a biblical method that works.”³³ More can be learned by reading *Planting Missional Churches*, 2016, written by Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im.

In *Kingdom First: Starting Churches that Shape Movements*, 2015, by Jeff Christopherson, the author warned of the dissenter: “Fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.”³⁴ The Restoration Church being a new plant that reaches out to “down and outers” and prisoners has a disproportionate amount of emotionally broken people. The pastor’s responsibility is large. “Have you ever bitten off more than you can chew? This is the constant pressure experienced by planters.”³⁵ This is where an effective leader realizes he can’t do it all by himself.

When a dissenting non-pastoral leader arises in a new church plant and causes pain to the community, Apostle Paul instructed that they “should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So, I beg you to reaffirm your love for him.” (2 Cor 2:7, 8) (ESV). In the book written by Bobby Jamieson, 2012, *Guarding*

³³ Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im, 2016, *Planting Missional Churches* (Nashville: B&H Academic), 352, 357, Kindle.

³⁴ Jeff Christopherson, 2015, *Kingdom First: Starting Churches that Shape Movements* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group), 1057, Kindle.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 3462, Kindle.

One Another: Church Discipline, it is explained how to handle the dissenter. The goal is to get the dissenter to repent of his sin and restore him to the community, while reaffirming their love for him.

In the book concerning *Church Discipline*, 2012, Jonathan Leeman tells how the discipling member teaches the new believer to follow Christ's example of doing good and eliminate the bad in their life. The one doing the discipling becomes a model for the new follower. He teaches that in some cases there are consequences for not obeying God's plan. It is called discipline. When the dissenter gets off the right path, he/she needs correction. This correction takes place when a member of the community comes alongside and guides the wayward one to become more Christ-like. If the wayward one refuses to accept the correction, it may be necessary to ask him/her to lovingly leave the community until such time as they are ready to repent and ask forgiveness.

Another book on *Church Discipline* (2010) by John Owen spoke about church discipline in the early church. "The church is such a society as no men have right or power either to enter into themselves or to exclude others from but by *virtue of the authority of Christ*." ³⁶ At Restoration Church, much prayer goes into how to handle the dissenter. "Paul instructs that the church is to "Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you" (2 Cor 13:11) (ESV).

In the book *The Externally Focused Church*, 2004, by Rick Rusaw and Eric Swanson, the authors talk about presenting mercy to the sinner. The community needs to build a relationship with the sinner, determine his/her real need, and then try to help. What is the real need of the

³⁶ John Owen, 2010, *Church Discipline* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust), 201, Kindle.

dissenter? The church must determine it and work with that person to fulfill that need. This is showing mercy to that person, in love, while restoring him/her to the fellowship.

Restoration Church 17 members of the community are involved in a discipleship program that will create disciples who multiply themselves. It is being done through the International School of Ministry being initially instructed by the pastor. As people complete sections of the program, the gifted leaders will begin teaching it. The book, *True Discipleship: The Art of Following Jesus* (2003), written by John Koessler, explained that disciples grow at different speeds and that speed is largely dependent on the amount of obedience involved.³⁷ “But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil” (Heb 5:14) (ESV).

In their book, *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel*, 2005, Mark Dever and Paul Alexander speak about the biblical background for deacons and elders. It is important for Restoration Church to begin developing those offices if it intends to follow the biblical precedent for building a strong church. The pastor alone cannot keep up with all that is going on with 85 or more people in the congregation. If it is to be a biblical church, it must follow what the Bible teaches concerning this matter. “Both offices must be present for a church to be organized, led, and served according to the Word.”³⁸

A very important detail that must be looked at in the Restoration Church to protect it from the dissident is the matter of discipleship. In his book, *Advanced Strategic Planning*, 2013, Aubrey Malphurs has a chapter on making mature disciples which would be helpful to the

³⁸ Mark Dever and Paul Alexander, *The Deliberate Church: Building Your Ministry on the Gospel* (Wheaton: Crossway Books), 132, Kindle.

leadership in directing new converts down the right path to maturity. He has found that most churches do not have a plan to develop mature believers.

When the pastor first began his ministry at Restoration Church, he felt no pressing need for anyone to help him. However, C. H. Spurgeon offered a warning in his book, *An All-Around Ministry*, concerning this thought. “A proud man may have some weight, but a vain man is light as air, and influences no one. From both these egotisms may we be kept, for they are both injurious to ourselves and hateful to God.”³⁹

Restoration Church Ministries is expanding rapidly from Las Cruces to a small town near Tucson, Arizona and recently to San Diego, California. The purpose, as stated in their covenant, is to be a missional church. “This missional church is committed to be the incarnational ‘body of Christ’ in today’s world.”⁴⁰ This description comes from the book, *Breaking the Missional Code*, 2006, by Ed Stetzer and David Putman.

In most churches today, there is no such thing as testimony time; however, this is still a regular occurrence at Restoration Church. It is done as an act of worship. According to Vernon M. Whaley in his book, *Called to Worship*, 2009, “It is a firsthand authentication of an event, an open acknowledgment of what one has experienced, seen, heard, felt, enjoyed, or endured” (p. 263). It is a great witnessing tool for a church that reaches out to the lost community surrounding them.

God is using the ministry of Restoration Church in a mighty way, evidenced by its rapid growth and expansion. The pastor is in the center of a cyclone which is (coincidentally) the name of a book, *A Center in the Cyclone: Twenty-first Century Clergy Self-Care*, 2014, written

³⁹ C. H. Spurgeon, *An All-Round Ministry*: Faithful Classic, 752, Kindle.

⁴⁰ Ed Stetzer & Davide Putman, 2006, *Breaking the Missional Code* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers), 2802, Kindle.

by Bruce Epperly, Mr. Epperly discusses the need for today's pastors to seek a peaceful place in the cyclone to experience the joys of serving God as they did in the beginning of their ministry. It is an important read for a pastor feeling burnt-out or in despair.

In the book, *Church Planting Movements, How God is Redeeming a Lost World*, 2004, written by David Garrison, there is a list of the ten universal elements that are true for every Church Planting Movement; each of those are being developed in the Restoration Church. The desire of Restoration Church Ministries is that it becomes a Church Planting Movement. The people are being trained to be aware of the dissent non-pastoral leader and will be prepared to deal with it in a biblical manner.

Why are churches shrinking? Why are churches closing? Could it be that the churches are not making disciples? "Discipleship isn't just one of the things the church does; it is what the church does."⁴¹ *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being Followers of Christ*, a book written by Bill Hull in 2006, says that a [church] without discipleship is a [church] without Christ (Dietrich Bonhoeffer).

An old, old book came to the attention of this researcher recently. Called *The Didache*, it is believed to be one of the earliest Christian documents (other than the New Testament). It appeared late in the 1st century or early 2nd century AD. Chapter 16 talks about a subject this researcher does not often hear, the "Coming of the Lord," the "false prophets" associated with that, and "the corrupters" (dissenters) which this thesis project addresses. The book gives the church a warning, "Watch for your life's sake. Let not your lamps be quenched, nor your loins unloosed; but be ready, for you know not the hour in which our Lord will come."⁴²

⁴¹ Bill Hull, 2006, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Spring: NAVPRESS), 24, Kindle.

⁴² *The Didache: The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (1st or 2nd Century), 158, Kindle.

In his book, *Discovering Church Planting* (2009), J. D. Payne described the dangers to look for as a church planter. These dangers will be shared with the pastor of this new church plant. Evangelism is a must; otherwise, a new church plant is nothing but a bunch of “already Christians” gathering in a new place. Church planting must involve winning people to Christ and providing a place for them to grow. That’s number one! Number two is leadership development. “One of the greatest temptations facing church planters is that of control. Many fear that unless they are in control of everything, the new believers will not be able to function correctly as a church. However, it is only when church planters are out of control that the Holy Spirit can be in control.”⁴³

Developing leadership in a new church plant requires a lot of thought and prayer. What is taking place is that a new culture is being developed, using people from different cultural backgrounds. In his book, *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* (2015), Peter Scazzero explained how this activity takes place and turns out healthy for all concerned. He first described what an unhealthy leader is like; in the remainder of the book, he tells how to become a healthy leader. It is an excellent source for a pastor who is willing to become an emotionally healthy leader.

How does one handle the problem of obesity in the church? Gary Thomas, in his book *Every Body Matter: Strengthening Your Body to Strengthen Your Soul*, 2011, answered the question that many people consider. Is being overweight a sin? He cited a clear warning from Proverbs 23:19-21. “Hear, my son and be wise, and direct your heart in the way. Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat, for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will clothe them with rags” (ESV). In the New Testament, Paul clearly

⁴³ J. D. Payne, 2009, *Discovering Church Planting* (Colorado Springs: Paternoster), 1317-19, Kindle.

denounces overeating, but not to the serious level of sexual sin. This is the culture which the researcher is working.

In the last book, we discussed maintaining the pastor's health it was dealing with keeping the pastor's health through proper care of his body. In this next book *Clergy Killers: Guidance for Pastors and Congregations* written by G. Lloyd Rediger (1997), we are shown clues and given instructions on how to handle the dissident church member. Rediger also talks about Pastoral Fitness through building support systems and defining different types of conflict. The book describes the necessity of having support systems in place to keep the entire church in shape to bring glory to God.

Another book concerning how to become an effective leader dealing with the dissenter is *Overcoming the Dark Side of Leadership: How to Become an Effective Leader by Confronting Potential Failures* (2010) written by Gary L. McIntosh and Samuel D. Rima. This book teaches the pastor how to be aware that he has a dark side and how to deal with it. To learn and understand this will prevent a pastor from "quitting". The book helps the pastor to come to terms with his dark side and deal with it successfully.

Church planters are fortunate to have smaller more intimate churches than a megachurch. However, in Dave Browning's book *Hybrid Church: The Fusion of Intimacy & Impact* (2010) he speaks of Christians confusing unity with uniformity. This book describes how to blend impact and intimacy together for a church that will bring greater glory to God. This is a great book for a church planter to read and understand.

Church planters are to evangelize and to teach those who have given their lives to Christ to be evangelists themselves, as ambassadors for Christ. J. I. Packer's book *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 2008, helps one understand the true meaning of evangelism. "But

the way to tell whether in fact you are evangelizing is not to ask whether conversions are known to have resulted from your witness. It is to ask whether you are faithfully making known the gospel message.”⁴⁴

Review of Literature: Pertinent Biblical Passages

Theological Foundations

Matt 16:18 (ESV) reminds us that the church that is being planted belongs to God. “I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” “Christ, is both its Founder and its Foundation; he draws souls and draws them to himself; to him they are united, and on him they rest and have a constant dependence.”⁴⁵ The community of Restoration Church are God’s workmen.

I John 4:6 (ESV) How can a dissenter be discovered? “We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us, whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.” The pastor and members should observe the community to see who is listening and who is not, followed by conversations with the ones who are not listening. “...demonically inspired teachers either reject the teaching of God’s Word or add elements to it.”⁴⁶

I Cor 3:11 (ESV) as Restoration Church moves forward with this church plant it is important to remember that “For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” “The doctrine of our Saviour and his mediation is the principal doctrine of

⁴⁴ J. I. Packer, 2008, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* (Downers Grove: IVP Books), 339, Kindle.

⁴⁵ Matthew Henry, *A Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Vol. V Matthew to John (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company), 232.

⁴⁶ John Mac Arthur, 2007, *1, 2, & 3 John and Jude* (Nashville: Nelson Books), 43, Kindle.

Christianity. It lies at the bottom, and is the foundation, of all the rest. Leave out this, and you lay waste all our comforts, and leave no foundation for our hopes as sinners.”⁴⁷

Eph 4:1-16 (ESV) addresses the community life that needs to be developed at Restoration Church, calling it “unity in diversity in the body of Christ.”⁴⁸ Christians are to live lives worthy of their calling, loving one another as Christ loves them. This next point is what the researcher would like to end before it begins, “God is the author of peace, and the sowing of ‘discord among the brethren’ (the opposite of keeping the unity of the Spirit) is an abomination in his sight.”⁴⁹ This thesis project is designed to prevent the dissident brother/sister from causing discord by loving him/her and teaching him/her to use his/her gift(s) the correct way. “The grace which each believer has received for the discharge of his particular function in the community is proportionate to the gift which he has freely received from his glorified Lord.”⁵⁰ As the pastor and church body works with the dissenter, they will do so “speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, which is the head, even Christ.”⁵¹

1 John 4:21 (ESV) reminds us that “this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.” When a dissident person, trying to take over leadership, is exposed, he is to be loved and dealt with as a brother to restore him to the body.

3 John 9-10 (ESV) described the dissident non-pastoral leadership being discussed in this thesis project at Restoration Church. “As was the case with the Devil, pride drives peoples to seek to exalt themselves. There have always been proud, egotistical, self-promoting people, who try to usurp authority, seize a place of preeminence, and elevate themselves over others, even

⁴⁷ Ibid., 518-519.

⁴⁸ F. F Bruce, 2012, *Epistle to the Ephesians* (Calverton Down: UK, Creative Communications Ltd.), 1211.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 1243.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 1316, 1319.

⁵¹ Ibid., 1480.

God.”⁵² Gaius was not commended for his love but (more fundamentally) for his commitment to truth. As is always the case with believers, Gaius’ genuine love flowed from his obedience to the truth. John commended him because he not only knew the truth but lived it.”⁵³

Restoration Church practices the fellowship of believers as described in Acts 2:42-47 (ESV). Every Sunday, the community of believers come together to worship, hear a sermon, break bread, and have instruction from the word in the form of ISOM. Often, this fellowship of believers takes place during the week in the daytime or evening, whenever they get together for instruction in the Word.

Matthew 28:20 (ESV) reminds the community of believers at Restoration Church that they are to make disciples by “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” The disciples are being equipped for service to the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and are reminded that, “All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped with every good work” (2 Tim 3:16-17) (ESV). “Disciple making is an important part of the church’s ministry of stewardship. It is stewardship of people.”⁵⁴

A lack of church structure is a problem in Pentecostal churches, and Restoration Church currently has no structure. The researcher reminds the pastor of what Proverbs 11:14 (ESV) says, “Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.” The pastor is beginning to realize he cannot do it alone. This is especially true when it

⁵² John MacArthur, 2007, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary 1-3 John* (Chicago: Moody Publishers), 252.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 4804, 4808, Kindle.

⁵⁴ John Koessler, 2003, *True Discipleship: The Art of Following Jesus* (Chicago: Moody Publishers), 2703, Kindle.

comes to discipleship. The entire church, that is born again, are to disciple one another “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another” (Prov 27:17) (ESV). It is a biblical principal.

Administration is an important part of leading a church. A new church plant like Restoration Church, with many people from rough backgrounds, requires a good administration technique. Luke reminds the community to “Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him” (Luke 17:3) (ESV). When the dissenter acts (sins), the community must be ready to spring into action with love and forgiveness. Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible, says, “The *forgiving of offenses* is a *great duty*, and that which we should every one of us make conscience of (v.3): Take heed to yourselves” (p. 764).

When a dissenter is noted, the community is to “take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them” (Eph 5:11) (ESV). *The Epistle to the Ephesians* by F. F. Bruce says, “If the things which please God are to be approved, the things which displease him are naturally to be reprobated-exposed, censured and, if possible, corrected (Gk. *elencho*).” (p. 1847) Kindle. In obedience to God, the community is to deal with sin found in the body of believers.

“For those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear” (1 Tim 5:20) (ESV). An example of rebuking before all was the case for Ananias and Sapphira, who were exposed for lying -- not to man but to God -- and fear fell on all who had knowledge of what happened to them. The dissenters were made known and were rebuked for their sin. The church must learn from this example. The sin of Ananias and Sapphire parallels with the sin of Adam and Eve. “The *original sin* of the church is portrayed in terms of the misuse of money and possessions! Ananias and Sapphire disregarded the presence of God in the

Christian community, the sacredness of that fellowship in God's eyes, and the relational aspect of their sin.”⁵⁵

The Scriptures teach that the church is like a building with the foundation being Christ himself. That building is being formed into the temple of God. Each believer is a part of that building (temple) and should function in unity to make the building strong enough to withstand the forces that try to destroy it. The dissident non-pastoral leader is not adding to the unity or the strength of the building and must be identified and dealt with in love. Why? Because if he is a true believer, the Spirit of God lives within him, as it lives in each individual believer.

Through the Spirit of God, the gift of serving in the temple was given to men and women. (Eph 4:8). It is important that the pastor and other members be trained in identifying gifts and encouraging each other to use the gifts that God has given them. Even the dissenter has a gift (if he is at heart a believer) and should be encouraged to find and use the gift, not strike out on his own. The Word gives “exhortation to mutual love, unity, and concord, with the proper means and motives to promote them.”⁵⁶ The Word continues to instruct that, “if we wish to be considered members of Christ, let no man be anything for himself, but let us all be whatever we are for the benefit of each other. This is accomplished by love; and where it does not reign, there is no edification, but an absolute scattering of the church.”⁵⁷

Paul described the way of love for the church in 1 Cor.13: If one has all the gifts and has not love, nothing has been gained (1 Cor 13:3b). Paul then explained all the benefits that love

⁵⁵ David G. Peterson, 2009, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 209.

⁵⁶ Matthew Henry's, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. V1, *Acts to Revelation* (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company), 701.

⁵⁷ John Calvin, *Commentary on Ephesians, 1345, 1350, Kindle*.

brings, “Love is patient, kind ... endures all things ... Love never ends” (1 Cor 13:4-8a). Paul guides the immature Corinthian Church with his wisdom.

When talking about a new church plant, one does well to look at what Paul described in Ephesians. F. F. Bruce said, “In Ephesians, the Church, the body of Christ, is a new community created by God to be the dwelling place and vehicle of his Spirit, with a view to the consummation of his eternal purpose and the establishment of his dominion throughout all creation.”⁵⁸ In Ephesians 2:8-9, it is learned that, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast” (ESV).

In 2 Thessalonians 3:6, the church is reminded to watch for the person who is walking in idleness and not following the teachings of good doctrine. This is where the dissenter comes from. According to John Calvin’s commentary on Thessalonians, Calvin is saying “Paul declares that such persons must be put away from the society of believers, that they may not bring dishonor upon the church.”⁵⁹ There should still be an attempt to love and restore them to the community, if possible.

One of the things this thesis project hopes to teach is that God has definite feelings concerning His church and, because it is His body on earth, there are things to watch for. In Proverbs 6:19, the Word states that God hates “a false witness who breaths out lies, and one who sows discord among the brothers.” The believers at Restoration Church are being taught to be on the lookout for this type of person.

⁵⁸ F. F. Bruce, 2012, *The Epistle to the Ephesians: A Verse by Verse Exposition by One of the Great Bible Scholars of Our Age* (Bath, UK: Creative Communications Ltd.), 126, 131, Kindle.

⁵⁹ John Calvin, *Commentary on Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians* (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), 6862, Kindle.

The survey results at Restoration Church indicated that the core group of believers have been believers for an average of 19 years. However, they need a great amount of training to develop a structure and be wise to the dissident individual. Hebrews 5:14 sends a warning concerning apostasy, that those mature Christians should “have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil” (ESV). This “power of discernment” comes from feeding on the word of God.

2 John 9 teaches that the true Christian abides in the teaching of Christ, which includes evangelism and disciple making. John MacArthur (2007) stated, in his commentary on 1-3 John, that “the test of a true Christian and a true preacher -- pure doctrine concerning Christ.”⁶⁰ As a missional church, Restoration Church must adhere to this admonition. Evangelizing the lost will grow the church and ministry like nothing else will.

A new church plant brings with him/her dangers of a mixture of beliefs. If the person who comes into the community is not a new believer, he/she may have come from a community that preached a different gospel. 1 Timothy 1:4 warns to be careful of a different gospel “which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God which is by faith.” (ESV). Matthew Henry’s commentary of 1 Timothy 1:4 reads, “That which minister’s question is not for edifying; that which gives occasion for doubtful disputes pulls down the church rather than builds it up.”⁶¹

2 Thessalonians 3:14-15 speaks of the dissenter in this way, “If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. Do not regard him as an enemy but warn him as a brother” (ESV). Treat him as a

⁶⁰ John MacArthur, 2007, *1-3 John MacArthur New Testament Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Publishing), 224, Kindle.

⁶¹ Matthew Henry, *A Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company), 807.

brother who can be restored to the faith in love. Bring him back into the body to use the gifts that God has given him for the glory of the Lord.

When the unruly dissenter attacks the leadership of the church, it comes from earthly wisdom, not from God. As stated in James 3:16, “For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice” (ESV). According to John MacArthur’s commentary on James, this “vile practice” refers to “things that are not so much intrinsically evil as they are simply good for nothing.”⁶²

A new church plant draws an interesting group of people together, and the pastor must be aware of any false prophets and teachers slipping in to cause trouble. This kind of person will blaspheme the way of truth. “And in their greed, they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep” (2 Pet 2:3) (ESV). Spurgeon says that “they say, ‘It is narrow; it is old fashioned; it is not in accordance with spirit of the age.’”⁶³ Beware of these people!

False people often join up with a new church plant to determine what the church doctrine is. Is it just by faith you are saved, or is it faith plus something else (works?) which is a false doctrine that imprisons a person to the group? Paul was aware of this (Gal 2:4), and the church community should also be aware of this type of heresy. Martin Luther was aware of this heresy and, in his commentary to the Galatians, says, “True faith lays hold of Christ and leans on Him alone. Our opponents cannot understand this. In their blindness, they cast away the precious pearl, Christ, and hang onto stubborn works.”⁶⁴

⁶² John MacArthur, 2007, *James* (Nashville: Word Publishing), 71, Kindle.

⁶³ Charles Spurgeon, 2014, *Commentary on 1 & 2 Peter and Jude* (Spurgeon Commentary Series: Titus Books), 582, Kindle.

⁶⁴ Martin Luther, 2015, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians 1535* (USA: Astounding Stories), 34, Kindle.

Restoration Church's vision is to be a missional church, which means that evangelism must be an important activity reaching out from the church. The community should be trained to evangelize the lost. The Scripture is clear on this in Romans 10:15: "And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'" (ESV). Their discipleship training program should help them accomplish this.

The Scriptures warn that if the dissenter can flourish, "he will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Tim 3:13b) (ESV). Therefore, in a new church plant, the people must be trained to detect this type person. Bible study is the most important way to discover the truth of the gospel. Individual discipleship, "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt 28:20) (ESV), will strengthen their faith. The Bible classes that the students at Restoration Church are taking from the International School of Ministry will help prepare them for leadership.

At Restoration Church, the gospel or "good news" that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16) (ESV) is taught and shared through evangelism with the lost world around them. This is the most important message that the church has for the community. In Acts 17:31, Paul teaches that there will be a "day on which he [Jesus] will judge the world in righteousness by a man [Jesus] he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead" (ESV). David G. Peterson, 2009, in his commentary on *The Acts of the Apostles*, says that "Positively, Paul has argued that human beings were created to seek God and have a genuine relationship with him as their creator (vv. 27-28). Negatively, he has shown that their beliefs and

practices have kept them from the true knowledge of God.”⁶⁵ Pray that we all are ready for that day!

I John 5:12 (ESV) If the dissenter does not have life (spiritual life) he is not one of us. “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.” Beware of this person, he is not there to build on the one foundation, Jesus Christ. Hath no part or lot therein. In the former clause, the apostle says simply, the Son; because believers know him: in the latter, the Son of God; that unbelievers may know how great a blessing they fall short of.”⁶⁶

Gal 5:19, 20, 21 (ESV) The dissenter can be identified by these works of the flesh: “sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” From the words of Matthew Henry, “it is past dispute that the things he hear speaks of are the works of the flesh, or the product of corrupt and depraved nature: most of them are condemned by the light of nature itself, and all of them by the light of scripture.”⁶⁷

2 Pet 2.1 (ESV) “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who brought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.” According to Matthew Henry even the early church had to be alert for dissenters, “but in the beginning of this he tells us they had, even at that time, false prophets in the church as well as true.”⁶⁸

⁶⁵ David G. Peterson, 2009, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), 502.

⁶⁶ John Wesley, 1754, *1 John*, 651, *Kindle*.

⁶⁷ Matthew Henry, *A Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company), 676.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 1045.

Theoretical Foundation

Benjamin Franklin said, “The rotten apple spoils his companion,” which goes back to Shakespeare’s time. The same applies to that single dissenter in a church community who can divide the church. “Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor 5:6,7) (ESV). The Corinthian Church had its share of leaven, and this is a warning to what happens if the leaven is not taken care of. “The bad example of a man in rank and reputation is very mischievous, spreads the contagion far and wide.”⁶⁹

Power struggles attack all kinds of churches, regardless of denomination. Power struggles also occur in business and other types of organizations. Restoration Church is a charismatic church that does not belong to any denomination and is not connected to any other church. It is a new church plant and subject to power struggle from the beginning -- especially because the church presently does not have any church structure.

To understand the charismatic Pentecostal experience in governance, the researcher studied an article from HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies, written by Mangaliso Matshobane and Maake J. Masango, with the Department of Practical Theology, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria, South Africa (2018). The authors believe their research will help all denominations.

The 2018 Matshobane/Masango study began by explaining what conflict really is in churches. They said that conflict is created by the exercise of power which feeds the conflict. Spiritual conflict is believed to be the most serious of all conflict or power struggles. “Spiritual

⁶⁹ Matthew Henry, *A Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company), 528.

conflict is when those who are antagonists become so determined to oppose others that they develop ‘evil’ strategies to education. In other words, knowledge privileges one person above the other and therefore gives them power over the other.”⁷⁰ Another area that can cause a pastor a great deal of trouble is being manipulated by large donations. The pastor must be spiritually attuned to financial manipulation. “The findings of the research on power struggles have confirmed Galtung’s theory of structural conflict as the main cause for of power struggles.”⁷¹

Church planting and spiritual warfare go hand and hand for a new church plant. Satan will do everything in his power to stop a new church from being planted. The church plant pastor or team must be prepared to take on the Devil head-on. “Church planters need to be prepared to resist Satanic attacks that are *mental, moral, and physical.*”⁷² Restoration Church is in a series presently of donning the whole armor of God. The pastor is teaching, preaching verse by verse through Ephesians 6:10-20. “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil” (Eph 6:10, 11) (ESV). Constant prayer is the way to victory.

It is important that the body of believers be healthy and spiritually strong. The community of believers is made strong by studying the word of God and fellowship. According to Ray Stedman “Great damage has been done to the cause of Christ by unhealthy saints who attempted to carry out evangelistic or social ministry with great zeal -- but without true spiritual health.”⁷³ At Restoration Church, the pastor is encouraging the community to educate itself by

⁷⁰ Ibid., 4.

⁷¹ Ibid., 5.

⁷² J. D. Payne, 2009, *Discovering Church Planting: An Introduction to the Whats, Whys, and Hows of Global Church Planting* (Colorado Springs: Authentic Publishing), 911. Kindle.

⁷³ Ray C. Stedman, 1995, *Body Life* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers), 2127, Kindle.

becoming students at the International School of Ministry. It has strengthened those who enrolled in the two-year course.

Chapter 3

Methodology

In this Chapter the researcher and pastor will be looking at a methodology to be used in solving the problem of non-pastoral leadership in a new church plant. Many scholarly books have been researched and pertinent Bible passages have been studied to determine how to address this problem with restoration in mind.

Planning for this research project began after a meeting between the pastor, Florencio Vigil, and the researcher. Restoration Church had recently moved from a home church to a storefront church. The pastor held services in the Las Cruces Detention Center and the state prison outside of town. As a result of this work, several members of the church community were from jail or from the street (due to street preaching). The church also had an outreach program in a less desirable part of town, and several converts from this ministry were also added to the community. When those people were added to the 25 from the home church, the storefront church began to fill up. The researcher explained the concern he had for problems that might arise from such a diverse group such as emotional problems and psychological problems. The pastor was working alone without deacons or elders; this is the way he wanted it to be handled. The researcher had many years' experience in church planting and church re-visioning and spoke openly to the pastor.

The pastor and the researcher agreed to meet every week to discuss how to involve the community in this project. It was decided that surveys would be taken randomly and anonymously to gather information about the people and their understanding of the church. The surveys were to be non-threatening and simple. Below is a list of the questions asked in Appendix A: Survey #1, Appendix B: Survey #2-10, and Appendix C: Survey #2-16.

1. How long have you attended this church?
2. Why do you continue to come here?
3. Do you believe in Jesus Christ? If so, how long have you been a believer?
4. Do you spend much time reading the Bible?
5. How much time do you spend reading the Bible?
6. Have you learned where church leadership comes from?
7. Where do you think the pastor gets his authority?
8. Are you involved in a small group Bible study?
9. Is there more than one pastor here?
10. Do you know how your church is governed?
11. Do you know if the church has deacons or elders?
12. Do you know of any dissenters in the church community?
13. What would you do if you knew of dissenters?
14. Do you love your church community?
15. Do you seek to be involved in serving here at the church?

It was decided to construct a list of 15 questions, to be handed out randomly. The community's size was approximately 55 people.

Survey #1

The pastor and the researcher decided to present this survey after the preaching service and before lunch was served. They both spoke to the community and explained that there were no right or wrong answers, and they would be anonymous. They were told to not write their names on the survey and to place the surveys in a box at the back of the church upon completion. There would be no way to identify whose answers were on the surveys. They were given 20

minutes to complete them. The surveys were passed out by a person who did not attend the community; consequently, it was unknown who received the survey sheet. When the box was collected, there were 26 surveys inside.

A surprise temporarily stopped our progress. The membership had reached the building capacity, and a one-month vacate notice was given to the church. The surveys were set aside until the matter of a new meeting place was solved. When the move and the dust settled, the researcher renewed gathering material to satisfy the thesis project. In addition, the researcher took a medical leave, which also delayed the project for a couple of months.

The pastor and the researcher met after the medical leave under a totally new environment and situation. The church had moved into a larger 300-person capacity building with Sunday school facilities, an area for youth, and dining area. Simultaneously, the community grew to around 80, with 17 signed up for the International School of Ministry classes (ISOM).

More surveys were taken, one for 10 students to determine how much growth had taken place since the first survey and a second for 16 new people. Again, the survey was random and anonymous. The same procedure was employed, with one exception. The pastor gave the 10 survey questions to the ISOM students because he knew who they were. The non-community member handed out 16 more survey questions to the remainder of the group. If anyone had completed the survey earlier, they were not allowed to repeat the survey, only people new to the community were questioned. Again, they were asked to *not* put their name on the survey and told there were no right or wrong answers. Twenty minutes was set aside to answer questions. Upon completion, survey sheets were then placed in a box at the rear of the church; 26 sheets were gathered from the box when they were finished. The researcher and pastor discussed the

surveys and compared the differences among the three survey groups. “Action research always retains its focus on transformative action which is discovered and inspired by the research process.”⁷⁴

The pastor immediately saw areas that needed attention. It was evident from the survey that a dissident non-pastoral leader could step in and cause trouble where confusion was discovered. The researcher recorded the surveys on charts for comparison purposes and to show the community leaders where changes were needed. It was obvious where the weaknesses lie.

Researcher’s Personal Observation

Times and places were picked to become acquainted with the community. The researcher did not attend every event. The pastor and the researcher were in a weekly men’s Bible study group. The researcher also belonged to a small Bible study group on Sunday afternoons as well as being a member of another church. The researcher’s home church originated 25 years ago and had grown to over 2000 members with ministries worldwide. Restoration Church’s vision was like the plan for that church. However, they have much different roots and a different culture.

The pastor felt he had all the gifts mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 -- apostle, prophet, evangelist, shepherd, and teacher (APEST) -- when he started the church but soon found out that was not so. He initially thought he could do it all by himself; that also changed. The researcher-pastor meetings became centered around, “You need help, you cannot do it alone.” His health and family were discussed. The pastor was overweight, and he had a large family with several teenagers. The researcher shared that the church can only be as healthy as the pastor; by trying to do it all, the church could not grow larger than his ability to do it all.

⁷⁴ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, 2016, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press), 261.

As the researcher-pastor meetings continued, the pastor made some obvious changes. He went on a weight loss program and began to eat a healthy diet. He set aside a weekly date night with his wife. When the first survey results showed that 100% of the people volunteered to work, the pastor was convinced that God was speaking to him. When the researcher attended church services, it was obvious he had enlisted several people to help. However, it took several months for the pastor to allow people to help him in ministry practices. He eventually decided to ordain another pastor. The pastor handpicked a candidate; unfortunately, he proved to be a very strong dissenter, which was revealed when a guest speaker came to share his life and call to ministry, the candidate got up in middle of the service to protest against the speaker. That brought an end to his ministry prospects; however, he did come the next week and ask forgiveness of the church. The next candidate was brought by the Lord.

The main purpose of this thesis project was to help new church plants become aware of dissenting non-pastoral leadership person(s). They can invade any church, and they must be identified and lovingly handled toward restoration. It has been exciting to watch the pastor and the church develop -- and it is only the beginning.

Much change has taken place since the beginning of this project. Pastor Flo has preached many sermons concerning “The Whole Armor of God” (Eph 6:10-20). The preacher’s preacher Charles Spurgeon (2014) said, “You cannot do right if you are not strong. Unless you have the backbone of principle -- unless you have spiritual muscle and sinew by the indwelling Holy Spirit in you, you cannot continue to do that which is right. Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord.”⁷⁵ Pastor Flo is teaching the community to be strong in the Lord. He is teaching them to believe in the Word of God and to not let anyone deceive them.

⁷⁵ Charles Spurgeon, 2014, *Commentary on Ephesians* (USA: Titus Books), 428, 432, Kindle.

By putting on the whole armor of God, the believer has a variety of defensive weapons for his/her battle against the power of darkness, the devil. John Calvin said, “Truth, which means sincerity of mind, is compared to a girdle. A girdle was, in ancient times, one of the most important parts of military armor. Our attention is thus directed to the fountain of sincerity; for the purity of the gospel ought to remove from our minds all guile, and from our hearts all hypocrisy.”⁷⁶

The strong mature Christian must put on “the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph 6:17) (ESV). “The helmet of salvation is hope, which has salvation as its object. The helmet secures the head. A good hope of salvation, well founded and well built, will purify the soul and keep it from being troubled and tormented by Satan.”⁷⁷ Pastor Flo is in the process of teaching the community to be aware of Satan’s tactics and the way to defend against these attacks.

Implementation of the Plan

The plan was implemented by an explanation (by pastor and researcher) to the congregation that a thesis project was being developed to prevent dissident non-pastoral leaders from causing strife and division. They were told that the researcher and pastor agreed upon a worthwhile project to protect the church and the pastor. The church’s vision was to become a missional church, reaching out as far as the Lord desired. The community was receptive to the project and indicated that their cooperation would be forthcoming. The pastor and the researcher realized that the primary focus when growing a church must be evangelism. Therefore, there is a strong desire to get out into the neighborhoods, as there are indications of many unchurched (and lost people) nearby.

⁷⁶ John Calvin, *Commentary on Ephesians*, 2055, Kindle.

⁷⁷ Matthew Henry, *A Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company), 720.

The researcher discovered a book written by Dave Browning, *Hybrid Church: The Fusion of Intimacy & Impact* (2010) which fit this situation extremely well. Restoration Church has intimacy through its close relationship as brothers and sisters and impact of its evangelism into the neighborhood. Browning suggests that “If we bring together strong elements of intimacy and impact, we naturally get a third component—buzz. It is electrifying to a congregation when ministry is both personal and powerful.”⁷⁸ Browning continued, “If house churches became evangelistic, it would be dynamite!”⁷⁹ The pastor and the researcher realize that to grow a church the primary focus is to be evangelism. There is indication that there are many unchurched (and lost people) in church neighborhoods. The next step is to start the surveys.

It was announced that surveys would be random and anonymous. There would be no way to identify who answered the questions. The surveys would not ask right or wrong questions; simple questions would indicate the depth of the community of believers. The community agreed with this plan. It was decided that after the next Sunday service 30 minutes would be set aside to take the survey. A non-member person would distribute 26 survey sheets randomly and place an empty container at the back of the church for the people to deposit their survey in when they were finished. The researcher would pick up the box and take it to his office for safe keeping and data analysis.

The next two surveys would be taken differently. The community moved into a much larger facility and a survey was taken of the people who did not attend the community in the previous building. These would be totally new members of the church community. The survey was handled the same way as the first except only 16 survey sheets were given out and picked

⁷⁸ Dave Browning, 2010, *Hybrid Church: The Fusion of Intimacy & Impact* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass), 99. Kindle.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

up. The third survey was handled a little different in that the pastor handed out the survey sheets randomly to 10 ISOM students. In this case the pastor knew who received the surveys. These two surveys were handled the same as the first. The person completing the survey did not identify himself/herself, placed the completed survey in an empty box at the back of the church and picked up by the researcher and taken to his office for data analysis.

It was in the researcher's office where the real work began. With the help of a graduate accounting student from NMSU, the researcher gathered the data from 52 surveys and charted everyone's answers on a chart for comparison. These individual charts are found in the appendix. The charts were where the indicators came from to decide on what plan to take to start training the community to be on the watch for the dissident who could divide the church and ruin the ministry.

Indicators

Indicators are survey results that indicate possible problems. These areas will need attention rather quickly; some can be addressed in training, others in clarification and structure review. When the indicators are brought together, it will be determined by researcher and pastor which areas need immediate attention. Because the church is growing quickly, the results need to be addressed before things change too much (which might make it necessary to repeat the process and could produce different results). Once the surveys were taken, they were reviewed to find commonality. The commonality consisted of relative importance to the project's central purpose. This is a relatively new church plant. The church plant started when the core group left its original home and entered the small storefront, at which time it became Restoration Church. At this point, the group was following the pastor's lead. The project's thesis centers around a dissident non-pastoral leader who causes divisions within the group by trying to take over the

pastor's duties. The following are themes that the researcher will develop as he compiles data from the survey answers.

Confusion

A major problem with division in charismatic churches stems from lack of structure. Said lack of structure causes the community to be confused about who and what is to be followed. In the Corinthian Church, there were many problems, but Paul reminded the people that, "God is not a God of confusion but of peace" (1 Cor 14:33) (ESV). Matthew Henry said it this way: "The honor of God requires that things should be managed in Christian assemblies so as not to transgress the rules of natural decency."⁸⁰ As the researcher began to review the surveys, confusion appeared right away as respondents were not sure of how the church was structured, number of pastors, elders or deacons.

When the community is confused as to who or what to follow, it opens the door for the dissident to come in. It is important that the community understand the structure or support system that operates in a successful organization, including the body of Christ. There are five principles to follow:⁸¹

1. Everyone needs support systems.
2. Each person and group have support needs that are both similar and idiosyncratic.
3. Support systems are interdependent.
4. Support systems must adapt to change.
5. Support systems are about the management of energy.

⁸⁰ Matthew Henry, 583.

⁸¹ G. Lloyd Rediger, 1997, *Clergy Killers: Guidance for Pastors and Congregations under Attack* (Louisville: John Knox Press), 148, Kindle.

“The illusions of ‘rugged individualism’ do not fit contemporary opportunities and needs. In fact, we are born dependent and remain that way; we get sick when we forget what is required for health.”⁸² Questions will be asked to determine whether the responder understands what is taking place in the church structure. The respondent’s answer to those question will show whether there is any confusion in the mind of the responder.

Biblical Strength

Biblical strength was an important part of the pastor’s plan when he planted this church. He enrolled members in the International School of Ministry (ISOM) as soon as he could to begin discipleship practices. It has already been proven that their studies have helped. People are discovering their Spiritual gifts and willingness to volunteer has increased.

The survey includes questions to help determine the biblical strength of the community. biblical strength can often be determined by how much time is spent in biblical study. If one studies and reads his/her Bible with regularity or attends a Bible study group, they will grow stronger in their Bible knowledge and their knowledge of the Lord. The International School of Ministry Bible study (which several persons are enrolled in) is already showing the results of volunteerism and the knowledge of God. “One of the great weaknesses of the church today is that ordinary Christians do not normally read their Bibles on a regular basis and do not make the teaching of Jesus decisive for the way they view ecology, taxes, marriage and divorce, abortion, and other pressing social and personal issues.”⁸³ This fact is clearly demonstrated by the survey results.

Most of the surveyed people have not actually studied the Bible (even if they have been Christians for years). “The Bible is essential to our spiritual growth—so essential that lasting

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Michael Green, 1992, *Who Is This Jesus* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers), 105-106.

spiritual maturity is impossible without it...Only a strong faith –a faith based on God’s Word— will protect us from temptation and doubt.”⁸⁴ It is obvious why Christians get off tract and backslide.

How can the community guard against dissenters? Study the Word of God “so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.” (Eph 4:14)(ESV).

In his book *Willmington’s Guide to the Bible* the author Dr. Harold L. Willmington lists several reasons why it is important for a Christian to study the Bible:⁸⁵

1. Because of its Author: A Creator, a Redeemer, a Shepherd, a Judge, etc.
2. Because of the often-repeated command to read it. (Matt 4:4).
3. Because the Bible is God’s chosen way to accomplish his divine will. (Rom10:13-17).
4. Because our enemy the devil has read it.
5. Because the example of Paul. (2 Tim 4:6-8, 13).
6. Because the Bible alone provides answers.
 - a. Where did I come from? (Gen 1:26-27).
 - b. Why am I here? (Eccl 12:13).
 - c. Where am I going? (Rev 20:15).
7. Because we will never have opportunity to apply many of its verses after we leave this earth.
8. Because the only ultimate proof for our faith is the Bible. (John 20:31).

⁸⁴ Billy Graham, 2006, *The Journey* (Nashville: W Publishing Group), 105.

⁸⁵ Dr. Harold L. Willmington, 2011, *Willmington’s Guide to the Bible* (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers), xiii-xv.

The pastor and the researcher believe Bible study is an important part of growing a strong God-centered church. Paul instructed Timothy to “Remind them of these things and charge them before God not to quarrel about words, which does no good, but only ruins the hearers. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:14, 15) (ESV). As workmen of God, it is imperative that they understand the word of truth, for the author of it is the God of truth. “It requires great wisdom, study, and care to divide this word of truth rightly.” It requires knowledge of the truth to protect the community against dissidents who cause problems.

Length of Time as a Christian

The length of time that a “born again” spirit filled Christian lives should bring maturity. Spiritual maturity does not come by works, but by obedience to the leadership of Christ. We are not saved by works, but by faith, which the Lord himself gives to us. The survey should indicate the maturity of the church community. Maturity develops as a Christian spends time with Jesus. In his book *Kingdom First*, Jeff Christopherson explains that “the character necessary for multiplying true disciples of Jesus grows directly in proportion to our personal fellowship of Jesus ... The process of following Jesus is the only spiritual discipline that can transform the darkness of our broken character into the image of Christ Himself.”⁸⁶

Commitment

By answers given to several of the survey questions, the pastor and the researcher should be able to determine the community’s level of commitment. If they identify themselves as loving the Lord and are willing to serve where asked, that would be a good indication. If they have a halfhearted answer to serving, that will also indicate how committed they are. If they are

⁸⁶ Jeff Christopherson, 2015, *Kingdom First: Starting Churches that Shape Movements* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group), 687, 692, Kindle.

not willing to serve, the reason(s) behind that will also have to be determined. From this commitment, the pastor can develop the much-needed help to operate the ministry effectively. The pastor will have to work with the people to help identify their personal ministry gifts and place them in positions that bring that gift to fruition.

Final Summary

After taking the surveys and developing the data, the pastor will have a much better idea where the church is and what direction he needs to take to reach God's vision for the church. The plan is not complicated and should not take an enormous amount of time to complete. The real work begins once the data has been analyzed and the needs are determined from the community's answers. Then it will be time to sit down and develop another plan to meet the needs of the church's ministries. The Indicators listed above: Confusion, Biblical Strength, Length of Time as a Christian, and Commitment were triangulated between the graduate student from NMSU, the pastor, and the researcher to see how valid the indicators were. Discussions were held and ideas were brought forth to use the indicators in a way that benefited the whole of the community. One of the strongest indicators was that all the members of Restoration Church claim to be believers; some for as long as 19 years; the shortest being 9.5 years. The weakest indicator was the lack of daily Bible reading or study which followed not knowing the church structure.

As mentioned earlier, the church is growing rapidly; with that growth, answers to the surveys become more critical. Changes must be made to keep the church on track to meet God's vision for the ministry. The pastor and the researcher have regular meetings (a minimum of once every two weeks) to discuss progress and changes that need to be made. The pastor understands that church structure is important and has already made significant progress in structure. There

have been people added in key positions of leadership, including an associate pastor, youth pastor, youth worship leader, prayer ministry leaders, visual aids and video manager, and children's church leaders. All of these were handled by the pastor until it was decided that he could not handle everything on his own and still grow a church community. The people have been given authority to make decisions in their delegated area(s). The pastor is still in charge of the Sunday worship service and the preaching service, as well as the Wednesday night service (which consists of music, Bible study, and prayer time).

The growth in the Restoration Church Ministries has also been moving rapidly with (a) a Restoration Church approved in the local prison; (b) a small group, led by an ordained member of the church working near Tucson; a pastor has been ordained to pastor the group in Tucson of 25 and (c) another small group lead by an ordained member of the local church, now working with 8 to 12 people in San Diego. The Tucson and San Diego groups will soon be tied to the Las Cruces group by telecast. The Las Cruces pastor will preach the services, while the other two groups will handle their own worship music. This all should take place by early 2020.

The pastor announced some changes in the core values of the church since the data has been analyzed. The pastor believes that God has spoken to him to make a change in the vision for the church. Grow Forward is the new thrust of their church training.

1. Grow Forward by reaching up to God. "Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." (Jer 29:12-13)(ESV). They will pray to God as individuals, small groups, and all the community together.

2. Grow Forward by reaching out to people. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the

captives and recovering of the sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19)(ESV). Evangelize the lost.

3. Grow Forward by restoring lives. "Restore to me the joy of your salvation and uphold me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you" (Psalm 51:12-13)(ESV). The church training for this new year will center on the theme Grow Forward.

During the time the other ministries have been under development, there have been a couple cases of dissension in the Las Cruces group. The pastor called them aside and spoke with them in love. One repented to the entire church body and agreed to give up his ordination and preaching credentials until he got his life straightened out (he remained in the church). The other incident involved two people who needed to work out their differences. The pastor asked them to repent and love each other. One agreed, but the other left the church without resolving the differences. Thankfully, the dissenters did no harm to the rest of the community. This is another example of how being aware of dissenters who try to pull people in another direction can be important.

The researcher cannot stress the importance of the data obtained from the three surveys. To be able to go to the pastor and show him the areas of weakness and the areas that need immediate attention was extremely educational for both the researcher and the pastor. The pastor received the data with gladness and began to make the necessary changes to rectify the deficiencies. One of the first items on the agenda was to encourage more of the community to become involved in the International School of Ministries training. The data showed that the students were beginning to grow in their knowledge of Christ and the church. Students were

finding their spiritual gifts and were volunteering to use them. The pastor was being relieved from “doing it all” himself.

Also, through Bible study which was encouraged through more participation in Wednesday night service, the pastor himself was learning that he could not do it all but required a support system to help the church grow. Several men were ordained into the ministry which allowed them to assist in his ministry. The prison ministry had reached a point where the pastor planned to ordain a prisoner to handle the prison preaching/teaching.

A woman volunteered to lead the children’s ministry which relieved the pastor’s wife from that responsibility. The initial youth pastor did not last; while another is located, the structure continues to fall into place. The pastor now has an assistant pastor and an elder, both able to take over if the pastor gets sick or must travel.

This action research project requires discovering data that pertains to the problem and then taking action that will alleviate the problem. After three surveys, the pastor and researcher were able to make comparisons and determine what action(s) they needed to solve the “dissenter problem.” This problem will require continuous and permanent monitoring throughout the life of the ministry. The community needs to be made aware of how to recognize the dissenter when he/she shows up and properly report it.

The teaching that the pastor has been doing concerning the body of Christ, each one having his/her part and functioning in unity brings awareness to the community. It also reveals when one is not functioning properly. The pastor has also stressed the need for putting on the armor of God to protect from the attacks of the devil. Putting church structure in place and making the community aware of that structure has brought unity to the members. Encouraging

personal and group Bible study has helped growth in the church. Evangelism is still the focus followed by discipleship. Loving one another as described in the Scriptures is a must.

An outline is essential, one that breaks down the church structure and informs parishioners who to ask for help in various areas when needed. The pastor has come to accept that he can't do it all and that others must pick up the slack to keep the church community growing in a healthy manner. It is time to look at the survey results and recognize what can come from what has been learned.

The survey results have shown the areas of weakness and strengths. Looking at the area of weaknesses, it indicates the most serious weakness is personal Bible study, second to that is lack of church structure understanding. The greatest strengths are all the responders are Christians and longtime Christians which in the long run will be a definite advantage as the church grows.

The pastor has not wasted anytime in addressing the lack of Bible study. He has enlisted several people in the International School of Ministry and has increased Bible study in the weekly events at church. Beside Bible study on Wednesday night, the church has a free movie night on one Friday evening each month showing Christian movies. The Saturday evangelistic groups knocking on doors has been increased. Several people have made decisions to follow Christ at church and during the evangelistic visits into the neighborhood.

The next step is to educate the people on starting more churches like the Tucson and San Diego groups. The pastor's new vision of Grow Forward indicates he is working with God to expand the kingdom. The three churches that are under construction have been started from evangelism, and that is the way they will keep growing forward. They are busy seeking the kingdom of God for God's glory. As the ministry grows it is imperative that the leadership keep

in mind how they got where they are without dissent. They must question how they have kept the group at peace and growing ahead without division. It would behoove the leadership to review what has brought them as far as they are and improve even on that because growth continues to bring new challenges.

In Chapter 4, results will be magnified which will enable other leaders to take advantage of what Pastor Flo and the Restoration Church successfully accomplished for the glory of God. Pastor Flo's main thrust is to be obedient to God's call and direction for this Restoration Church. He wants everyone to understand that they are God's children doing God's work for His glory and not the pastor's or their own but only for God.

Chapter 4

Results

Church Training

When Pastor Flo and the researcher met to decide on how to ensure the safety of the community from a non-pastoral leader who could cause a disturbance in the church, it was decided Bible study and church training would be the correct preventative actions

The church training began with the enrollment of 17 believers in an online Bible training class from the International School of Ministry. This program was used as a discipleship program. The program also includes an Old/New Testament survey. One of the brothers who has completed the program was selected as facilitator of the program. It was hoped that the program would expand to more believers.

Church training began with educating each member with what the body of believers have as a goal for each one's life in the body. To protect the body from dissident non-pastoral leadership, each member of the community was educated in the church beliefs.

“For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim 3:2-7) (ESV).

The pastor began the week with Sunday worship and preaching/teaching, after which there was a meal and fellowship. At 1:00 pm, the students who signed up for the ISOM began their class with the pastor. As a group finished the first segment of the class, the new students were led by a student from the first segment. The pastor then taught the second segment, eventually working himself out of the teaching those classes all together.

Research Conducted

To conduct the research for this project three surveys were taken. The first survey was taken while the community was still in the small store front. The second survey, done in two parts, was conducted after the community was forced, to move to a larger facility and members of the community were beginning to be involved in classes at International School of Ministry. The results of these surveys were placed in charts and are located in the Appendix under A, B, and C. Appendix A represents survey #1, Appendix B represents survey #2-10 of the students that had enrolled in ISOM, and Appendix C survey #2-16 represents the new people who had entered the community since moving to the larger facility.

Survey #1: (Results shown in Appendix A)

Survey #1 was taken while the community was still meeting in the storefront. Much interesting information came from the completed questionnaires, giving Pastor Flo an opportunity to understand what must be done while he was in the planning stages. One positive revelation that came from the questionnaire was that all 25 respondents were “born again” Christians. The average time of their Christian experience was 19 years (a year longer than the pastor has been a Christian). The pastor now realized that he has possible maturity within his core members and is more confident in sharing leadership responsibilities. Another positive outcome from the questionnaire was that 100% of the respondents loved their church community and wanted to be involved in serving the church in their gifted areas.

There were a couple of areas of confusion in the questionnaire. One concerned whether there were any deacons or elders; another asked about pastors. This amounted to about half of the respondents to those two questions. The pastor is in the process of addressing these issues. A more serious area was that of church discipline. Five people believed there were dissenters in the

church, and about half of the respondents did not know how to handle that question. This subject needs a lot of study, compassion, and love so the wounded are not shot instead of restored.

Because the church has doubled in size and the community moved to the larger facility the pastor and researcher decided it was necessary to take a second survey. It would include some of the ISOM students and several new people who were now attending. Then the results of the various surveys could be compared.

Survey Questions (Appendix A). 1 (Survey number). 1 (Question Number):

A.1.1: How long have you attended this church?

Answer: The average attendance of 2.64 years is reflective of the fact that this church was just planted about two and a half years ago.

A.1.2: Why do you continue to come here?

Answer: The survey revealed that all who answered the questions were “born again”

A.1.3: Do you believe in Jesus Christ? If so, how long have you been a believer?

Answer: All the respondents answered that they were believers in Jesus Christ. “Jesus answered, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of the water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do you not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again'” (John 3:5-7)? The average time these people have been believers is 19 years which should give the pastor a strong foundation on which to build a church.

A.1.4: Do you spend much time reading the Bible?

Answer: “So, faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Rom 10:17). This demonstrates the need to encourage Bible reading on their own if they want to grow in their Christian faith. "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Ps 119:11).

A.1.5: How much time do you spend reading the Bible?

Answer: This survey question reveals a weakness in these responders' Bible reading habits. "For the word of God is a living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of the soul and of the spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12-13). By not spending time reading God's word they are losing out on help in their life from the Spirit.

A.1.6: Have you learned where the church leadership originates?

Answer: "The resources are in the harvest"⁸⁷ Church leadership is provided by the Lord from within the harvest. "And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood" (Eph 4:11-13).

A.1.7: Where do you think the pastor gets his authority?

Answer: "Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). The pastor must understand that the call to lead he has received from the Holy Spirit came from "the voice of the King. A call from anyplace else will be devastating."⁸⁸

A.1.8: Are you involved in a small group Bible study?

Answer: The small group bible study group that these people are involved in is a Bible study course from ISOM presently being led by the pastor. More people are being added

⁸⁷ Jeff Christopherson, 2015, *Kingdom First* (Nashville: B & H Publishing), 1690.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1065.

to this group as the individuals determine it is good for them to study the Bible as well as be disciplined.

A.1.9: Is there more than one pastor at this church?

Answer: There is confusion in this area of leadership because Pastor Flo is the only official pastor of this church currently. Pastor Flo is searching for additional help to pastor but has not yet found anyone from the flock that has the call to be a pastor. Prayers are being raised that a person from the Bible class will receive that call.

A.1.10: Do you know how your church is governed?

Answer: Because there is no church structure this is a difficult question to answer.

“Some church planters downplay the importance of biblical church structures. They believe that structures are theological afterthoughts or traps to be avoided for the sake of encouraging a streamlined organization. But when structures are ignored at the beginning, they often become problems later.”⁸⁹

A.1.11: Do you know if the church has deacons or elders?

Answer: This is another area of confusion because the only elder is Pastor Flo. It would be wise for Pastor Flo to develop a team.

Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a three-fold cord is not quickly broken (Eccl 4:9-12).

According to Jeff Christopherson in his book *Kingdom First*, there are four benefits to having a team.

⁸⁹ Ed Stetzer and Daniel Im, 2016, *Planting Missional Churches*: Second Edition (Nashville: B & H Academic), 2729, Kindle.

- 1. A team helps you move further faster.
- 2. A team creates an environment of learning and continual improvement.
- 3. A team keeps you encouraged.
- 4. A team strengthens you in times of spiritual warfare.⁹⁰

A.1.12: Do you know of any dissenters in the church community?

Answer: This survey question indicates that some recognize that there are dissenters active in the church community. There is confusion in the church. Only 5 out of 26 believers realize there is dissension. "Much of the explanation for the confusion that exists so widely in the church today is that Christians have been looking at the things seen instead of at the things that are unseen."⁹¹

A.1.13: What would you do if you know of dissenters?

Answer: Less than half of the people would know what to do if dissenters were discovered. The 10 that answered had some very good ideas especially the 7 who said they would pray. Communication is an extremely important part of dealing with dissenters. Communicating this information to the pastor "is only completed when the receiver, pastor, understands the sender's intended message."⁹²

A.1.14: Do you love your church community?

Answer: What a wonderful testimony concerning the church community.

A.1.15: Do you seek to be involved in serving here at the church?

Answer: Everyone is willing to participate in serving in the church. The important part is to discover the gifts of each person and allowing them to serve in their gifted area.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 2473, 2484, 2500, 2514.

⁹¹ Ray c. Steadman, 1972, *Body Life* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers), 298, Kindle.

⁹² Jeff Christopherson, 2015, *Kingdom First* (Nashville: B & H Publishing), 1924, Kindle.

Intervention Design

This action research project began with the first step of intervention when dissident non-pastoral leadership began to surface. The process started when the pastor printed the church beliefs for all to study. The researcher and pastor believed the wisest beginning was to educate the community on why they were assembled. They were assembled as the body of Christ in this location to do the work that the Lord had for them. "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10). In his book, *Body Life*, Ray C. Steadman taught: "When it lives in and by the Spirit, the church is nothing less than the physical extension of the life of Jesus to the whole world." ⁹³ Once the people of the church understand they are a part of Christ living on earth and their body is the temple of God, their whole life is transformed. This is what the pastor of Restoration Church is teaching to our community of believers. "But unto each one of us was the grace given, according to the measure of the gift of Christ" (Eph 4:7) (RV, 1881). "The grace which each believer has received for the discharge of his particular function in the community is proportionate to the gift which he has freely received from his glorified Lord." ⁹⁴

The deterrent to the dissident individual trying to usurp authority is that everyone in the community understands he/she is to operate in his/her gifted area. With the training the community is receiving, a dissident person should be identifiable. The next thing the community should learn is how to deal with that individual in love by encouraging him/her to make use of their God-given gift for the good of the body (church). "When each part is working properly, the body grows and builds itself up in love" (Eph 4:16B) (ESV).

⁹⁴ F. F. Bruce, 2012, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (Claverton Down, Bath, UK: Creative Communications Ltd.), 1341, Kindle.

The researcher occasionally participates in the ISOM classes to experience what the community members taking the classes are experiencing. The pastor and researcher continually discuss how the training is going and what is being discovered about the body of believers. They have observed that, through discipleship training and ISOM training, individuals are discovering their gifts. People are beginning to ask to be used in their gifted area(s).

The next series of classes began on October 1. Additional people signed up for the classes. The researcher and pastor have distributed survey questionnaires to the new people in our community (who joined after the move to our larger building). At the same time, the researcher and pastor will consider the appointment of an elder (or elders) for our larger community. The pastor currently does most of the work. In the researcher's mind, this is far more work than he should be doing while trying to maintain sound biblical study. Paul and Barnabas "appointed qualified elders in each church"⁹⁵ as they went about planting churches. Even a backup preacher would be helpful at Restoration Church. The pastor needs time to "strengthen all the disciples" (Acts 18:23b) (ESV). Even before elders were chosen, deacons were chosen. "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:2-4) (ESV). This ministry is at the point of needing to do this to remain faithful to the word.

The researcher and pastor are working on these matters to prevent reasons for dissent. It is important that whoever the pastor appoints to be elders or deacons will "reflect the whole measure of the fullness of Christ, both in their personal and corporate character. In fact, mature

⁹⁵ Gene A. Getz, 2007, *The Measure of a Healthy Church* (Chicago: Moody Publishers), 493, Kindle.

spiritual leaders are unquestionably the key to producing a mature church.”⁹⁶ The pastor’s decisions must be bathed in prayer.

Changes began to take place after the first survey results were studied. The church ordained an associate pastor to take part of the load off the pastor. Restoration Ministries expanded its outreach in Tucson, AZ and in San Diego, CA. An ordained member of Restoration Church began working in a small town near Tucson, AZ; at last count, he had a group of about 25 people who meet in a home church. This pastor was coached to be aware of dissident individuals who may try to disrupt the group. A plan is underway to connect the group to the Restoration Church in Las Cruces via the Internet; in this way, they can receive the preaching portion simultaneously from Las Cruces. The Tucson group has a worship leader and music in place.

The researcher and pastor are working on these matters to prevent reasons for dissent. It is important that the persons appointed by the pastor to be elders or deacons “reflect ‘the whole measure of the fullness of Christ, both in their personal and corporate character. In fact, mature spiritual leaders are unquestionably the key to producing a mature church.”⁹⁷ The pastor's decisions must be bathed in prayer. In a few days, another survey will be taken to determine if there has been any growth in the new members who have come on board since the move to the new building. The church has almost doubled in size, and it is important to learn what the new people think about the church and the leadership. Once that survey is taken and the results analyzed, it will be easier to determine what additional training is needed so that new people understand the working of the Restoration Church.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 2393, 2398, Kindle.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 2393, 2398, Kindle.

As the community begins to understand leadership, they will find “that biblical authority is not characterized by a position occupied but is instead a natural byproduct of the anointing of God. This authority is recognized by the body when call and gifts are reflected in godly character.”⁹⁸ Godly character is attained slowly by walking in the Spirit of God and knowing Him more personally. As a person walks with Christ, his gift will become more apparent within the body of Christ. When properly trained, the disciple begins to understand that the body of Christ is an organism and that he/she is an important part of that organism. The leadership of the body is under the direction of Jesus Christ. “But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, that there be no division in the body, but the members may have the same care for one another” (1 Cor 12:24, 25) (ESV). The dissenting individual will be very apparent and can also be ministered to.

Survey #2: (Results shown in Appendix B)

This survey included people currently enrolled in the ISOM class and those new to the church. The ISOM students answered much more positively than during Survey #1. There has been a definite growth in their understanding of body life since completing the first semester at ISOM.

This second survey is particularly important because the new church leaders will come from this group of people who are attending the International School of Ministry. Additional people are signing up to take the course each month. This is an excellent opportunity to take discipleship training and be encouraged to share the gospel with others, turning the process into discipleship multiplication. The pastor has seen the positive results of administering the course.

⁹⁸ Greg Ogden, 2010, *Unfinished Business: Returning the Ministry to the People of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 3310, 3312, Kindle.

People are finding their gifts and learning to share those gifts with the community for God's glory

Survey #2, Part 1: (10 ISOM Students) (questions and answers): (B Appendix). 1 (Survey number). 1 (Question Number):

B.2-10.1: “How long have you attended this church?”

Answer: These people have “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayer” (Acts 2:42) (ESV). They are the faithful core of the church being disciplined and are learning about church structure. They desire to learn and be taught. Out of this group will come future leaders in the church. The students in ISOM average less time of attendance than the people in the first survey (which averaged 2.64 years).

B.2-10.2: “Why do you continue to come here?”

Answer: Most of these people are attending this church because God has led them here. They like the friendliness of the church community, the pastor’s authenticity, and the way he applies the Bible to their everyday life. “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:17,18) (ESV). Most of these students believe it was God who brought them to this church.

B.2-10.3: Do you believe in Jesus Christ? If so, how long have you been a believer?

Answer: All ten said they were believers; they averaged 16 years as believers. This was a solid base; this group possessed gifts that were badly needed to form the church structure. “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”

(John 3:3) (ESV). “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation” (2 Cor 5:17) (ESV “Regenerating grace creates a new world in the soul; all things are new. The renewed man acts from new principles, by new rules, with new ends, and in a new company.”⁹⁹ Here again, the survey showed that the students had been believers for a shorter period, on average than the first survey.

B.2-10.4: Do you spend much time reading the Bible?

Answer: When Christ makes a new creation out of a person, there should be a great thirst to learn what God has to say. Reading the Bible is a very important part of satisfying that thirst. That person who does not find time to read and study the Bible may be the one who creates dissension in the church community. This community wanted to learn how to be aware of the dissenter to pray for him and witness to him concerning salvation. They also spent more time reading the Bible.

B.2-10.5: How much time do you spend reading the Bible?

Answer: Each of the nine people reading the Bible averaged one hour per day. This did not count the pastor’s expository sermons on Sunday or the pastor’s Wednesday night Bible study. The pastor encouraged the community to read the Bible as much as possible so that God could speak to them individually and they could grow in the wisdom and knowledge He offered. The first survey average was 0.26 hours a week and in Survey #2-10 the average was one hour a week.

B.2-10.6: Have you learned where church leadership originates?

Answer: Even though many of the students in the ISOM discipleship program knew where the church leadership originated, there were still a few people who had not learned

⁹⁹ Matthew Henry, *A Commentary on the Whole Bible*, (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell), 621.

that. This is how a dissenter can slip through the cracks and show up later. A larger percentage of the students know where the church leadership comes from.

B.2-10.7: Where do think the pastor gets his authority?

Answer: These members know that the pastor's authority comes from God. This fact alone should deter the dissenter from challenging the pastor. "However, spiritual leaders in every local church should reflect "the whole measure of the fullness of Christ," in both their personal and corporate character."¹⁰⁰

Jeremiah 3:15 says, "And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding" (ESV). This community of believers recognizes these qualities in their pastor.

B.2-10.8: Are you involved in a small group Bible study?

Answer: An important part of spiritual growth comes from "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another" (Pro 27:17) (ESV). Only half of the students in this chart were fellowshiping with one another; thus, they were missing regular fellowship with God and with one another. The pastor will have to encourage regular fellowshiping for these students.

B.2-10.9: Is there more than one pastor here?

Answer: The New Testament never states that a church is to be led by one pastor. All through the New Testament, the word elders (*presbyteroi*) is plural and the word overseers (*episkopoi*) is also plural. However, denominational churches often operate with one pastor (not biblical).

¹⁰⁰ Gene A. Getz, 2007, *The Measure of a Healthy Church: How God Defines Greatness in a Church* (Chicago: Moody Publishers), 2397, Kindle.

B.2-10.10: Do you know how your church is governed?

Answer: “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God” (Acts 20:28) (ESV). More than one person is required to oversee the flock of God. In the scripture, Luke reminded the elders to take care of themselves as well as the flock that God had given them.

B.2-10.11: Do you know if your church has deacons or elders?

Answer: The church has given evidence that deacons or elders are watching over the flock.

B.2-10.12: Do you know of any dissenters in the church community?

Answer: Three people have discerned that dissenters are present in the community of believers.

B.2-10.13: What would you do if you know of dissenters?

Answer: The first line of defense is prayer. Pray that God will give the dissenter a spirit of unity in place of division. Then inform the pastor. “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness.” (Gal 6:1) (ESV).

B.2-10.14: Do you love your church community?

Answer: All the people in this survey love their church community. Amen.

B.2-10.15: Do you seek to be involved here at the church?

Answer: From the information gathered in this survey, it appears that the training made the students more aware of how the church should be structured. These people are the future leaders of this church and possible future church planters.

Survey #2, Part 2: (new people who never attended the smaller old building): (C Appendix). 1 (Survey number). 1 (Question Number):

This survey was taken several months after moving into the larger church building. The membership had almost doubled. This survey was conducted at the same time the 10 ISOM students took the survey.

C.2-16.1: How long have you attended this church?

Answer: In comparison to Survey #1, Survey #2 demonstrated that there several new people coming into the church community since moving into the new building.

C.2-16.2: Why do you continue to come here?

Answer: Most of the people believed that the Holy Spirit was active in the hearts of the people.

C.2-16.3: Do you believe in Jesus? How long have you been a believer?

Answer: Everyone identified as believers, but the average time as a believer in Survey #2 was 9.5 years versus 19 years in Survey #1.

C.2-16.4: Do you spend much time reading the Bible?

Answer: A higher percentage of the new people stated they read the Bible.

C.2-16.5: How much time do you spend reading the Bible?

Answer: The time spent reading the Bible per day was less in the new group, 0.18 versus 0.26 hours a day in survey #1. The ISOM student group spent an average of one hour a day reading the Bible.

C.2-16.6: Have you learned where church leadership originates?

Answer: "And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church" (Eph 1:22) (ESV).

C.2-16.7: Where do you think the pastor gets his authority?

Answer: Most people understood that the pastor's authority comes from God.

C.2-16.8: Are you involved in a small group Bible study?

Answer: Responses revealed about the same percentage of people in this group as in Survey #1.

C.2-16.9: Is there more than one pastor here?

Answer: A slightly higher number believed there is more than one pastor because of the growth in the community after moving to the new location.

C.2-16.10: Do you know how your church is governed?

Answer: This is still a major problem going forward, as there is still no church structure.

C.2-16.11: Do you know if the church has deacons or elders?

Answer: The reason people do not know if there are deacons or elders is that no one has spoken of any.

C.2-16.12: Do you know of any dissenters in the church community?

Answer: The three persons who recognized dissenters in the community need to look at Jesus' example to see how they can honor God in this situation (1 Cor 10:31) and gently restore the dissenters (Gal 6:1).

C.2-16.13: What would you do if you know of dissenters?

Answer: Percentagewise, this group would do the same as the people in Survey #1. They would pray. “God’s response to prayer with obedience always releases the nature of heaven into our impaired circumstances.”¹⁰¹

C.2-16.14: Do you love your church community?

Answer: One person responded “no.” It is believed this was a visitor, as 100% of the respondents in both surveys professed their love for the church community.

This church radiates the love of Christ.

C.2-16.15: Do you seek to be involved in serving here at the church?

Answer: This percentage was smaller than in Survey #1. The people in this survey have attended the church for a shorter period and may not recognize the need for help or have not been asked to be involved.

Summary

In November, the pastor of Restoration Church and this researcher began to discuss the potential problem of *Dissident Non-Pastoral Leadership* at this new church plant. The church had been meeting in the pastor's home for over a year and was ready to move the Restoration Church into a small storefront. At that time, the researcher took a survey to determine what kind of people were attending the church. To the surprise of both pastor and researcher, they were all believers, with an average time as Christians of 19 years. The pastor now knew that he had a strong core group of believers.

Over the next few months, the pastor began to organize the church. Building

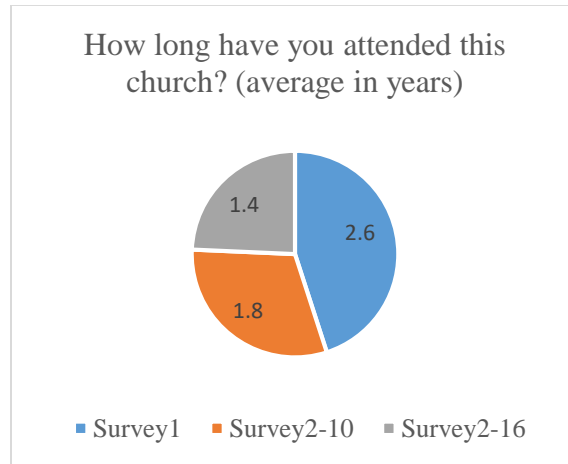
¹⁰¹ Bill Johnson, 2005, *When Heaven Invades Earth* (Shippensburg: Destiny Image Publishers, Inc.), 176, Kindle.

capacity was reached in April, when the landlord asked them to move out. At this point, there were no dissenters. It was only after moving into a new, larger building that dissension reared its ugly head. The pastor quickly took care of the problem and reestablished peace. To help the pastor in discipleship, 14 people were initially enrolled in the International School of Ministry; more followed. While the pastor worked on his plan for structure and leadership, another survey was taken (in September) of the new attendees who had not taken the first survey; ten ISOM students were included in the survey.

The following data is the sum of all the surveys taken and will be used to further strengthen the work that has been done. Many changes have taken place as the result of what was found in the surveys. The last section of this study will refine that information and highlight the areas that need immediate attention and correction.

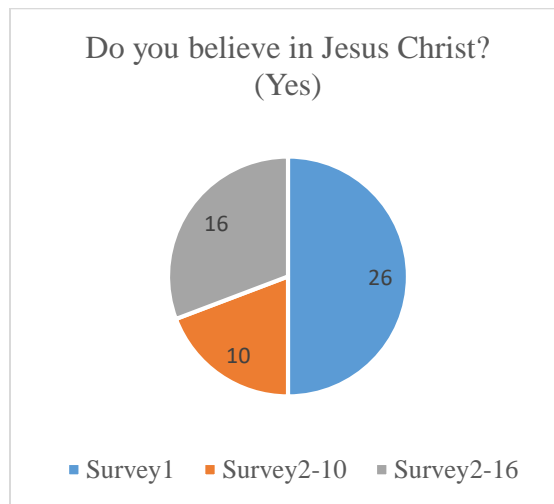
When looking at the results of pie chart #1 below, it becomes obvious that the church is still very young. The blue section represents the original group that moved into the first storefront church. The red displays the group that attended the school taught and led by the pastor (using material from ISOM). The grey group represents the people who began coming to the church when it moved into the larger storefront (seats around 300 people). This pie chart includes everyone who took the survey -- from the first storefront up to the move into the larger Restoration Church building.

Chart #1



This pie chart #2 shows that everyone who took the survey (from the first storefront all the way through the move into the larger Restoration Church building) identified as believers in Christ.

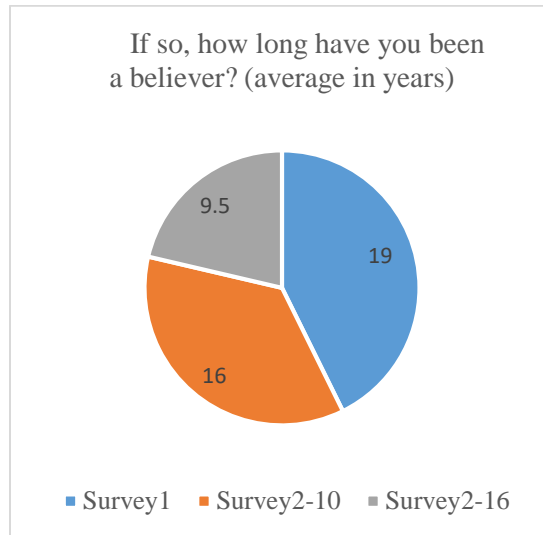
Chart #2



This was a surprising statistic in chart #3, because the average of “years being a Christian” in the first survey indicated they were Christians longer than the pastor. This should bring great depth into the church. The grey wedge indicates that the people coming into the new

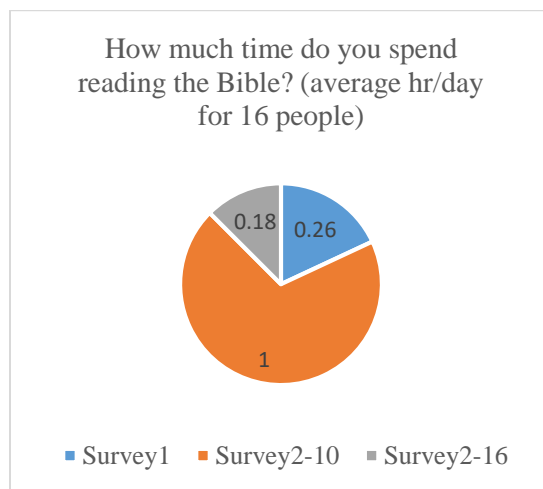
church building have been believer's half as long as the original group. The students have been believers for an adequate time to become leaders in the church.

Chart #3



This pie chart #4 indicates that more time needs to be spent reading the Bible and learning what God expects of them.

Chart #4



The student reading time is high, partly due to the study they must do for their classes. The pastor plans to encourage the people to read and study the Bible more in order to grow in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord.

Chart #5

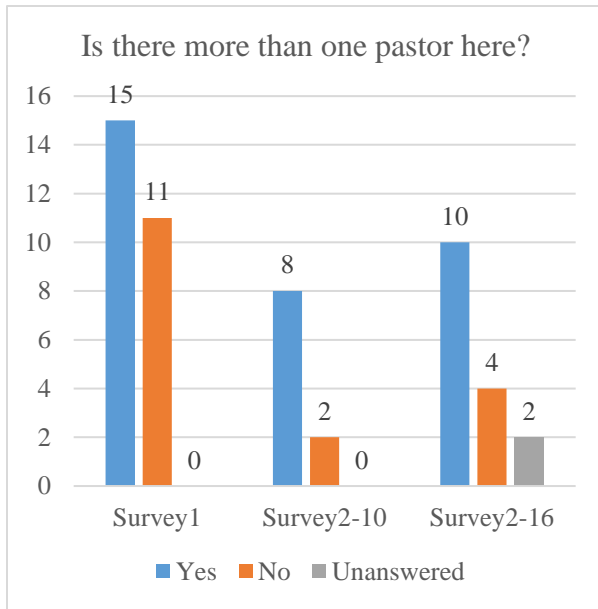


Chart #6

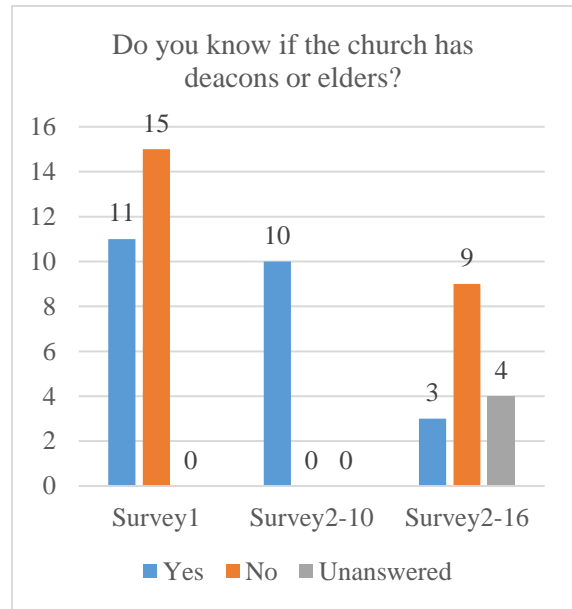


Chart #7

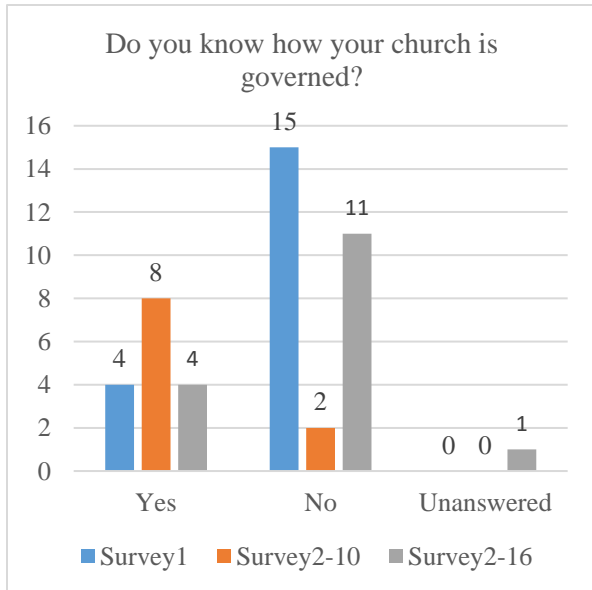
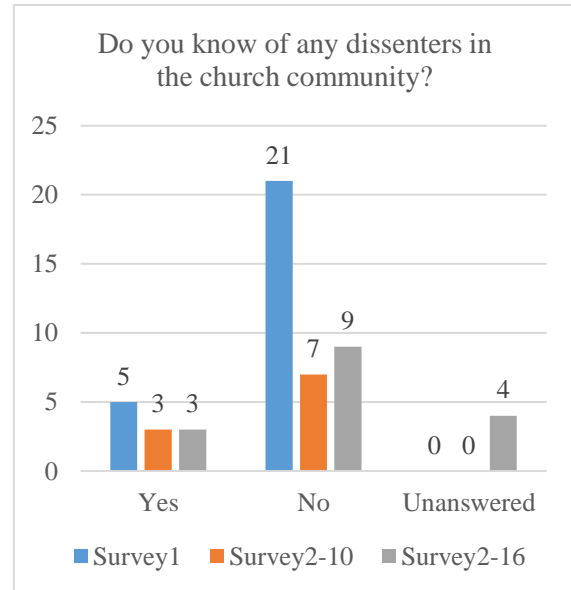


Chart #8



Charts 5 thru 8 were placed in this project to illustrate the areas that the pastor must work on to keep any dissenters from speaking out to cause disruption in the community. The researcher and the pastor have discussed the need to act quickly before the church grows out of control. Without leadership or structure divisiveness could get quickly out of hand. The pastor has dealt with Chart 5, the problem of how many pastors there are, by ordaining an assistant pastor to his staff. Also, there have been two evangelists/church planters added to the staff, one in Tucson and the other in San Diego where other churches are being planted.

Chart 6 has encouraged the pastor to ordain three people to be deacons/ deaconess to help him with the large amount of work he has been doing himself. The pastor has appointed a part time youth minister to handle the twice a month youth group meeting. However, the pastor has not yet addressed the question of church governance (Chart 7) other than he is taking on that role for now. Here again is an example of confusion caused by lack of church structure. Restoration Church has a vision statement and a statement of beliefs but there is no description of church structure.

Chart 8 indicates that there are dissenters within the community and people know it. However, it was not until they moved into the new building that a dissenter was revealed; this was dealt with by the pastor. Since then, the pastor had added some structure to the church government. He has also begun to assign others in the community to handle some of the work of the ministry.

Final Summary

Before this project began Pastor Florencio Vigil and the researcher sat down and discussed the reason for starting the new work. Pastor Flo had been meeting in his home with a group of people that felt it was time to expand the ministry. Pastor Flo is an evangelist, youth

pastor and a prison minister. The pastor is a Pentecostal preacher and he felt that he alone could administer a larger church. The researcher began to share with him that one of the major problems for failure in Pentecostal church plants was the lack of structure.

The discussion centered on the truth of God's word and to follow it the church must operate as a human body with all its parts operating in unity to be a healthy body. "When Paul speaks of the church as a body, he makes it clear that no one joins that body except by the new birth, through faith in Jesus Christ. There is no other way into this body. Once a person becomes a part of that body, every member has a contribution to make."¹⁰² In I Corinthians 7:17 Paul reminds believers to "Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him."

The issue that the pastor and researcher discussed was the subject of this Thesis Project which is *Church Leadership: Examining the Role of Non-Pastoral Leadership in a New Church Plant*. This refers to the dissident church member who causes division because he/she does not want to submit to pastoral authority. Without structure in the church it is easy to develop this kind of dissident. In G. Lloyd Rediger's book *Clergy Killers*, 1997, he says, "There is a general distrust of authority figures of any kind. Biblical and theological illiteracy is becoming the norm in the pews. This means parishioners do not understand God's purposes and the dynamics of spiritual leadership, except through their own experience and ideas."¹⁰³

When the researcher and the pastor decided on survey questions, they wanted them to be simple questions to identify what the responders understood about the church and their lives as members of the body. Once the surveys were completed and placed on charts it would be determined what plan was to be developed. Once the surveys were in it was determined many of

¹⁰² Ray C. Stedman, 1995, *Body Life* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers), 1338, Kindle.

¹⁰³ G. Lloyd Rediger, 1997, *Clergy Killers* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press), 20, Kindle.

the Christians had been long time believers without much Biblical and Spiritual growth. Discipleship and Bible study were to be the first part of church training. Pastor Flo enlisted a total of 17 members to start training at ISOM.

As the ISOM training progressed people began discovering their gifts. God was beginning to reveal to the pastor that he could not do all the work alone. People were being raised up to fill the different needs that were present. The first position filled was that of an assistant pastor. Then it went on from there with three evangelists being ordained to start other ministries that would be related to the Restoration Ministries that was the vision of the pastor.

Wednesday night service became more centered on expository preaching word for word through a book. On Sunday, the pastor began preaching the truth on how to protect oneself from the attacks of the Devil by putting on *The Whole Armor of God* and reminds them that, “as each member works at the task God has given him to do, the whole body functions as intended.”¹⁰⁴ Each person must be on guard for the dissenter who can come in to destroy the whole body. The dissenter comes in with the intention of being destructive to the body insisting that their right and the pastor is wrong. The dissenter is deceitful and demonic. This is where training concerning the using the whole armor of God is important. This is where the person with the gift of discernment is of utmost importance because they can see and understand evil.

As the church grows evangelism and discipleship remains the strength of the church and the encouragement for continued Bible study both at the home church and at the new plants will honor God and build the Kingdom.

¹⁰⁴ Stedman, 1338, Kindle.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

“The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgement, with every secret thing, whether good or evil” (Eccl 12:13, 14) (ESV).

Church Leadership: Examining the Role of Non-Pastoral Leadership in a New Church Plant is the name I chose for this thesis project. The new church plant, Restoration Church, is pastored by Rev. Florencio H. Vigil who has 16 years pastoral experience, mostly as a youth pastor, but had never planted a church. This project was designed to help the pastor keep this body of believers healthy and strong by identifying any dissenter bent on taking over or destroying this community of believers through strife and divisiveness. Restoration is the theme of this church, so bringing any dissenter to repentance and understanding of his/her place in the body is of utmost importance.

Because this was an action research project, the pastor and researcher agreed that survey data--which plays an important part in development of church structure and training--would be used to educate the community on how to detect takeover attempts by non-pastoral leadership. This body of believers has been (and continues to be) trained in identifying and overcoming a dissenter who may try to disrupt the unity and harmony of this congregation. Church members continue to be coached to “reproduce” themselves, thus multiplying our number of disciples. Evangelism plays a very important aspect in this training. The International School of Ministry is the chosen discipleship program used by this church plant. Initially, 17 members enrolled in the program, but the numbers continue to grow as benefits are realized. Future leadership will be

chosen from this group as they become aware of their gifts and responsibility to the Kingdom of God.

A heavy emphasis has been placed on donning the whole armor of God, as discussed in Ephesians 6:10-18 and 1 Thessalonians 5:8-11. The issue of living a Christian life has also been discussed at length, using Jesus' own words in Matthew 22:37-40; Mark 12:29-31; Luke 10:27; and I Corinthians 13:8a, "Charity never faileth" (KJV). If the community of believers learns that love is most important it will be hard for dissenters to operate in the community.

Issues

Possible issues may come from new people, from different Christian cultures, who are adapting to the culture of Restoration Church. The average time as Christians for the core members is 19 years which is longer than the pastor has been a Christian. Adaptations often reveal problems. The pastor must be prepared to promptly recognize the individual gifts and talents of this core. The pastor has eventually come to understand that structure is needed as the community grows. Teaching new members how the body of Christ operates requires training (which has been implemented). Seventeen people have enrolled in ISOM training, which aids the discipleship program and educates the people in God's living Word. To date, this training has produced four people who have been ordained into various church ministries.

Concerns

It is important that the pastor quickly develops a structure to lead the fast growth that is already taking place. Pastor Flo thought that he alone could handle all the work but has come to realize that he could quickly "burn out" without help. While the community is willing to volunteer, placing people according to their gifts is important--which takes time if their gifts are

not yet fully understood. Church training must be developed quickly. Developing financial concerns are a reality which needs to be addressed.

To date, as these concerns have emerged, the pastor has been quick to react. An assistant pastor has been ordained by the church; he came from the membership and was therefore immediately up to speed. A person was assigned to handle electronics -- video, sound, and TV screens. Two other church members were ordained to oversee the prayer ministry, both inside the church and outside the church. A part-time youth pastor agreed to supervise the youth group, and a worship leader for that group has volunteered. The youth leader who has been working in other youth ministries in town for several years has come to help, but the church cannot afford to hire him fulltime, yet. The pastor has known him for a long time as well. Volunteers have taken over the cleaning responsibility and garbage disposal.

The pastor continues to develop leadership and volunteerism with an eye on possible dissenters. Up to this stage of development, there have only been two cases of dissent; both situations were quickly handled by the pastor. One case ended in loss of a member (her decision). However, this case did expose an area of dissension that had not been thought of, gossip. "A gentle tongue is the tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit" (Pro 15:4)(ESV). This turns into a new area which needs much training, controlling the tongue. "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear"(Eph 4:29)(ESV).

The Future

The vision of this pastor and of the church is to be a missional church reaching out to other areas and developing more Restoration Ministries. A small group, headed by an ordained church member/evangelist, was developed in a small town near Tucson, Arizona, and is now

becoming part of the Restoration Ministries outreach. A plan is being developed to connect the two groups via the Internet so that preaching from Las Cruces can be viewed by the Tucson group. The worship service will be handled by the individual group, but the preaching is being centralized. The next step to get the Tucson group to enroll in the ISOM program for discipleship training as has the Las Cruces group. There is an ordained church member, an evangelist, working in San Diego, California attempting to plant another Restoration Ministries outreach there. He is from San Diego, so he knows the area and of course several people. That work is just in the beginning stages. The plan to have that group reached by internet from Las Cruces for simultaneous preaching at all three churches. As the pastor develops a strong foundation in the Las Cruces community the pattern can be instituted in future plants which will make it somewhat easier as the Restoration Ministries grow and mature. The community must pray that the pastor understand that he must keep himself healthy by eating, sleeping, and loving his family to bring glory to God and continue the work God has called him to.

Recommendations

#1. This researcher recommends that the pastor move at a slower pace to train up a team, “[He may] be surrounded by a good group of people yet not function as a true team. If [he] is the one making all the decisions, providing all the leadership, and casting all the vision, then [he] doesn’t have a true team. An unwillingness to empower others with authority could be the thing that slows you down.”¹⁰⁵

#2. The pastor should develop strong leadership from the core group, Training those from inside the community so that they are all going in the same direction with the same goals and passion. “The problem is that some leaders struggle with taking the time to work through

¹⁰⁵ Jeff Christopherson, 2015, *Kingdom First* (Nashville: B&H Publishing), 2473, Kindle.

checklists. They do not like to dabble in detail.”¹⁰⁶ The lack of interest in details can cause failure down the road. It is important for the pastor to have a plan and work the plan.

#3. The main emphasis of the plan must be evangelism and discipleship. Churches grow and prosper by evangelizing the surrounding community. The moment that a church stops emphasizing evangelism is the moment the church begins its path to death.

#4. The researcher recalls when fresh out of seminary the home mission board sent my wife and me, with three children out to plant a church up north. The training I had was to find a place to meet and start evangelizing the community, we will pray for you. That was forty years ago. The researcher does not recommend that approach but does recommend some well written books to help get off to a good start. The first one is *Advanced Strategic Planning: a 21st-Century Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*, 2013, by Aubrey Malphurs. The book is excellent at giving the planter a good idea of what he must plan for to be successful.

The next book will awaken the church planter to the possibility of the dissident member. This book was written by G. Lloyd Rediger called *Clergy Killers: Guidance for Pastors and Congregations Under Attack*, 1997. This thesis project was written to address the problem of dissident members, with restoration in mind. Restoration is not always possible, but it must be offered to the dissident with love. Restoration may not be possible because of lack of understanding the problem. Rediger, in his book, explains that there are three types of conflict and a different management method is necessary to handle each conflict.

1. Normal Conflict-this person “responds well to rational, competent, and caring management methods.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶ Aubrey Malphurs, 2013, *Advanced Strategic Planning* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books) 24, Kindle.

¹⁰⁷ G. Lloyd Rediger, 1997, *Clergy Killers: Guidance for Pastors and Congregations Under Attack* (Louisville: John Knox Press), 63, Kindle.

2. Abnormal Conflict-this person needs a therapist to manage his/her problem.
3. Spiritual Conflict-this person requires a person with the gift of spiritual discernment to discern the spiritual conflict. “The exorcism formula Jesus used is a valuable guide, as long as we let God’s Holy Spirit lead the way.”¹⁰⁸ Example Mark 5:1-20.

Final Summary

The issue presented in this thesis project is how to identify and combat the dissident non-pastoral member who puts himself first and is not willing to acknowledge the authority of the church leadership, without turning him away from the church community.

This study examined the planting of a new church which began in the pastor’s home and grew to a membership of 25 in 18 months. At that time, the membership moved into a storefront with a capacity of 55, at which time they again moved to a larger storefront (capacity around three hundred). The attendance at that point was 80-plus.

The pastor enlisted volunteers to attend the International School of Ministry to help with the discipleship training and Bible study. The plan was that leaders would begin to develop, and their gifts would be recognized.

Chapter 1 presents the ministry context; the problem and purpose statement; basic assumption; definitions; delimitations; limitations; and the proposed thesis statement. Chapter 2 consists of the conceptual framework; literature review of scholarly books and articles; and pertinent biblical passages. It also includes theological and theoretical foundations. Chapter 3 develops the plan; researcher’s personal observations; implementation of the plan; indicators; biblical strength; length of time as a Christian; and commitment. Chapter 4 discusses the methodology; church training; survey #1; intervention design; survey #2-10; survey #2-16; and

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 66, Kindle.

summary. In Chapter 5, the nail can be driven home. All the good things that have happened so far must be expanded on and improved as mistakes are found. This includes the team building that began when the pastor realized he could not do it alone. This ministry building must be done by a dedicated, committed team of Jesus lovers.

Jesus did not start His church alone; He chose 12 disciples to work with Him and trained them to multiply themselves and then multiply themselves again. The church grew by multiplication, and this is how it must continue to grow. Many churches grow today by “church hoppers” who are looking for more entertainment, better music, and softer preaching -- but not by conversion. This does not glorify the Kingdom of God, nor is it the reason why Jesus started His church. He sought to save the lost -- which are many.

The foundation of a true Christian church must be built on Jesus Christ. “For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (I Cor 3:11) (ESV). Pastor Flo is dedicated to teaching the Word of God and training the community to have faith in every word. How does one enter that church? By believing in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Evangelism and discipleship are the tools which allow that to happen.

The dissident non-pastoral leader who brings disunity to the church has no place in this community. “There’s no question that one of the most destructive forces in the church today is conflict between Christians. Division among brothers and sisters has destroyed lives and brought the gospel of Jesus Christ into disrepute.”¹⁰⁹

Both the researcher and the pastor have experienced the dissident person that has destroyed ministries in which they have been involved. This problem is certainly nothing new.

¹⁰⁹ Ray C Stedman, 1972, *Body Life* (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers), 499, Kindle.

However, this is the first time we worked together to design a project that could help identify the problem and reduce the number of occurrences.

The simple task of taking a few surveys and evaluating the data told the researcher and the pastor things that they needed to know in order to develop a plan to keep the dissenters at a minimum. The surveys also helped the pastor to understand the community and what their needs were pertaining to training and involvement (volunteerism).

Between the researcher and the pastor, they have sixty-nine years of ministry involvement, but it was the first time that the researcher ever used surveys to discover the needs of the people in the church. After working on this project, the researcher believes it would be highly recommendable to use surveys, especially in a new church plant. The surveys were very simple one sentence questions that revealed where the people were in their Christian growth and walk. The people's answers helped design a plan to help the people grow in many aspects of their Christian walk. The surveys also identified the weaknesses in the present church plan.

Once results of the findings were shared with the church community, it appeared they understood and began looking for and finding their gifted areas in which they could become involved. They also began to see the need for unity so the church could "grow forward" glorifying God as they went. The research made the pastor aware that he could not do it all on his own but that he needed a good support staff to complete all the ministry that the Lord wants accomplished.

The researcher has read of church planting movements in India that start a small home church, within weeks someone is chosen from the group to start another small home church and within a few weeks this is repeated in another home. The churches just keep multiplying this way as the Spirit led. This is God's plan "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come

upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The pastor and the researcher believe it is necessary to have a strong discipleship program so that Restoration Ministries can continue growing forward. The expansion into Arizona and California is just the beginning and must be monitored carefully for the dissident to appear. Expanding the ministries reminded me of the importance of rooting out dissent before it could cause division.

The researcher recalls reading about the great preachers of The Great Awakening, during the 1730s, John and Charles Wesley who founded Methodism in England, and George Whitefield a great evangelist riding across this country on horseback sharing the gospel as he went. Then in 1784 Francis Asbury formed the Methodist Church in America and sent out itinerant evangelists across the nation to share the gospel with the lost.

It was one of those itinerant evangelists, working as an emergency room doctor, that reached the researcher with the gospel at the Country Chapel in Skandia, Michigan in February 1977. The researcher had traveled from San Diego, California to the northern woods of Michigan for God to speak to him and bring him into the kingdom of God. The pastor had to deal with dissenters in that little church. They were forced to leave, and peace was kept among the members. It is a sad affair to see that the Methodist Church is about ready to split because a dissenter at one time entered in and was not dealt with properly allowing a split of such a large group of believers. This is the reason for such a Thesis Topic to be written, to prevent another disaster like this.

There is ample warning in the Scriptures that the body of believers should be sensitive to dissent and dissenters. “Jesus said to them, ‘Watch and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and

Sadducees” (Matt 16:6). Matthew Henry says, “the corrupt principles and practices of the Pharisees and Sadducees are compared to leaven; they were souring, and swelling, and spreading, like leaven; they fermented wherever they came.”¹¹⁰ As the Restoration Ministries expands it would be wise for them, in each location, to perform the same survey and practices as were done in Las Cruces.

The Scripture gives several warnings to watch for that little bit of leaven: Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1; I Cor 5:6-8; Gal 5:9-10. New church plants are especially vulnerable to the potential of a non-pastoral leadership trying to inject his/her own vision for the church rather than working with the church planter who has been assigned the task by God to plant a new work. The new church planter would also be wise to read a book by Aubrey Malphurs to get started on the right path before jumping in headfirst. The book is called *Advanced Strategic Planning: A 21st-Century Model for Church and Ministry Leaders*, 2013. May God bless your work.

Some question how this action research may be used in a similar situation. The answer to that is easy because action research is a very simple, uncomplicated way to do the research and can be easily adjusted to fit many situations. Using the action research method of completing this type of project is the most efficient way to accomplish it. A good definition of action research comes from Bob Dick in Australia:

Action research is a flexible spiral process which allows action (change, improvement) and research (understanding, knowledge) to be achieved at the same time. The understanding allows more informed change and at the same time is informed by that change. People affected by the change are usually involved in the action research. This allows the understanding to be widely shared and the change to be pursued with commitment.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ Matthew Henry, *A Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell Company), 227.

¹¹¹ Nancy Jean Vyhmeister & Terry Dwain Robertson, 2014, *Quality Research Papers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 63.

If this researcher were to take on another project like this there would be minor changes; however, the action research method would not have to be modified, just the input. When a church planter is planning to plant a new church, the suggestion would be given to start with prayer and training for the planter so that he would come to the understanding that he would need a support group backing him up. Some church planters think they can do it all on their own (BIG MISTAKE). Surveys should take place earlier on in the plant, so the pastor gets a better understanding of the community he is to serve. In the above thesis project over two and a half years went by before any research was done. When the surveys were taken, there was confusion about many things that the people should have known.

The surveys indicated there were several long-time Christians, but growth was not evident. Thus, the foundation of the church plant was a bit unstable right from the start. This type of atmosphere was conducive to non-pastoral leadership to try and take over. One secret to action research is the relationship between the pastor and the researcher. Communication lines must always be open, and if they both have loving and learning hearts, the project will go well. In the above project the researcher and pastor had a face-to-face meeting every week, and it worked well. It was wonderful to see how the Holy Spirit worked and placed things on both of their minds to discuss.

A good place for the pastor/church planter to start his training would be to use some of the suggestions that are given in the *Advanced Strategic Planning* book mentioned above. This researcher was trained to pilot an airplane. Before ever getting in the plane there was a checklist to go through such as checking the tires, checking the fuel, checking the oil, checking the prop, checking the flaps, and rudder. That took place all on the outside of

the plane and then when in the plane there were more items to check off the checklist. When and only when the checklist was completed would the pilot start the engine and take off.

The early survey is like the pre-flight check list. The survey goes out and when the data is checked the pastor has an idea how prepared he is to grow the church. The pastor's planning will make a difference on his effectiveness as a church planter. Conducting a survey will help the pastor identify what kind of people make up the church. Knowing the people will help to know the direction the church can go. It will also help the pastor to pre-determine what troubles that may be coming his way. Planning is a process that continues to change as the circumstances change. Planning also requires a leader and a support group. One man cannot do it alone, as the pastor in this project discovered.

Action research being used in this type of project is good because the people being researched are the same people who work on solving the problem. This way they take some ownership of what is taking place. When they see the good results, then they are happy that they are part of the project. It gives the church community a chance to see the church's strengths and weaknesses. This working together builds respect and trust in each other. It also helps them to work toward the same goals because they are part of a team, God's team, "The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps" (Pro 16:9)(ESV).

During a recent weekly meeting between the pastor and the researcher it was discovered that a problem of dissent was developing that had not been considered before in our discussions. The problem had occurred early in the church before and the pastor

dealt with it. One person repented but the other person refused and left the church.

However, the problem has become more acute as of late, and it was decided that the pastor would address the issue head on during a Sunday morning service. That problem is gossip or slander. More people are involved in leadership rolls now and volunteerism is at its highest which provides an environment for those not walking in the Spirit to speak unkind and oftentimes false words, to give unscriptural judgements and accusations that unchecked could destroy the unity of the community of believers.

The pastor and the researcher decided to go to the Word of God concerning gossip in the church to know how to deal with this form of dissension.

- 2 Cor 12:20 “For I fear that perhaps when I come, I may find you not as I wish, and that you find me not as you wish—that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder” (ESV).
- Eph 4:40 “Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear” (ESV).
- James 1:26 “If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person’s religion is worthless” (ESV).
- I Tim 5:13 “Besides that, they learn to be idlers, going about from house to house, and not only idlers but also gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not” (ESV).
- Ex 23:1 “You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness” (ESV).

- Lev 19:16 “You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the Lord” (ESV).
- Prov 10:19 “When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent” (ESV).
- Prov 11:9 “With his mouth the godless man would destroy his neighbor, but by knowledge the righteous are delivered” (ESV).
- Prov 16:28 “A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends” (ESV).
- Prov 18:21 “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit” (ESV).
- Prov 26:20 “For the lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases” (ESV).
- Ps 34:13 “Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit” (ESV).
- Ps 141:3 “Set a guard, oh Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips” (ESV).
- Prov 18:7 “A fool’s mouth is his ruin, and his lips are a snare to his soul” (ESV).

This thesis project is not meant to be a one-time solution to all the problems of non-pastoral leadership. However, it is an example of what one church plant, Restoration Church, did to keep on the course that God set for them and a few of the tactics that helped them along the way. As the church grows or expands its ministry, things will be in constant flux and adjustments will have to be made as the church moves along. This thesis project is only meant to be an example of what can happen as the ministry grows and maybe some helpful advice to go along with your situation.

This is the end of Chapter 5, the Conclusion Chapter where the question of whether this study could be used in any other context of this nature. The answer to that question is yes with slight modifications. Also, as this chapter was being ended another question regarding dissension arose that needed immediate attention, GOSSIP. Gossip is a powerful destroyer of unity and man. If not handled properly and quickly a body of believers can be torn apart in a very short time.

Prov 26:20 “For the lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there are no whispers, quarreling ceases.” According to Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Kindle, “Contention is as a fire; it heats the spirit, burns up all that is good, and puts families and societies into flame...Whisperers and backbiters are incendiaries not to be suffered.”¹¹² It is of utmost importance that Christians learn to control their tongue. This is a new and powerful tool that the Devil has not used on the Restoration Church before to bring dissension. The greatest tool to overcome this threat is the Word of God. Bible training such as ISOM, in which several people have enrolled, is an important advantage that some people at Restoration Church have signed up for and are busy studying.

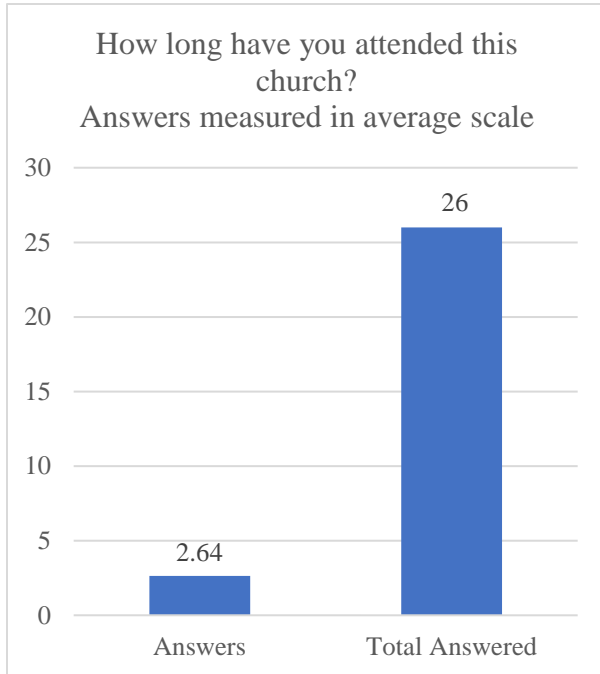
This information is being placed in this thesis project in hopes that whoever may take the opportunity to read this paper will be forewarned that dissension can come when and from where you least expect it. The researcher and the pastor have learned a great many lessons as we worked our way through this church plant together and because the action research method has been used, the community is also learning much as they partake in the plans and decisions of the church. The church has come together as one body under God, with love and compassion to reach others for Jesus Christ.

¹¹² Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Kindle Edition.

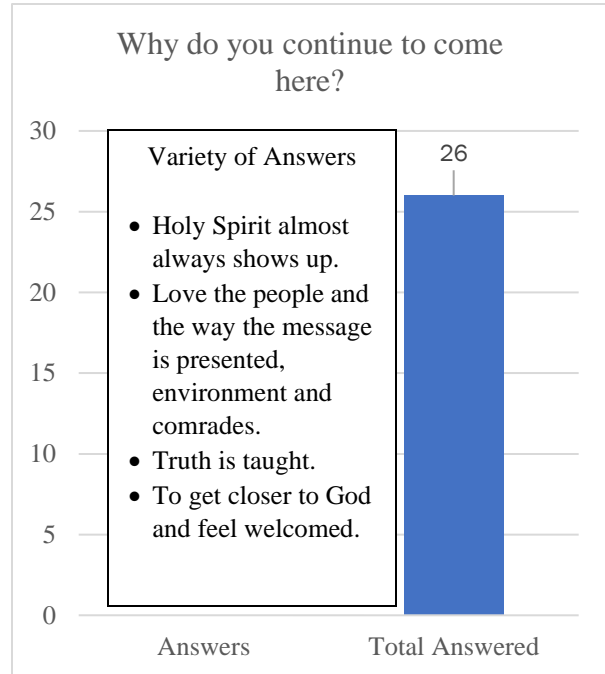
Evangelism and church planting go hand in hand. Without evangelism there would be no need for church planting. “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news” (Rom10:15)(ESV). “So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41)(ESV). “And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:47)(ESV). Restoration Ministries continues to expand and as it does this thesis project will be its guide to protect itself from the non-pastoral leader.

APPENDIX A: SURVEY #1

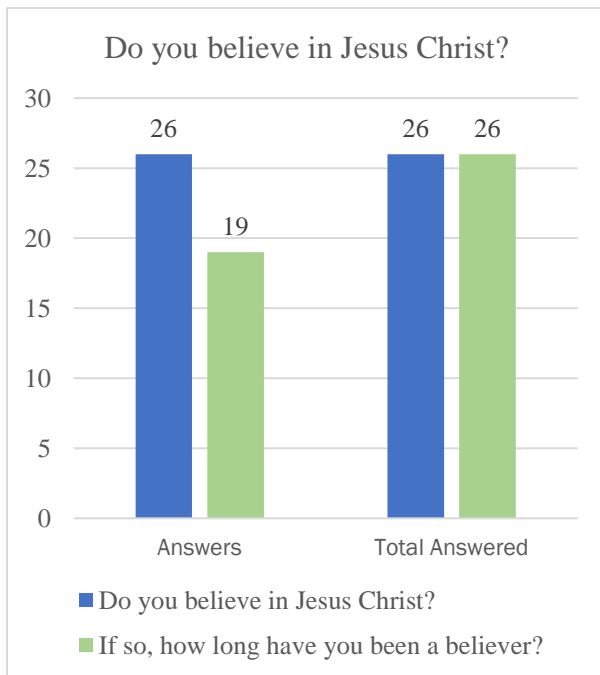
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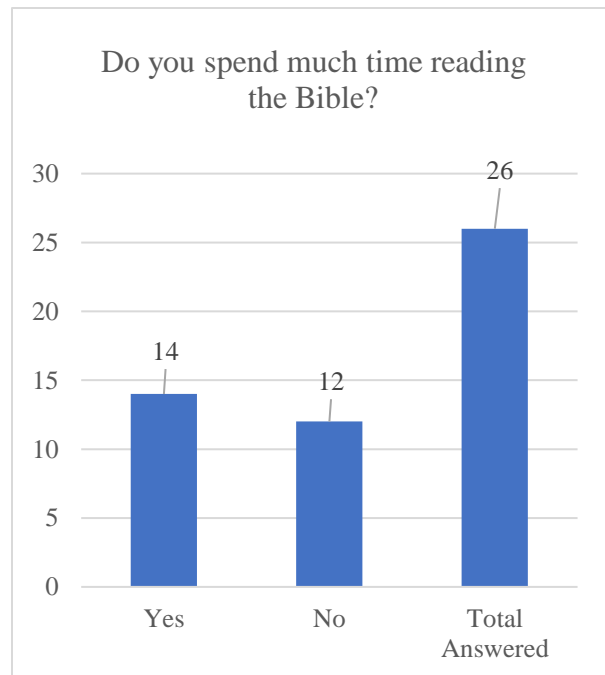
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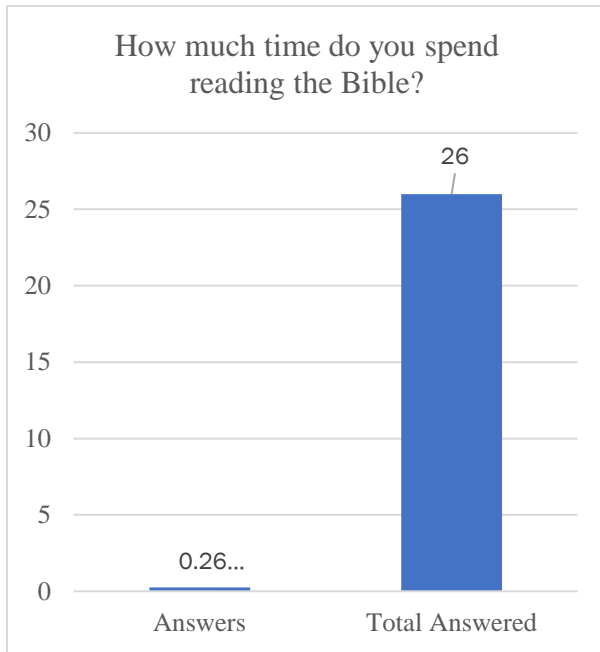


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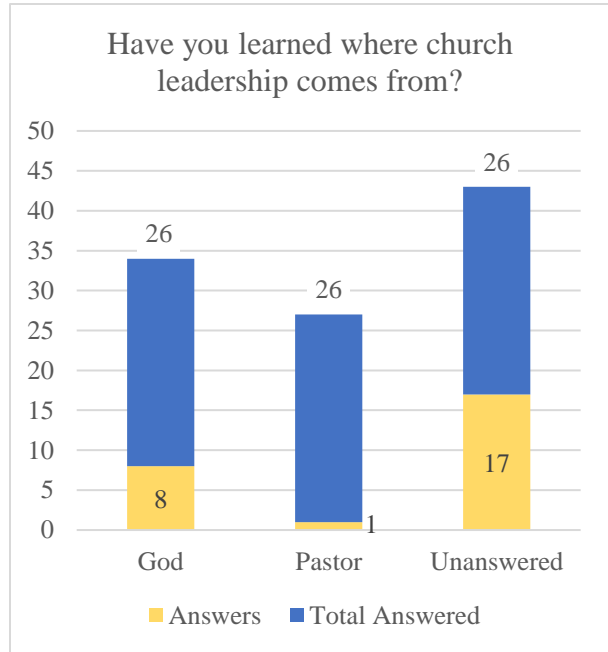


APPENDIX A: SURVEY #1

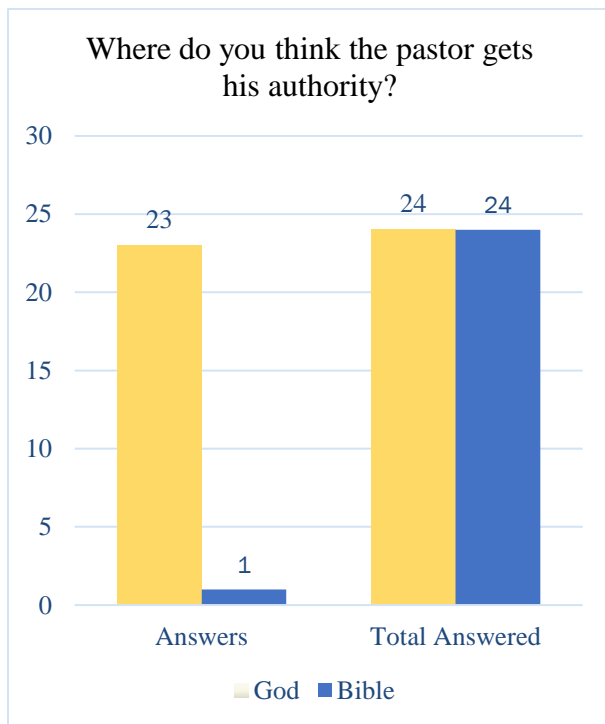
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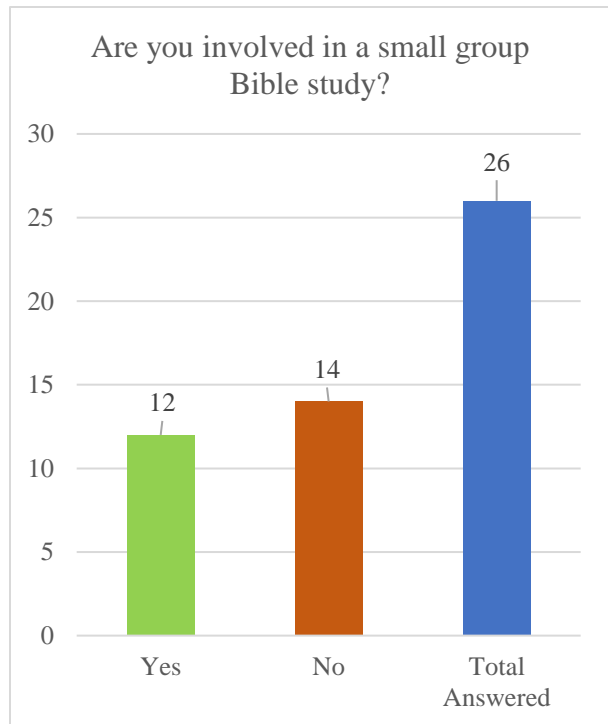
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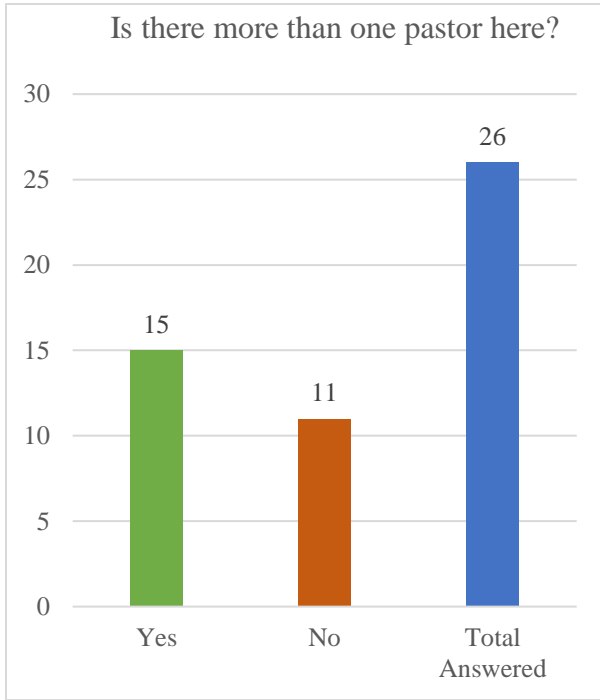


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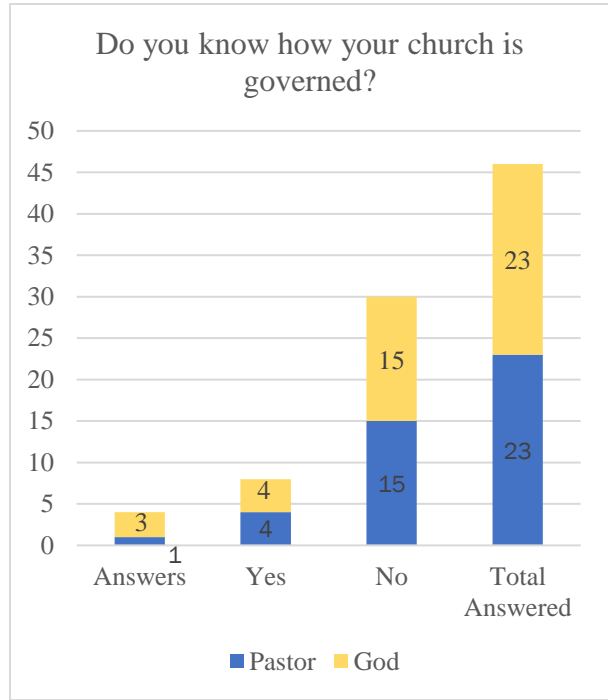


APPENDIX A: SURVEY #1

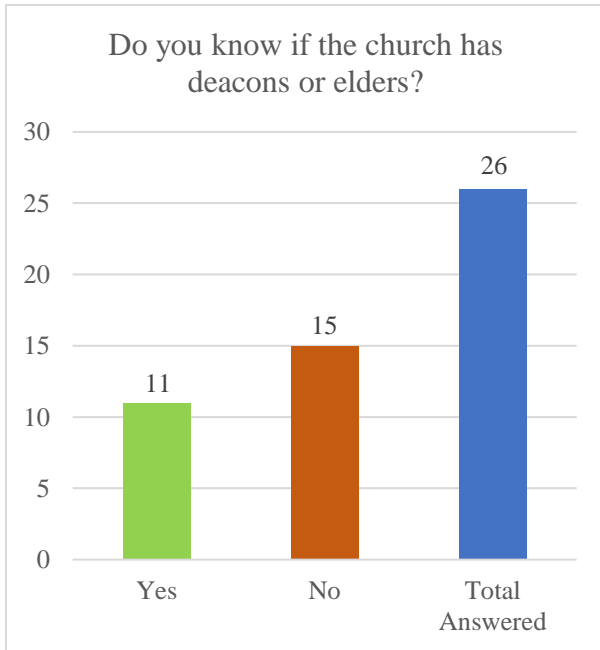
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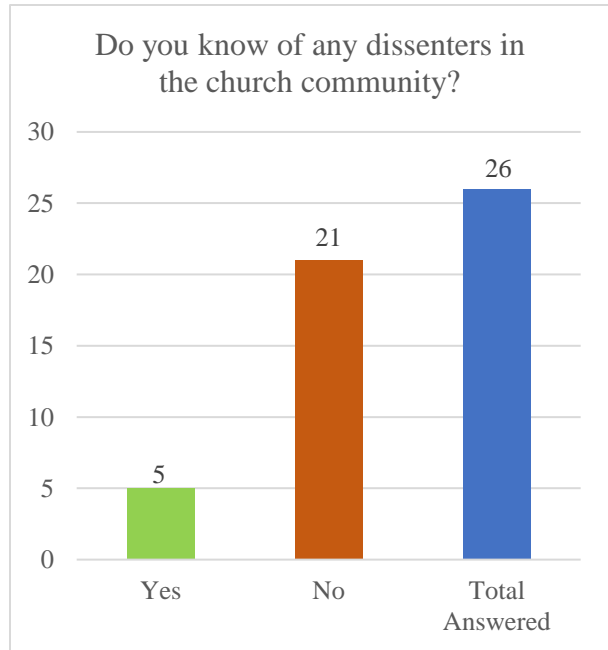
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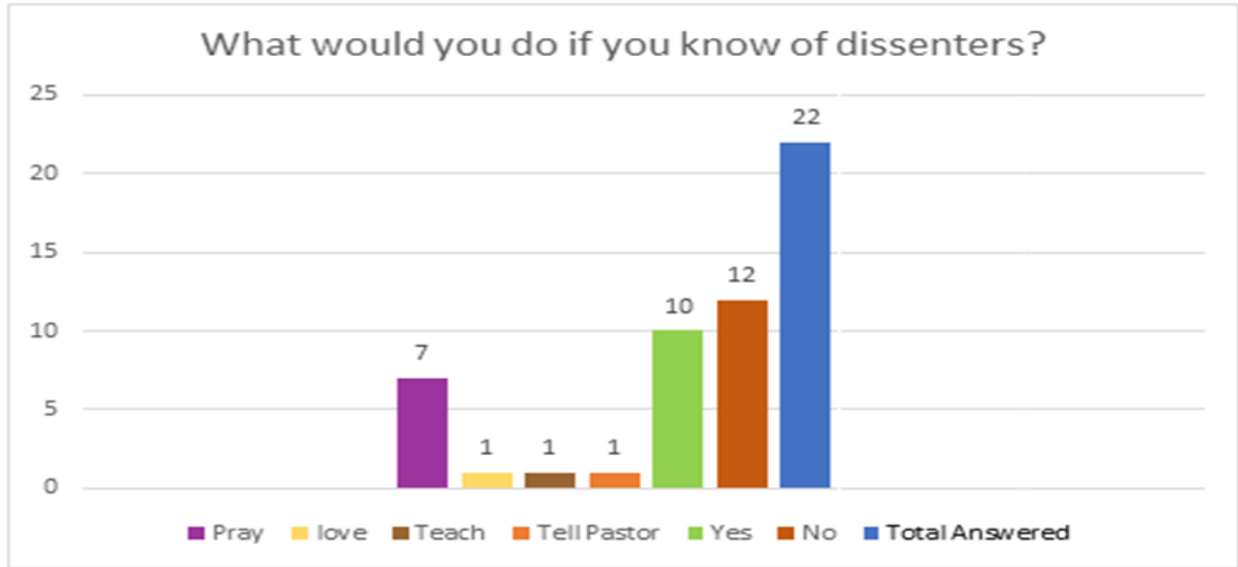


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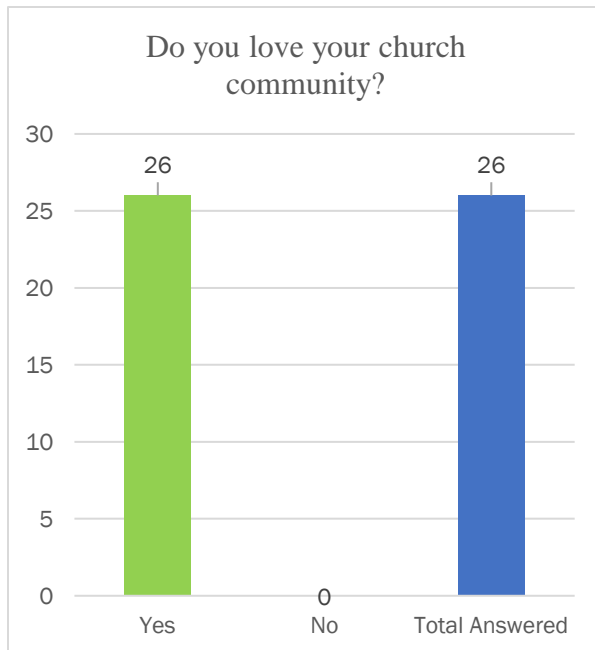


APPENDIX A: SURVEY #1

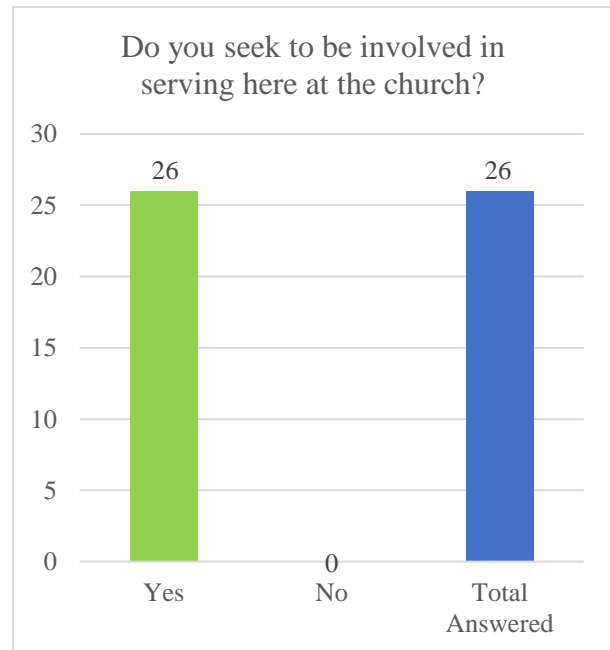
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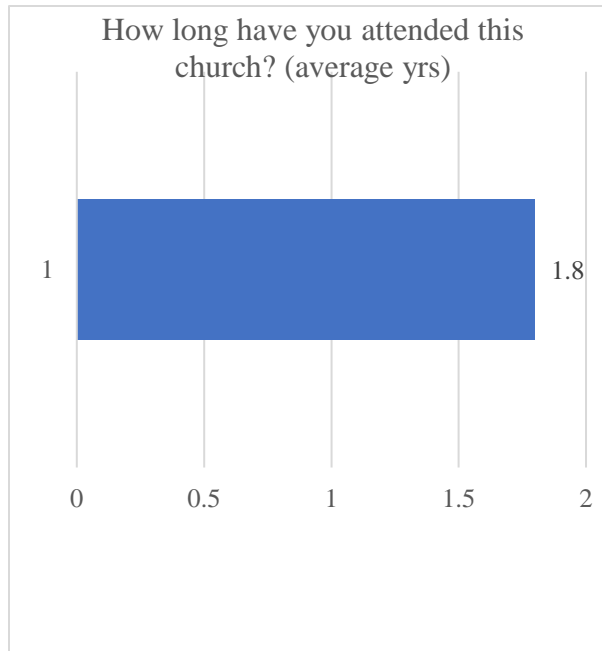


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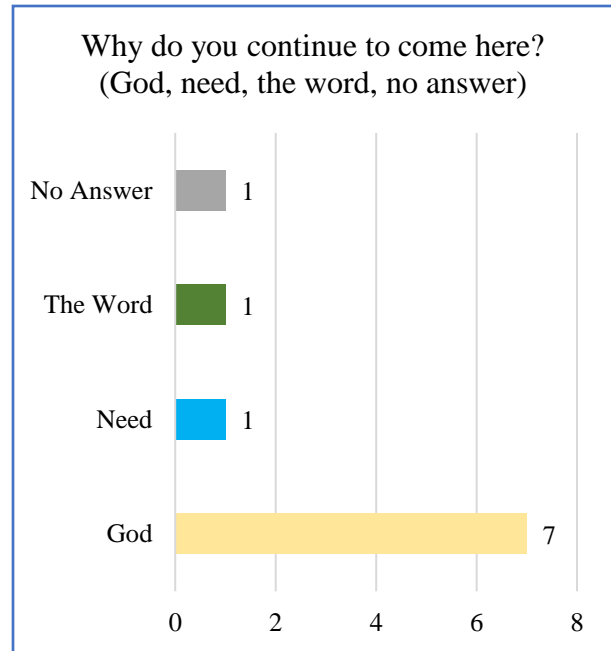


APPENDIX B: SURVEY #2-10

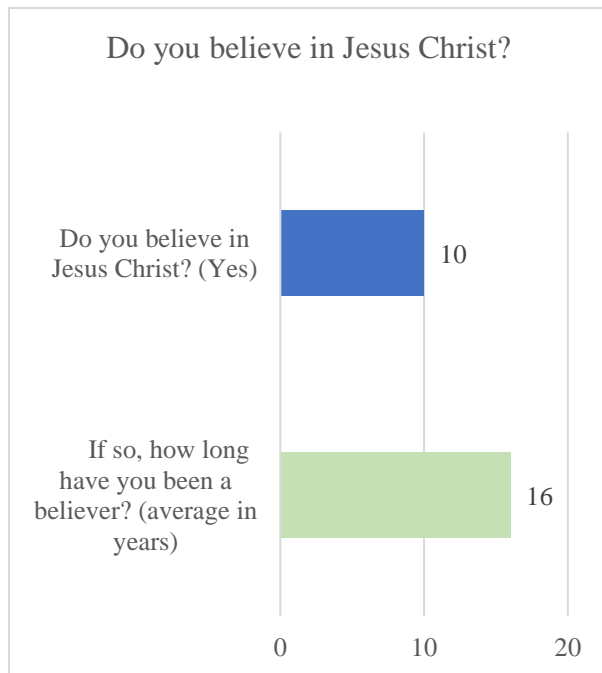
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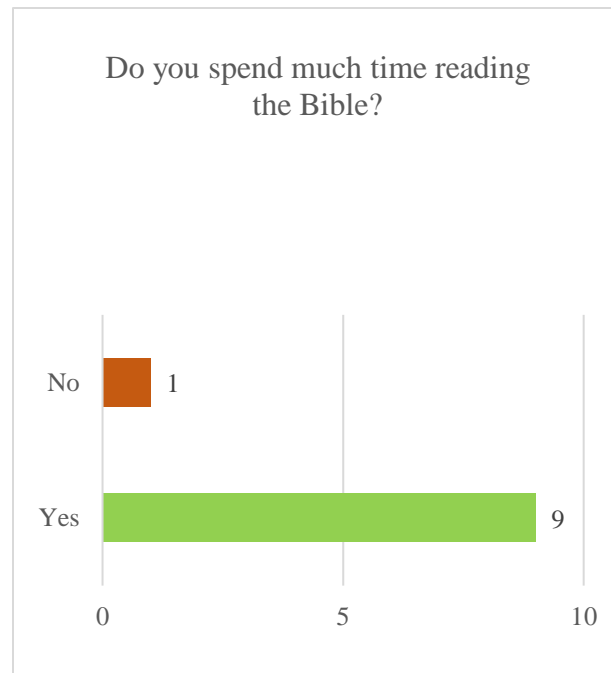
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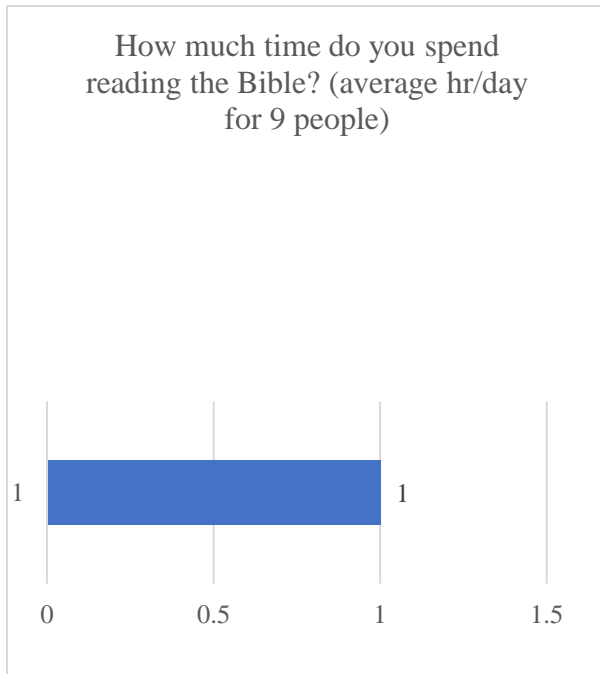


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APPENDIX B: SURVEY #2-10

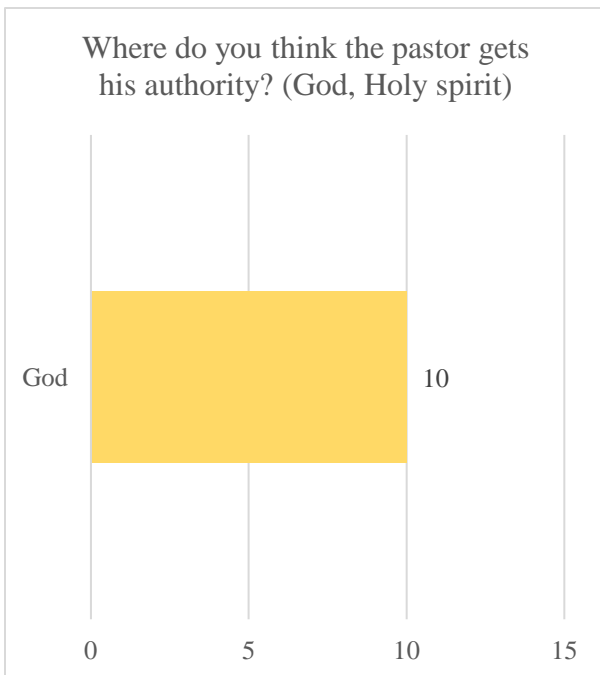
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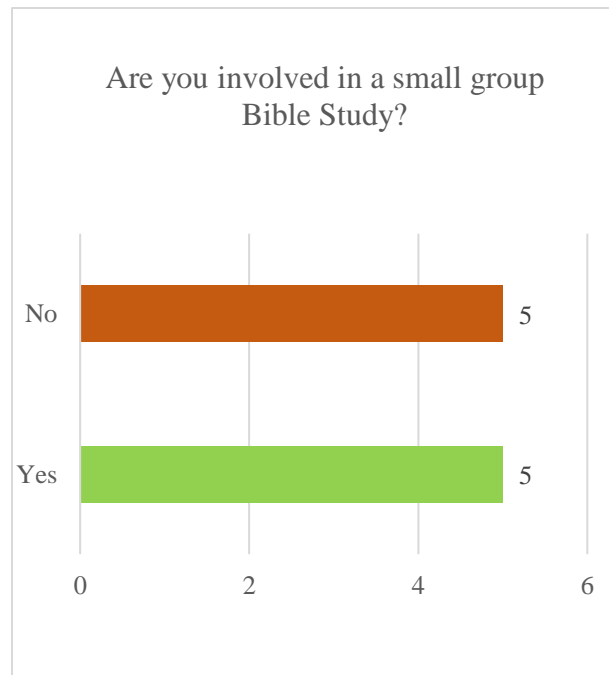
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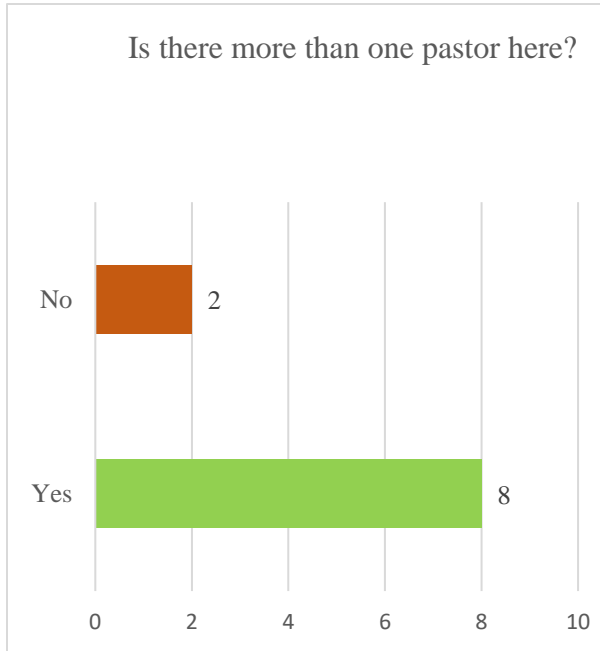


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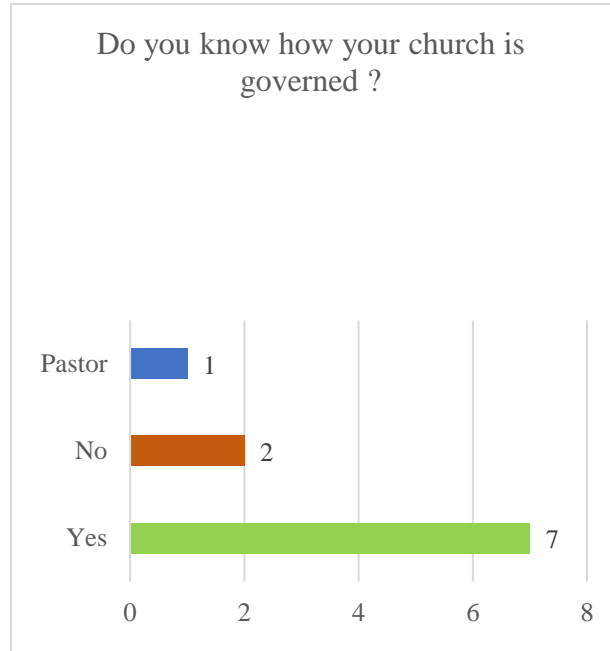


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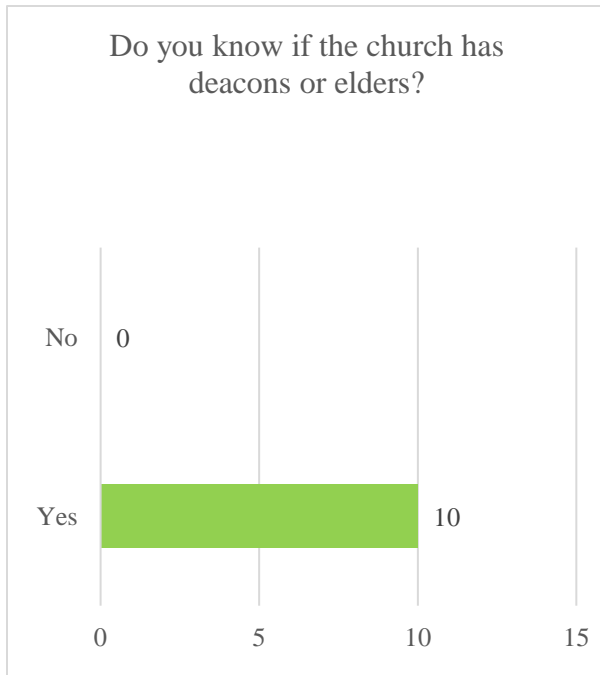
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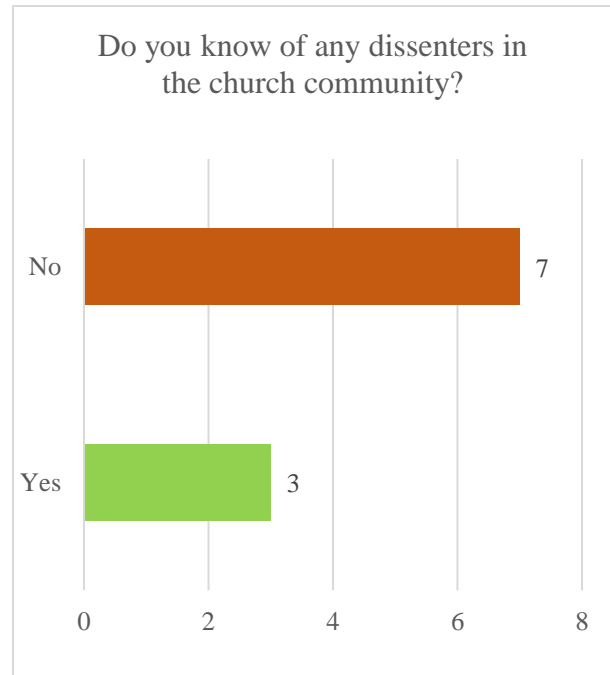
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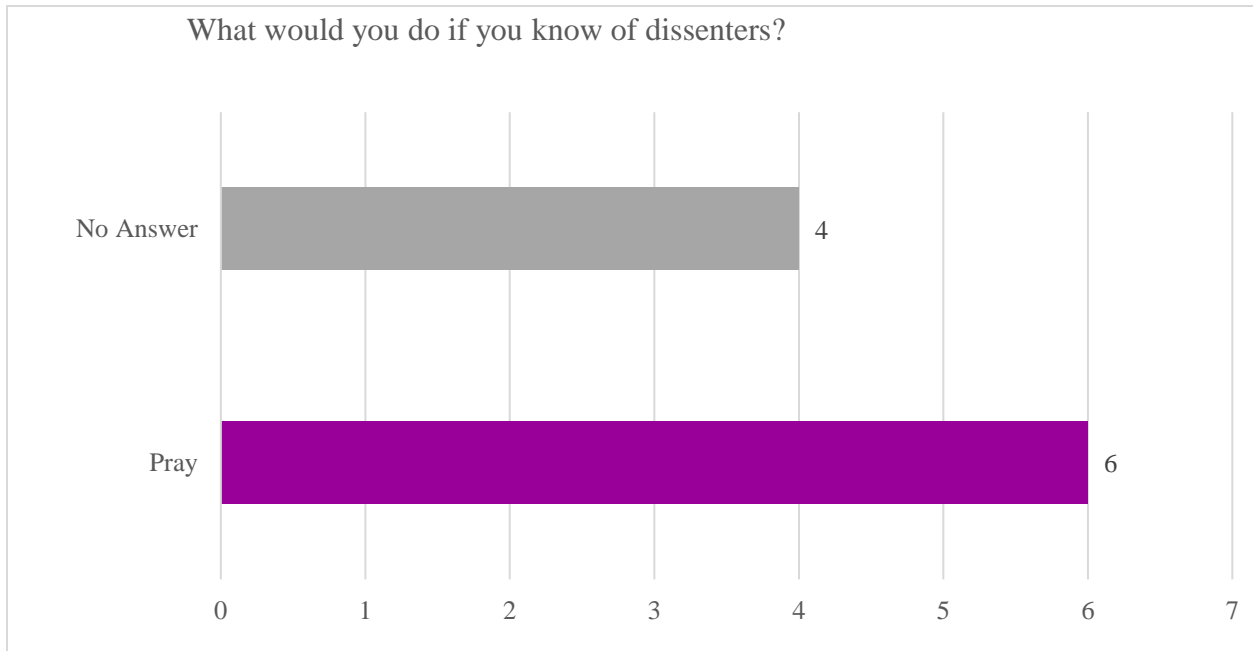


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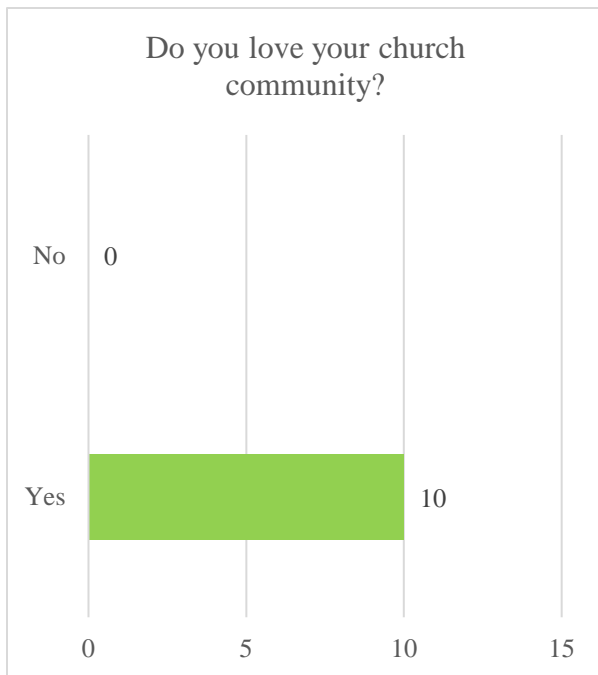


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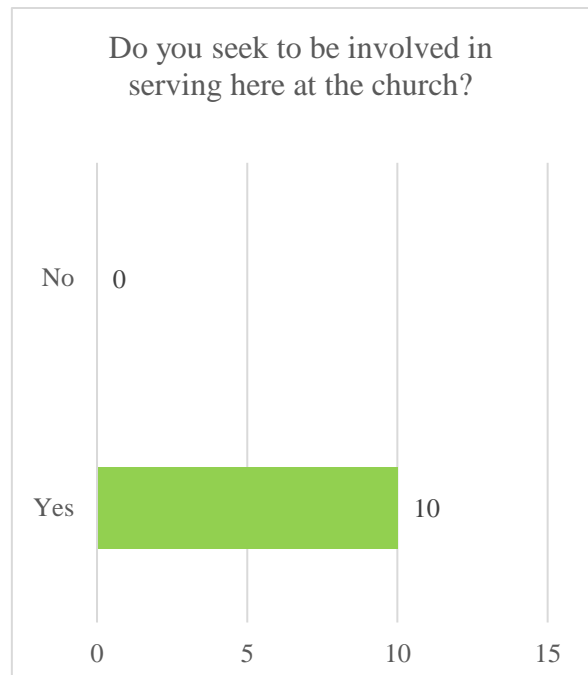
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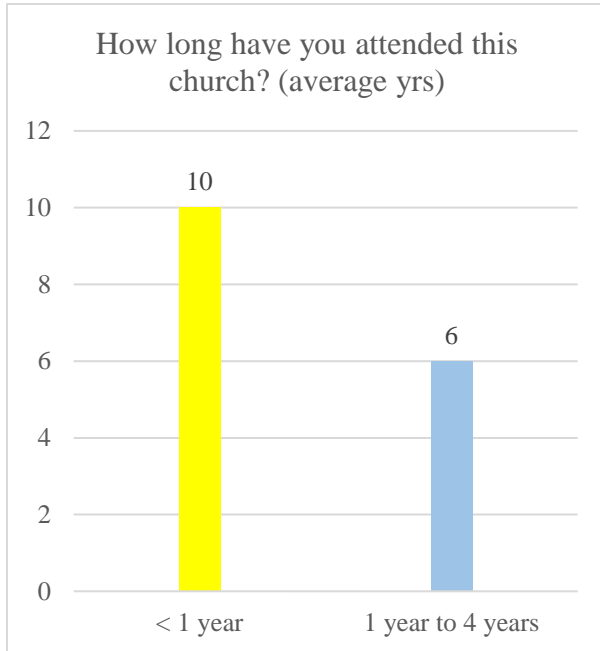


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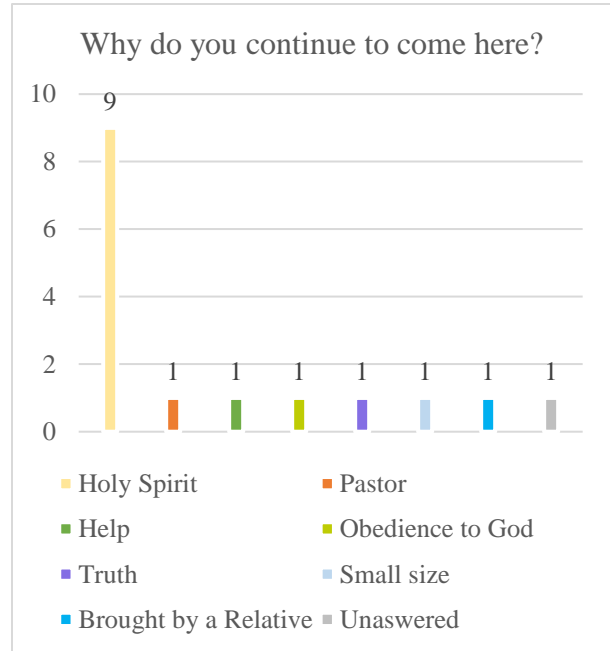


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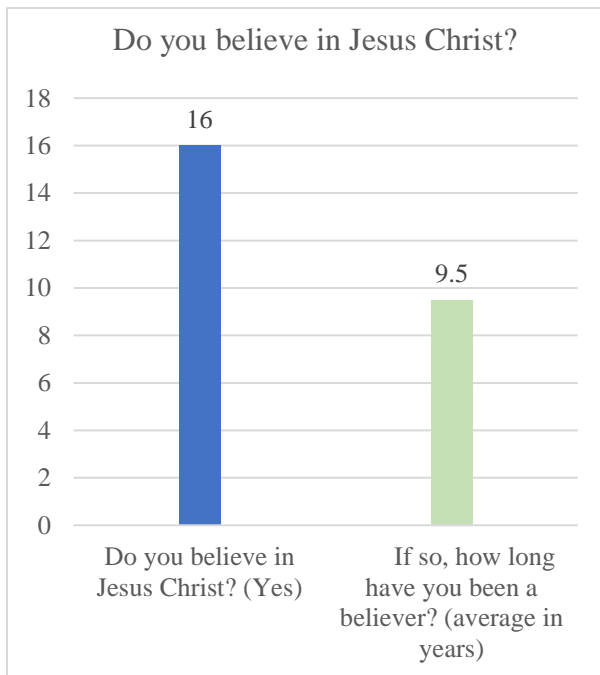
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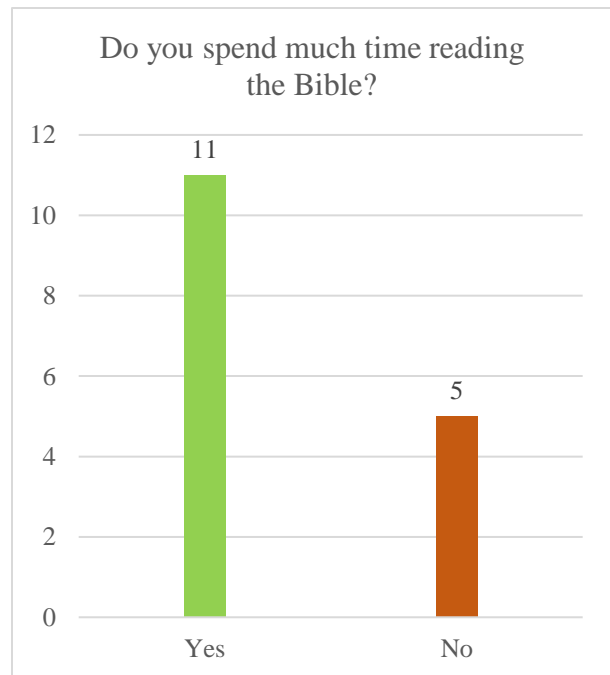
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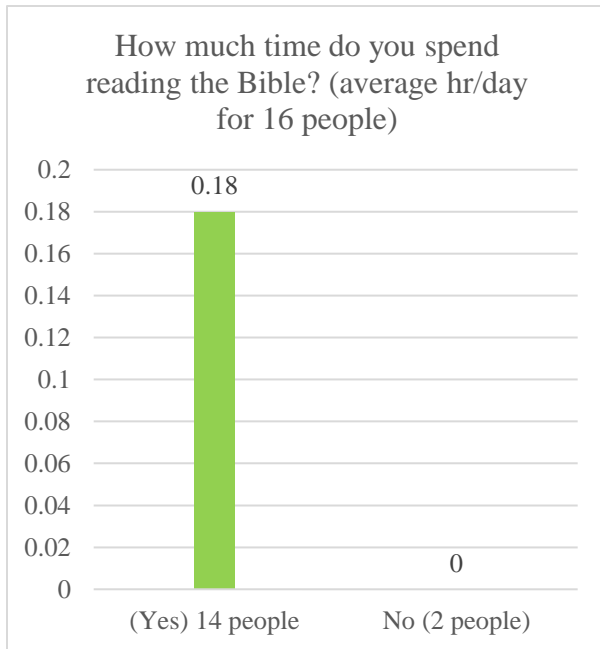


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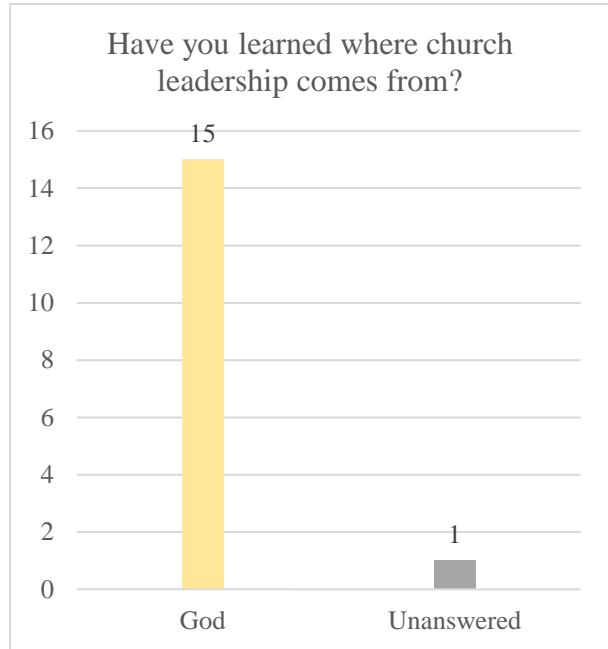


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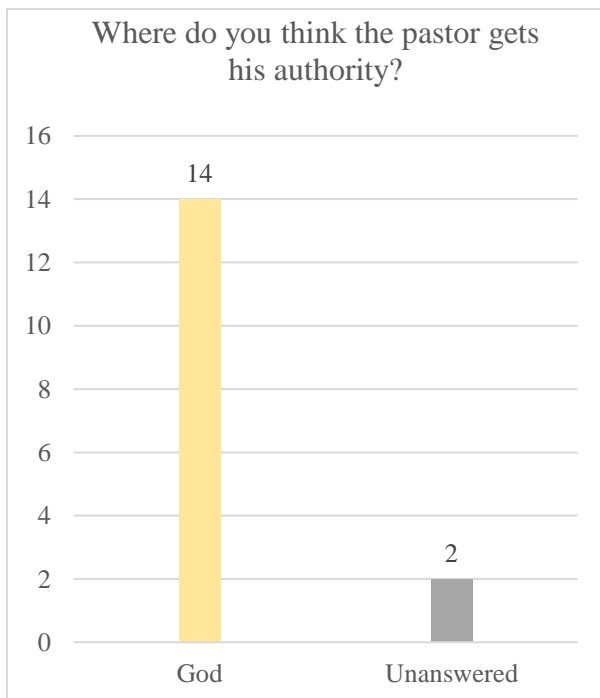
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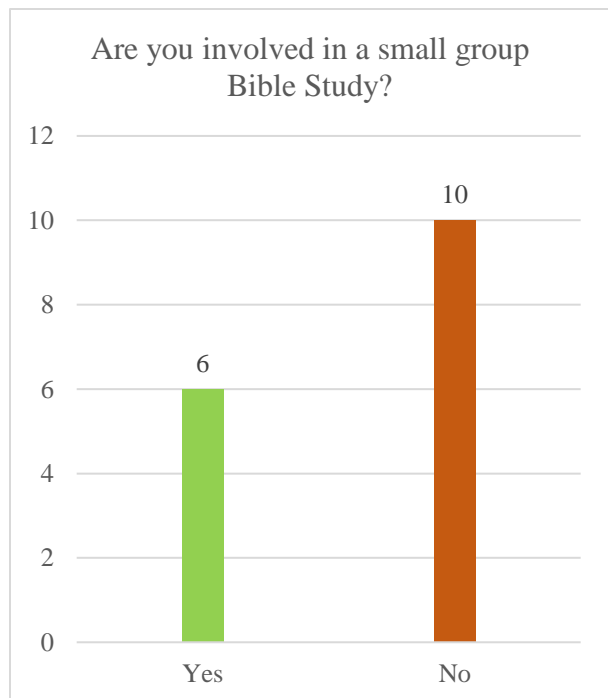
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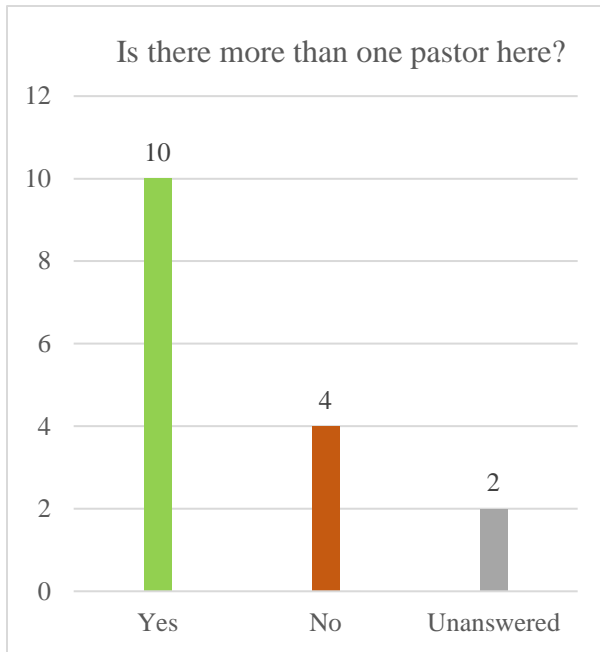


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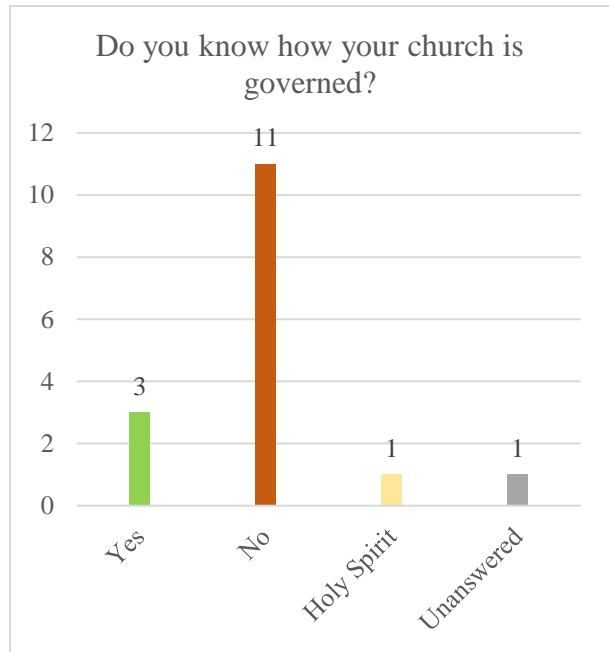


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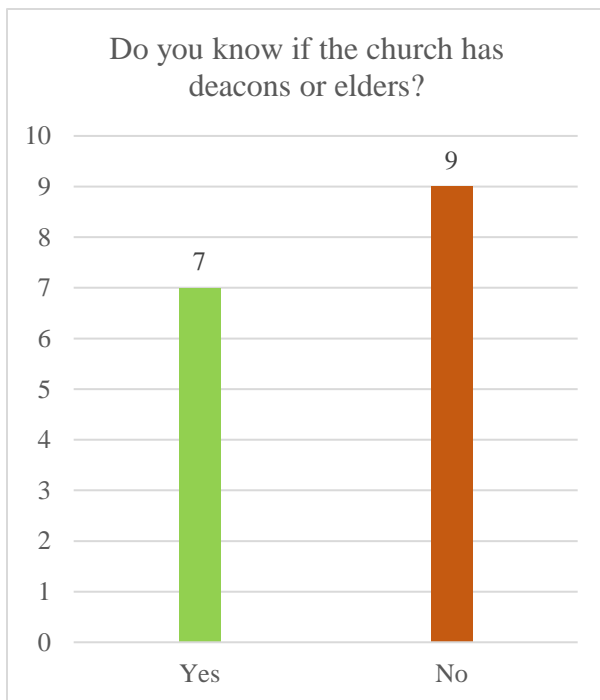
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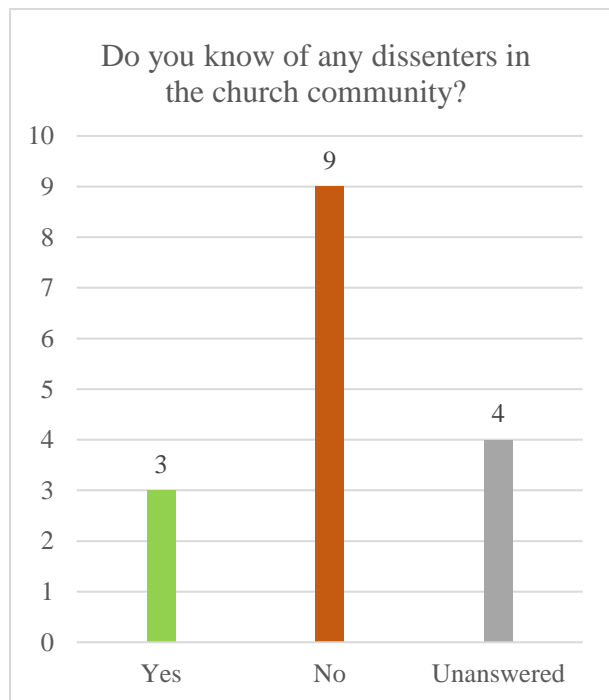
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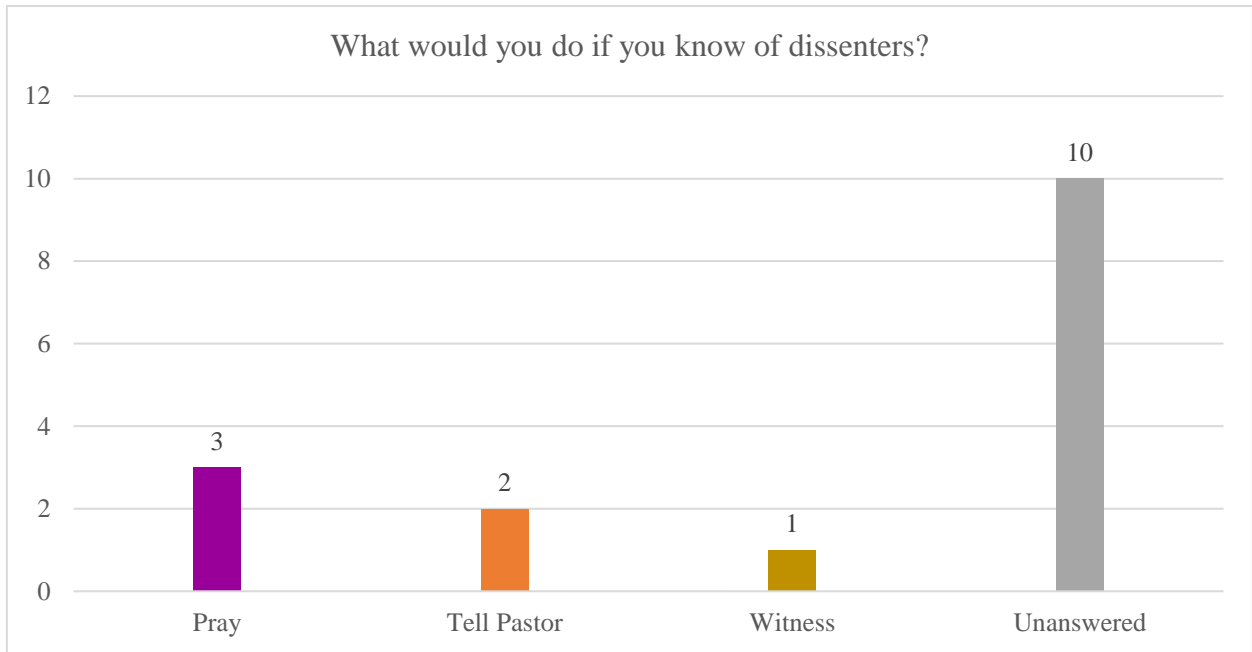


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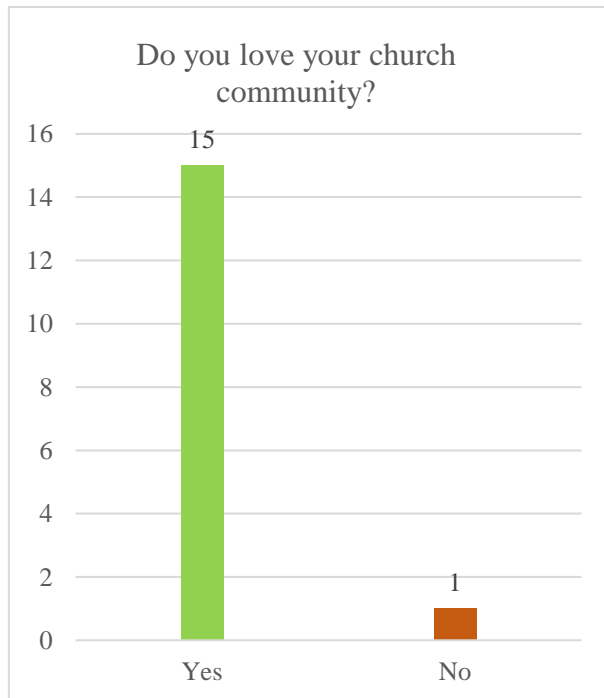


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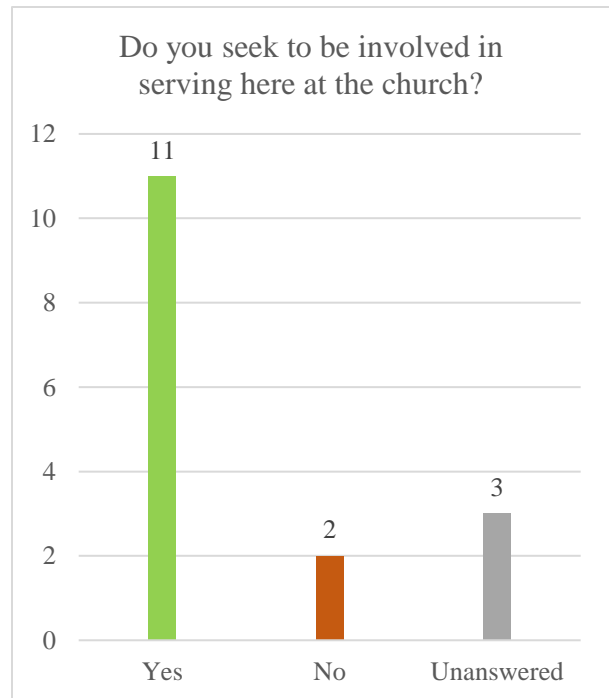
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C.2-16.14



C.2-16.15



APPENDIX D

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD



Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971

February 28, 2019

Douglas M. Beckman

IRB Approval 3669.022819: Church Leadership: Examining the Role of Non-Pastoral Leadership in a New Church Plant

Dear Douglas M. Beckman,

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

Your study falls under the expedited review category (45 CFR 46.110), which is applicable to specific, minimal risk studies and minor changes to approved studies for the following reason(s):

7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies. (NOTE: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

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

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
Research Ethics Office

APPENDIX E

FIFTEEN QUESTIONS FOR THE PASTOR

1. How long have you pastored this church?
2. Do you plan on continuing your ministry here?
3. Do you believe in Jesus Christ? If so, how long have you been a believer?
4. Do you spend much time reading the Bible?
5. How much time do you spend studying the Bible?
6. Have you learned where church leadership comes from?
7. Where do you think you, as pastor, receive your authority?
8. Do you teach a small group Bible study?
9. Are you the only pastor of this church?
10. Do you have a plan for governing this church?
11. Do you have elders or deacons in this church?
12. Are you having problems with dissenters in your church community that you know of?
13. What would you do if you had dissenters in your community?
14. Do you love your church community?
15. Do you encourage others to serve at the church?

You will receive a consent form with this questioner to allow this material to be used in the research project. Please sign it and place the questioner in the receptacle for all questioners at the back of the church.

APPENDIX F

CONSENT FORM

Church Leadership: Examining the Role of Non-Pastoral Leadership in a New Church Plant

Douglas Beckman
Liberty University
School of Divinity

You are invited to be in a research study on why non-pastoral leadership gets control in a church and how to identify when this activity begins. You have been selected as a possible participant because you are a church member in good standing, 18 years of age or older. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Douglas Beckman, a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to help church members understand the importance of following the leadership that God has ordained for their church community and to be able to identify those who step outside that authority and love them back into compliance.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Answer, anonymously, a list of fifteen questions which will take 30 minutes and place them in the receptacle marked for this research at the rear of the church.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society may include a greater, more honoring witness to the community surrounding the church through their training and unity of leadership. The church community may become more unified, loving and glorifying to the great God they serve.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this anonymous study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or RESTORATION CHURCH. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time, prior to submitting the questionnaire, without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue your participation prior to submitting your study materials. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Douglas Beckman. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at 575-640-5524. You may also contact the researcher's faculty chair, Dr. Juan Dugan, at jrdugan@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

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

Signature

Date

APPENDIX G
ABBREVIATIONS

APEST	Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Shepherd, Teacher
DMIN	Doctor of Ministry
ESV	English Standard Version
IHOP	International House of Pancakes
ISOM	International School of Ministry
KJV	King James Version

APPENDIX H
CONSENT FORM (PASTOR)

Church Leadership: Examining the Role of Non-Pastoral Leadership in a New Church Plant

Douglas Beckman
Liberty University
Doctor of Ministry/School of Divinity

You are invited to be in a research study on the role of non-pastoral leaders taking authority that they do not have. You, as pastor, were invited to participate in this research. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Douglas Beckman, a doctoral candidate in the Doctor of Ministry/School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to help church members understand the importance of following the leadership that God has ordained for their church community and to be able to identify those who step outside that authority and love them back into compliance.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Answer a list of 15 interview questions which will take 30 minutes and place them in the receptacle at the rear of the church marked for the project.
2. Once the information is gathered and analyzed you would be asked as a church community to gather to discuss the results. Time required for this is about 1 hour.
3. The results of this meeting will be used to determine what type of appropriate training would be necessary to bring the church community in line with the church authority. Another meeting would be called for the church body to discuss the length and time needed to complete this training.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life. If for any reason a participant develops any psychological risks, he/she may be excused from further participation in this study.

Benefits: Benefits from this research and training are that the church community become more unified, loving and glorifying to the great God they serve. Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include a greater more honoring witness to the community surrounding the church through their training and unity of leadership.

Compensation: Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality: The records of this anonymous study will be kept private. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or RESTORATION CHURCH. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time prior to submitting the survey without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study

Anonymous Survey Research: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please inform the researcher that you wish to discontinue your participation prior to submitting your study materials. Your responses will not be recorded or included in the study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Douglas Beckman. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact him at 575-640-5524. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty chair, Dr. Juan Dugan, at jrdugan@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

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

THE RESEARCHER HAS MY PERMISSION TO PHOTOGRAPH ME AS PART OF MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY.

Signature of Participant Date

Signature of Investigator Date

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